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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES: A STUDY OF TEACHERS IN LAHORE'S PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

In Pakistani educational institutions, particularly private secondary schools, conflicts often arise due to diverse emotional and professional dynamics. These conflicts can significantly affect the organizational environment and the quality of the teacher-student relationship. Variations exist in conflict management styles among private male and female secondary school teachers in Lahore, Pakistan. This study focused on private male and female secondary school teachers in Lahore, Pakistan. We used convenience sampling to select 500 teachers (250 males and 250 females) from 30 private secondary schools in the Lahore district. Data collection involved self-reported responses on standardized scales, including the Conflict Management Styles Inventory. The Pearson correlation revealed that Integrating ($P < .000$), obliging ($P < .000$), and Compromising styles ($P < .000$) had statistically significant positive associations with self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. However, the Dominating style ($P < .005$) showed a significantly strong negative relationship with self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy, while having no relationship with motivation and social skills. The Avoiding style ($P > .95$) had no association with emotional intelligence. Additionally, ANOVA results indicated a significant overall effect ($P = 0.02$) of conflict management styles on emotional intelligence. Conflict management plays a vital role in educational institutions. Institutional leaders should prioritize teacher training programs to enhance their conflict management skills. Future recommendations include focusing on teacher development to create a harmonious educational environment.

Keywords

Conflict Management, Secondary School, Private Teachers, Emotional Intelligence.



1. Introduction

Schools in the 21st Century are considered independent organizations and professional settings that support students' and teachers' learning communities for outstanding performance and excellence (Smith, 2020). When people interact, conflicts may arise due to their refusal to agree with one another. These conflicts are unavoidable, mainly between individuals experiencing adverse emotional reactions (Jones & Brown, 2019). It is evident that negative emotions and conflicts adversely affect professionals, particularly in school contexts. Identifying, understanding, and managing conflict situations in Pakistani schools has become a frequent reality in recent years. Psychologists and education science professionals are highly concerned about this issue because it negatively affects the teachers' performance and the quality of the learning environment (Khan *et al.*, 2018). The conflicts directly impact teacher-student relationships and contribute to the overall classroom climate profile (Ahmed & Ali, 2021). Successfully resolving conflicts becomes more likely when positive emotions are involved (Choudhary & Malik, 2017). For this reason, emotional intelligence (EI) has become a critical topic in education research as it helps to manage the emotional relationships between teachers and students, which are vital to the teaching and learning process (Gupta & Sharma, 2020). It has been observed that various factors contribute to conflict, such as low emotional intelligence, specific personality traits, work environment issues, unclear roles, ineffective communication, and the absence of support from colleagues or management (Smith & Johnson, 2018). Moreover, Brown and Lee (2018) have argued that high emotional intelligence is crucial for successful problem-solving and that it plays a vital role in conflict management by motivating negotiators to consider the interests of their opponents. Negative emotions are frequently associated

with workplace conflicts. Thus, Huang and Lin (2019) suggest that it would be beneficial to look into how emotional intelligence and conflict management in schools are related. Hence, the present study aims to provide empirical evidence to fill the gap in examining the association between the emotional intelligence of teachers and conflict management in the classroom setting in the context of teacher-student relationships (Garcia & Martinez, 2019). Classroom interpersonal relationships can significantly impact teaching and learning due to the emotional processes involved (Gupta & Sharma, 2020). The teacher's EI is crucial in providing verbal and non-verbal competencies that enable them to understand and evaluate their own and students' emotions (Huang & Lin, 2019). Emotional intelligence (EI) is the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically (Goleman, 1995; Goleman, 2020). By monitoring their feelings, teachers can manage students' emotions and implement strategies for perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions when faced with disciplinary issues, confrontations, and loss of authority (Johnson & Nguyen, 2022). Pakistan is one of the Asian countries where teachers experience high levels of stress and are at risk of burnout, which can affect not only their psychological well-being and social relations but also the school organization and students (Jones & Brown, 2019). In Lahore, private secondary schools play a critical role in Pakistan's education system, contributing significantly to educational accessibility and quality (Asian Development Bank, 2022). These institutions are known for their diverse faculty profiles, often combining experienced and early-career teachers, which enhances pedagogical approaches and student engagement (Pakistan Lawyer, 2025). However, the hierarchical structure, heavy teaching loads,

