

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Controlling task Conflict and improving Team Effectiveness

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Abstract: Task conflict and team outcomes have been demonstrated to be significantly influenced by emotional intelligence. However, empirical study data on these relationships in Vietnamese businesses is still lacking. This research contributes to a better understanding of emotional intelligence, task conflict, and team effectiveness in Vietnam, a developing country. By employing the PLS-SEM technique with a sample of 283 employees, this study found that emotional intelligence is adversely linked with task conflict and positively correlated with team performance and innovation. In addition, task conflict tends to harm team outcomes. Therefore, emotional intelligence appears to have the potential to increase team effectiveness by reducing task conflicts. Team members and leaders should be aware of how their coworkers react when faced with a task conflict. Managers should develop programs for staff to improve their emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, task conflict, team effectiveness.

1. Introduction

Companies need to maintain a high level of competition in today's global market by improving team effectiveness, which is regarded as one of the most key contributors to companies' survival. Therefore, creating a cohesive atmosphere for teams and effectively handling conflicts is critical. Task conflicts, in particular, are common in the workplace (Mauersberger et al., 2019). Disagreements or competing opinions, ideas, or thoughts about tasks are referred to as task conflict (Desivilya et al., 2010; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Pitafi & Cai, 2018). Several studies have also connected task conflict to enhanced team performance (De Dreu, 2006). However, the influence of task conflict on team effectiveness, whether good or bad, remains a contentious issue (Puck & Pregonig, 2014). This emphasizes the importance of further study into the relationship between task conflict and team effectiveness.

Furthermore, emotional intelligence (EI) is also known to predict team innovation and performance (Lee & Wong, 2019). According to Navas & Vijayakumar (2018), emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own emotions as well as manipulate the emotions of others. It is an important factor to business success since it represents a person's capacity to connect well with others. Emotional intelligence builds a solid foundation of standards in member interactions that encourage trust, group identity, and team performance, allowing team members to collaborate or resolve conflicts (Lee & Wong, 2019). As a result, it is vital to comprehend how emotions influence conflict resolution.

In brief, the goal of this research was to understand more about the relationship between emotional intelligence, task conflict, and team outcomes in the workplace, because emotions and conflict are considered to be interconnected in the workplace and are crucial to team performance and creativity. They will be defined and examined in greater depth by studying the links among the three conceptions in the context of Vietnam - a developing country.

Emotional intelligence and team effectiveness

Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as the ability to feel, express, interpret, manage, and use one's own and others' emotions (Kotsou et al., 2019). The mixed model (represented by Goleman (1998)) and the ability model (represented by Mayer et al. (2000)) are two perspectives on EI that are frequently used. Personality, social skills, self-esteem, emotion-related abilities, and motivational components are all included in the mixed model of EI (Mart-Vilar et al., 2019; Kopp & Jekauc, 2018). On the other hand, the ability model views EI as *"the ability to engage in sophisticated information processing about one's own and others' emotions and the ability to use this information as a guide to thinking and behavior"* (Mayer et al., 2000). This model focuses solely on people's capacity to perceive emotional information and utilize it to do abstract thinking. While the mixed model is often criticized as being too all-encompassing, the ability model is commonly popularized in the academic community and is opted for discussion herein. Taken from the ability model, emotional intelligence under Wong & Law (2002)'s viewpoint can be operationalized in four aspects: (1) an individual's capacity to detect and communicate one's own feelings is referred to as emotional self-assessment. (2) Emotional appraisal of others is the capacity to recognize appropriate emotions in others. (3) Emotional usage entails emotional guidance toward positive activities. (4) Emotion regulation is defined as the capacity to control one's emotions.

Emotional intelligence has been proved to have an impact on team performance. EI teams, according to Stephens & Carmeli (2016), are critical in providing a supportive environment that encourages good team performance. Lindsjrn et al. (2016), Jamshed et al. (2018), and Liu & Liu (2013) all claim that team members' capacity to manage mood, thoughts, and emotions affects team performance. Furthermore, studies have shown that emotional intelligence help to build optimistic working moods (Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017) and alleviate emotional issues such as tension and depression, which leads to better team performance (Greenidge et al., 2014). Such findings suggest that EI can be seen as a valuable ability with which teams use it to collect and share knowledge relevant to their target, as well as to execute activities, to achieve overall success (Barczak et al., 2010). A team with strong emotional intelligence creates a social and emotional atmosphere that develops empathy and helpful attitudes, improves cooperation, and leads to greater results (Maqbool et al., 2017; Troth et al., 2012; Rezvani et al., 2019).

H1: Emotional intelligence has a positive impact on team performance.

Emotional intelligence may also contribute significantly to team innovation. Emotional intelligence enables people to deal with challenges that need a large amount of information collecting, as well as to apply creativity and innovation in their profession (Parke et al., 2015). Emotional intelligence assists team members in dealing with emotions and maintaining good interpersonal connections. They tend to communicate openly, allowing them to share knowledge and breakthroughs, exchange ideas, and solve challenges. Employees with high EI, according to Suliman & Al-Shaikh (2007), prefer to discuss their thoughts with others, receive useful feedback and encouragement from coworkers, and how to form long-term, fruitful relationships with their coworkers. Tsai & Lee (2014) revealed that employee innovation is positively and significantly related to all four components of EI.

H2: Emotional intelligence has a positive impact on team innovation.

Task conflict and emotional intelligence

A task conflict occurs when members of a team disagree over the work's direction, content, or goal. Employees frequently use phrases like "work dispute" and "job disagreement" to describe these problems.

When faced with a workplace conflict, emotionally intelligent people are effective at understanding others' views, regulating their own emotions, and rarely experience unpleasant emotions at work (Pooya et al., 2013). As a consequence, they will be able to deal with tensions more efficiently and achieve better results (Schlaerth et al., 2013). Employees with strong emotional intelligence understand how to better explain their beliefs, even when they disagree with others, as well as how to make their derogatory opinions more appealing (Zhang et al., 2015). According to Stephens & Carmeli (2016) and Clarke (2010), emotionally intelligent individuals are also more enthusiastic about completing difficult assignments and are more likely to encourage their staff and colleagues, which results in greater adaptability and perception in the management of difficult activities in major projects.

Emotional intelligence improves team coordination, absorbs different viewpoints, and discourages team members to engage in personal debates. According to George (2002), emotional intelligence aids team members in developing new responses from various backgrounds and preventing confrontation from worsening. Emotionally intelligent teams can use collaborative conflict management approaches to alleviate tension, as demonstrated by Jordan & Troth (2004) and Ayoko et al. (2008). Members with strong emotional intelligence are more likely to complete assignments faster, impacting team effectiveness (Ghuman, 2016).

H3: Emotional intelligence has a negative impact on task conflict.

Task conflict and team effectiveness

Researchers' findings on the link between task conflict and team effectiveness have been on the debate. Moderate task conflicts can boost team performance by accelerating information delivery, stimulating creativity, equal competitiveness, and interpersonal critical thinking (Neck et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2013). When it contains intense negative feelings like anger, defense, and the belief that it can't be overcome, it

can become dysfunctional. In meta-analyses, task conflict has been demonstrated to be adversely associated to team performance (De Wit et al., 2012; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). According to Carnevale & Probst (1998), high task conflict diminishes team members' responsibilities, prohibiting them from working successfully or coming up with fresh ideas and alternative solutions. Additionally, when task conflicts escalate, it becomes increasingly difficult for teams to form and sustain cohesiveness. As a result, we propose that task conflict reduces team effectiveness.

H4: Task conflict has a negative impact on team performance.

H5: Task conflict has a negative impact on team innovation.