and diverse student population present unique challenges in teacher-student relationships and conflict management, requiring effective strategies to maintain a conducive learning environment (Asian Development Bank, 2022). Research indicates that people with high EI are more confident, creative, flexible, and better at dealing with stress and emotions, leading to better problem-solving skills and job performance (Jones & Smith, 2021). Dinh *et al.* (2023) found that women perform better than men on EI measures. Moreover, research by Choudhary and Malik (2017) shows that teachers with advanced degrees, such as a Ph.D., tend to exhibit higher levels of EI. Additionally, research has shown that schoolteachers with fewer years of experience often have a higher EI score than those teaching longer, indicating a negative correlation between length of teaching experience and schoolteacher EI (Khan *et al.*, 2018). School conflicts are inevitable because diverse opinions and interactions are part of everyday academic life (Brown & Lee, 2018). Such conflicts can manifest as social conflicts arising from disagreements over ideas, interests, principles, and values within the school community (Huang & Lin, 2019). Conflict management styles refer to individuals' different strategies to address and resolve disputes effectively. These styles are typically categorized as integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising (Bacud & Beltran, 2020). Teachers who lack the necessary skills to manage conflicts may struggle to create a harmonious learning environment, potentially hindering students' educational progress (Smith & Thompson, 2020). School conflicts are mainly observed between students and between students and teachers (Park & Kim, 2021). In 2019, Choudhary further highlighted the various conflicting behaviors of students, such as disrupting peers, lack of classroom participation, and instances of violence, both verbal (such as offending peers) and physical (such as destruction of school facilities,

equipment, and peer materials). Khan and Ahmed (2017) have found various reasons that cause conflicts in teacher-student relationships. These reasons include ineffective communication encompassing indifference, disrespect, personal judgment, persistence, and misunderstanding. Another reason is personal differences, such as unnecessary complaints, high expectations/ambitions, prejudices, and cultural-economic disparities. Furthermore, political/ideological differences that involve contempt for different ideas, intolerance, and insistence on personal judgments also add to conflicts. Lastly, organizational factors, like non-compliance, neglect of duty, negative social impact, curriculum failure, and unfair task distribution, can also lead to conflicts in teacher-student relationships. Integrating is a way to manage conflicts that prioritizes collaboration, cooperation, and problem-solving to meet the needs of oneself and others. According to Thomas-Kilmann (2019), those who use this method deal with conflicts directly and cooperatively, to resolve them collaboratively. This approach requires conduct orientation characterized by high levels of cooperation and assertiveness (Johnson & Nguyen, 2022). To achieve a solution that is satisfactory to all parties involved in the conflict, it is necessary to maintain openness, exchange information, and analyze differences between the parties (Dinh *et al.*, 2023). In contrast, the dominating method involves a high concern for one's interests and a low concern for others, indicating that one is attempting to satisfy their interests without regard for those of others (Smith & Jones, 2022). When using this method, a teacher may attempt to achieve their objectives by sacrificing those of their students, believing that conflict may be managed by mastering and suppressing the needs and expectations of the students (Brown & Martinez, 2023). There is a lack of research in Pakistan that focuses on teachers' emotional intelligence. Previous studies have revealed a need for

more correlation between teachers' emotional intelligence and their capacity to handle conflicts in the classroom (Khan et al., 2021; Rahman & Haque, 2020). A research initiative has been launched to explore how teachers' emotional intelligence is related to managing conflicts in the classroom. The primary objective of this study is to establish a connection between teachers' emotional intelligence and their ability to manage conflicts. The research question will be: "What is the correlation between teachers' emotional intelligence and their ability to manage conflicts in the classroom?" Considering the prevalence of classroom conflicts in Pakistani schools, it is crucial to investigate how teachers' emotional intelligence affects the conflict management strategies employed to resolve these conflicts. Additionally, the study will investigate how gender, teaching experience, and academic training impact teachers' emotional intelligence.

1.1 Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Theory (1995) and the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (1974) to examine the relationship between emotional intelligence and teacher conflict management styles. Emotional intelligence, consisting of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, shapes individuals' ability to manage interpersonal conflicts effectively. The Thomas-Kilmann model categorizes conflict management into five styles: integrating, obliging, compromising, avoiding, and dominating, which vary based on assertiveness and cooperativeness. Emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to adopt integrating or compromising strategies, using empathy and communication to resolve disputes, whereas lower emotional regulation may lead to avoiding or dominating approaches. By linking these frameworks, the study explores how teachers' emotional

capacities influence their approach to managing classroom conflict.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research pursues the following objectives:

To examine teachers' conflict management styles, such as integrating, obliging, compromising, avoiding, and dominating.

To analyze the relationship between teachers' conflict management styles and their levels of emotional intelligence in private secondary schools

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design and Sampling Technique

The study employed a quantitative approach using correlational research methodology to gather data from teachers in private secondary schools. The target population consisted of teachers in private secondary schools in Lahore, with 1218 such schools reported in 2018 by the School Education Department. The estimated total number of teachers in these institutions was 18,253, as reported by Punjab Education Statistics (2019-20). A sample size of 500 teachers (250 male and 250 female) was obtained from 30 private secondary schools in Lahore, utilizing the method of convenience sampling.

2.2 Research Instrument

Two questionnaires were used to collect data. The Conflict Management Styles Inventory (CMSI) by Thomas-Kilmann (1974) includes 20 items across five dimensions: Integrating, Obliging, Compromising, Avoiding, and Dominating. The Emotional Intelligence Inventory (EII) by Hyde, Pethe, and Dhar (2002) comprises 15 items measuring five components: Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Motivation, Empathy, and Social Skill. Both scales use a five-point Likert-type response format. Each questionnaire included five response options, ensuring structured data collection.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Values for the Sections of the Questionnaire

Scales	α	Items
Conflict Management Styles Inventory	0.807	20
Emotional Intelligent	0.832	15

Table 1 presents the reliability test results, where Cronbach's alpha coefficient, ranging from 0.807 to 0.832, was applied to assess the validity of each section separately. Measure of variables the study examined two key variables, with conflict management styles as the independent variable and emotional intelligence as the dependent variable. Conflict management was assessed using a structured questionnaire that measured five distinct styles: Integrating, Obliging, Compromising, Avoiding, and Dominating. Emotional intelligence, the dependent variable, was evaluated based on components such as Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Motivation, Empathy, and Social Skill. Both scales consisted of a Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

2.3 Data Collection

Data were collected through a structured survey using a standardized questionnaire by the researchers. The printed questionnaire was accompanied by an informed consent form and distributed directly to participants in the presence of the researchers to provide necessary clarification and

support. Participants were encouraged to respond voluntarily and assured that they could withdraw at any point without any consequences. All responses were treated strictly, and no identifying information was recorded to protect participants' anonymity. The researchers personally managed the distribution and retrieval of the completed questionnaires, ensuring that informed consent was obtained prior to participation.

2.4 Data Analysis

We utilized SPSS software version 25 for all analyses carried out in 2024. A codebook was developed to cover the whole questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were applied for data analysis. Pearson's correlation was used to evaluate the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management styles. ANOVA was used to assess whether emotional intelligence levels differ significantly based on the frequency of teachers' involvement in workplace conflicts. Results.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for the demographic characteristics of Private secondary school Teachers.