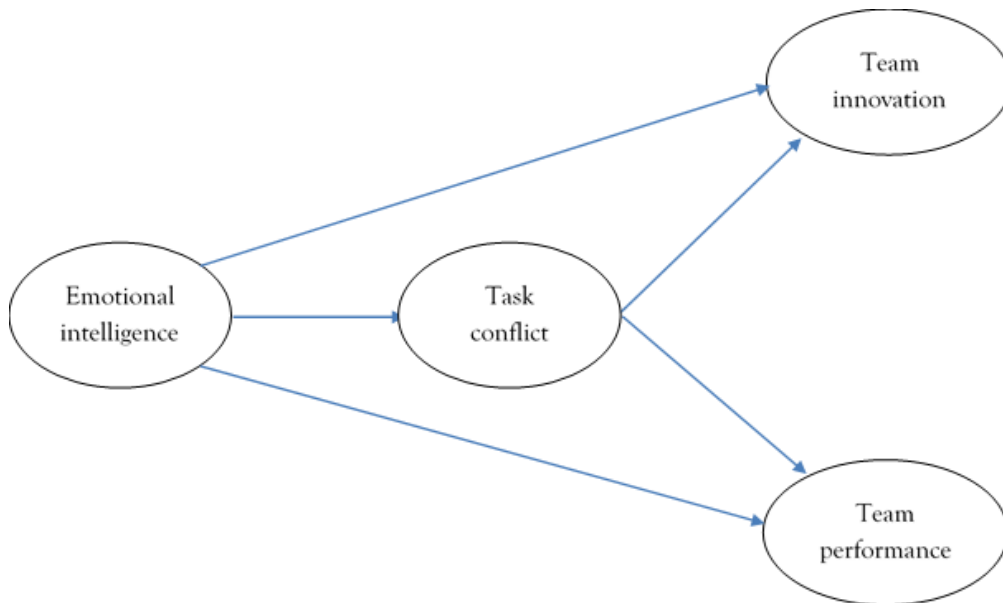


Figure 1. The proposed framework

2. Method

Data collection

The data for analyzing the study model was collected through an online survey. Literature-based scales were used. Five specialists from the University of Finance - Marketing assessed the quality of the preliminary questionnaire. Their suggestions were incorporated into the next iteration of the questionnaire. A convenience sample of 50 employees who graduated from the University of Finance - Marketing within the last five years was chosen as pilot test participants. They were asked for feedback on the questionnaire's clarity and intelligibility. The survey was completed based on the comments.

The official online survey took three weeks to complete. The participants were chosen in a non-probabilistic way. Self-employed people and those who have worked in Ho Chi Minh City for more than a year received an email with a link. As a result, some questions concerning jobs and experience must be included in the questionnaire to filter the candidates. There were about 300 persons that answered. Finally, 283

questionnaires will be used for further testing and interpretation after the replies that had an excess of straight-lined answers or were outliers were removed.

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Males made up 41.7 percent of the total useable sample, while females made up 58.3 percent. The participants were between the ages of 18 and 45. Around 53% of those who responded were under the age of 30; 30% were between the ages of 30 and 40; just 17% were beyond the age of 40. The majority (81.3%) had a bachelor’s degree or above. Furthermore, more than 50% of the respondents had worked for less than three years.

Table 1. The demographics of the respondents

Measure	Value	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	165	58.3%
	Male	118	41.7%
Age	Under 25 years	68	24.0%
	25 to 30 years old	82	29.0%
	30 to 35 years old	50	17.7%
	35 to 40 years old	35	12.4%
	40 to 45 years old	35	12.4%
	45 years old and above	13	4.6%
Education	High school	53	18.7%
	Bachelor	179	63.3%
	Master	48	17.0%
	Doctor	3	1.1%
Occupation	Government	86	30.4%
	Non-government	197	69.6%
Income	Under 10 million VND	120	42.4%
	10 to 20 million VND	108	38.2%
	20 to 30 million VND	23	8.1%
	30 million VND and above	32	11.3%
Experience	Under 3 years	148	52.3%
	3 to 5 years	39	13.8%
	5 to 7 years	18	6.4%
	7 to 10 years	19	6.7%
	10 years and above	59	20.8%

Source: Author’s calculations

Questionnaire development

Our questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first section covered the survey's presentation, research objectives, procedures, and so on. The second section included scale items for measuring the constructs.

Emotional intelligence: As described by Wong & Law (2002), Choi et al. (2019), and Khalid et al. (2018), this study examines EI using the self-reported WLEIS scale, which is constructed as a higher-order construct comprising four variables: self-emotional appraisal (SEA), others' emotional appraisal (OEA), use of emotion (UOE), and regulation of emotion (ROE). "I always know my team members' emotions from their behaviour" and "I am able to control my temper and handle difficulties rationally" were sample items. SEA, OEA, UOE, and ROE have the Alpha 's coefficients of 0.827, 0.882, 0.885, and 0.942, respectively.