Characteristics of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	250	50%
Female	250	50%
Teaching Experience		
5–10 years	79	15.8%
10–15 years	199	39.8%
15–20 years	112	22.4%
Above 20 years	110	22%
Job Nature		
Permanent	239	47.8%

Contractor

261

52.2%

Table 2 provides insights into private secondary school teachers, delineating three main aspects: gender, teaching experience, and job nature. Regarding gender, the respondents are evenly divided between male and female teachers, with 250 (50%) in each category, suggesting efforts by private secondary schools to maintain diversity among their teaching staff. In terms of teaching experience, the respondents exhibit a varied range: 79 (15.8%) teachers

have 5-10 years of experience, 199 (39.8%) have 10-15 years, 112 (22.4%) have 15-20 years, and 110 (22%) have over 20 years. This distribution reflects a blend of seasoned educators and newcomers to the profession. Concerning job nature, 239 (47.8%) teachers hold permanent positions, while 261 (52.2%) work on a contractual basis, indicating flexibility in staffing arrangements within private secondary school.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation: Conflict Management Styles & Emotional Intelligence (N=500)

		Self- awareness	Self- regulation	Motivation	Empathy	Social skill
Integrating Style	r	.42	.44	.38	.34	.35
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Obliging Style	r	.38	.42	.33	.32	.30
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Compromising Style	r	.31	.28	.29	.27	.27
	p	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Avoiding Style	r	-.03	.02	.00	.00	-.05
	p	.50	.60	.95	.94	.23
Dominating Style	r	-.09	-.09	-.06	-.09	-.08
	p	.03	.02	.14	.03	.07

Table 3 presents Pearson correlation coefficients (R-values) and associated p-values, indicating the relationship between conflict management styles and emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Teachers employing integrating and obliging styles exhibit positive correlations with emotional intelligence across various dimensions, indicating higher levels of emotional intelligence (all $p < 0.001$). Meanwhile, compromising style shows moderate positive associations (all $p < 0.001$), whereas avoiding style

demonstrates negligible correlations with emotional intelligence (all $p > 0.05$). Dominating style, however, displays negative correlations with emotional intelligence, suggesting potentially lower emotional intelligence in specific dimensions (some $p < 0.05$). This indicated that conflict management styles are associated with emotional intelligence among teachers. Integrating and obliging styles positively correlate with emotional intelligence, while avoiding and dominating styles show different patterns.

Table 4. ANOVA Test Results for the Relation between Emotional Intelligence and the Respondents' Frequency of Involvement in Workplace Conflicts

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	227.816	2	113.908	2.677	0.013
Within Groups	5404.253	127	42.553		

Total	5632.069
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Table 4 displays the results of an ANOVA test investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional management. The analysis indicates significant differences among groups based on conflict management styles (integrating, obliging, compromising, avoiding, and dominating) and their impact on emotional intelligence ($F = 2.677$, $p = 0.013$), suggesting that emotional intelligence levels vary based on the frequency of involvement in workplace conflicts. Specifically, the between-groups variation (sum of squares = 227.816, $df = 2$) indicates that differences in emotional intelligence are attributable to the respondents' varying degrees of conflict involvement. Conversely, the within-groups variation (sum of squares = 5404.253, $df = 127$) represents the variability in emotional intelligence scores within each group, regardless of conflict involvement. These findings indicate that workplace conflicts may influence emotional intelligence levels, but other unexamined factors could also contribute to variations. Therefore, further research is needed to explore additional variables and provide a more comprehensive understanding of what shapes emotional intelligence in professional settings.

3. Discussion

The findings from this study underscore the intricate relationship between conflict management styles and emotional intelligence among teachers, aligning with existing literature on the subject. The significant moderate positive relationship observed between the integrating style and various dimensions of emotional intelligence corroborates previous research highlighting the effectiveness of this collaborative approach in fostering self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Brown *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, the obliging style, although displaying weaker positive associations

with emotional intelligence dimensions beyond self-awareness and self-regulation, still indicates a constructive approach to conflict resolution, echoing prior studies emphasizing the importance of empathy and social skills in interpersonal interactions (Choudhary *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, the significant but weak positive relationship between the compromising style and emotional intelligence dimensions suggests that while compromise may not exhibit as strong a correlation as integrating or obliging styles, it still plays a role in facilitating aspects of emotional intelligence. This finding resonates with existing literature that recognizes compromise as a pragmatic strategy for conflict resolution, albeit with potential limitations in promoting specific emotional intelligence competencies (Garcia & Martinez, 2019). Additionally, the lack of relationship between the avoidance style and emotional intelligence dimensions underscores the ineffectiveness of avoidance as a conflict management strategy in nurturing emotional intelligence among teachers, consistent with prior research indicating avoidance as a less adaptive approach to handling conflicts (Sheng Yu *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, the unexpected positive influence of the dominating style on emotional intelligence, albeit weak, challenges conventional assumptions and highlights the complexity of the relationship between conflict management styles and emotional intelligence. This finding suggests that while dominating behavior may not align with traditional notions of effective conflict resolution, it may still contribute to certain aspects of emotional intelligence, potentially through assertiveness and clarity in communication (Dinh *et al.*, 2023). Overall, these results contribute to a deeper understanding of the nuanced interplay between conflict management styles and emotional intelligence among teachers, providing insights that can inform interventions to

enhance conflict resolution skills and emotional competence in educational settings (Smith *et al.*, 2022).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the intricate relationship between conflict management styles and emotional intelligence among teachers. The significant positive correlations observed between integrating and obliging styles with various dimensions of emotional intelligence emphasize the importance of collaborative and empathetic approaches to conflict resolution. These findings underscore the potential of fostering emotional intelligence skills, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and empathy, by promoting cooperative and accommodating conflict management styles. Moreover, the unexpected positive influence of the dominating style on specific aspects of emotional intelligence highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of conflict management behaviors and their implications for emotional competence. Overall, these results underscore the significance of considering conflict management styles and emotional intelligence in teacher training and professional development programs, aiming to cultivate practical conflict resolution skills and enhance emotional competence among educators. Furthermore, the findings of this study have practical implications for educational institutions and teacher training programs. By recognizing the relationship between conflict management styles and emotional intelligence, educators and administrators can design interventions and training initiatives tailored to enhance teachers' conflict resolution skills and emotional competence. Emphasizing the importance of integrating and obliging styles in conflict resolution training programs can equip teachers with the tools to navigate interpersonal conflicts effectively while fostering a positive and collaborative work environment. Additionally, addressing the potential role of the compromising style, albeit weaker

in its associations, can provide teachers with alternative strategies for resolving conflicts constructively. By incorporating these insights into professional development initiatives, educational institutions can empower teachers to effectively manage conflicts, promote positive relationships, and ultimately enhance the overall learning environment for students.

5. Limitations

This study's exclusive reliance on a quantitative, correlational design limits its depth, as it does not capture teachers' lived experiences or the contextual nuances that qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, could reveal. Although the sample was gender-balanced, inferential analyses (e.g., t-tests or MANOVA) were not conducted to determine whether male and female teachers differ significantly in emotional intelligence or conflict management styles. Likewise, while demographic variables such as years of experience, academic qualifications, and employment status were described, their potential influence on emotional intelligence and conflict management approaches was not examined using inferential methods. The analytical strategy was also restricted to bivariate correlations and a single ANOVA. In contrast, more advanced techniques, such as regression, moderation/mediation analysis, or structural equation modeling, could provide deeper insights and account for confounding factors.

6. Recommendations

To address these limitations, future research should adopt a mixed-methods approach that complements survey data with semi-structured interviews or focus groups, illuminating the "why" behind teachers' conflict-management choices. Researchers are encouraged to increase the population and sample sizes to bolster the credibility and applicability of the findings, thus facilitating a more robust generalization of results. Additionally,

conducting a comparative study between private and public schools could offer valuable insights into potential disparities in conflict management styles and emotional intelligence, contributing to a deeper understanding of how different educational settings may influence these aspects. Furthermore, extending this research to include elementary, higher secondary, and university levels would provide a comprehensive understanding of conflict dynamics across various educational stages, potentially offering strategies to mitigate conflicts at different developmental milestones. By addressing these recommendations, future studies can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between conflict management styles and emotional intelligence in educational contexts.

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