Team innovation was adapted from Anderson & West (1998), using a seven-point Likert scale with four items (Anderson & West, 1998). "My team is always moving toward the development of new answers" and "My team is open and responsive to change" are two examples of team creativity. The Alpha 's coefficient of team creativity was 0.95.

Team performance: Hackman's (1987) four elements for measuring team performance are used (1987). "My team performs well in the whole organization" and "My team meets its goals effectively" are two examples. The Alpha 's coefficient of team performance was 0.90.

Task conflict in the team is assessed by using the items from Jehn & Mannix (2001). The questionnaire has three items on a seven-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "not at all" and 7 indicating "a lot". "How much conflict of ideas is there in your team?" and "How frequently do you have disagreements within your team concerning the job of the project you are working on?" are two typical items for task conflict. The Alpha 's coefficient of task conflict was 0.88.

Data analysis

To evaluate the research model, we employed the two-step analytic technique suggested by Andersen & Gerbing (1988) with SmartPLS version 3.0. The validity and reliability of constructs were first tested. Then, we investigate the significance levels of the path coefficients in the structural model using a bootstrapping approach with 1000 resamples.

3. Findings and Discussions

Measurement model assessment

First, the first orders' reliability and validity are evaluated. The outer loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), and composite reliability (CR) for first-order components used to determine convergent validity are shown in Table 2. The outer loadings on all items were greater than 0.7, the CR values were greater than 0.7, and the AVE values were greater than 0.5. As a result, convergent validity was established (Hair et al., 2017).

EI is represented as a higher-order construct made up of four first-order constructs. In measurement analysis, there are two types of measurement models: reflective measurement models and formative measurement models. CR, AVE, and loadings mostly aid in assessing convergence validation for reflective constructs, instead of higher-order formative ones (Diamantopoulos et al., 2008).

Table 2. Loadings, AVE, CR, and Cronbach's Alpha for first-order constructs

First-order constructs	Measurement	Outer loadings	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Self-emotion appraisal (SEA)	SEA 1	0.793	0.660	0.885	0.827
	SEA 2	0.860			
	SEA 3	0.855			
	SEA 4	0.734			
Others' emotion appraisal (OEA)	OEA 1	0.857	0.739	0.919	0.882
	OEA 2	0.908			
	OEA 3	0.804			
	OEA 4	0.866			
Use of emotion (UOE)	UOE 1	0.804	0.697	0.902	0.885
	UOE 2	0.831			
	UOE 3	0.840			
	UOE 4	0.863			
Regulation of emotion (ROE)	ROE 1	0.929	0.851	0.958	0.942
	ROE 2	0.933			
	ROE 3	0.894			
	ROE 4	0.934			
Task conflict (TC)	TC 1	0.835	0.797	0.922	0.876
	TC 2	0.921			
	TC 3	0.920			
Team innovation (TI)	TI 1	0.837	0.769	0.959	0.950
	TI 2	0.876			
	TI 3	0.894			
	TI 4	0.859			
	TI 5	0.888			
	TI 6	0.888			
	TI 7	0.895			
Team performance (TP)	TP 1	0.837	0.718	0.927	0.902
	TP 2	0.878			
	TP 3	0.861			
	TP 4	0.837			
	TP 5	0.824			

Source: Author's calculations

As a result, the analysis incorporates Hair et al. (2017)'s guidelines for assessing collinearity, weights, and significance of higher-order structures, as seen in Table 3. Multicollinearity is absent when the variance inflation factor (VIF) is less than 5. (Hair et al., 2017). By a bootstrapping procedure (1000 samples), t-value appears to be over 1.96 (p-value < 0.05), which suggests that the weights of the constructs are important.

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In Tables 4 and 5, discriminant validity is also investigated. Under the Fornell-Larcker criteria, which examined discriminating validity, the square roots of AVE are bigger than the correlations between the components. Henseler & Fassott (2010) also proposed that Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) be used to measure discriminating validity at a cut-off value of 0.85.

Table 3. VIF and outer weights for second-order constructs

Second-order constructs	First-order constructs	Outer weights	t-value	VIF
Emotional intelligence	SEA - Self-emotion appraisal	0.290	19.983	1.791
	OEA - Others' emotion appraisal	0.279	13.029	1.337
	UOE - Use of emotion	0.327	22.208	2.112
	ROE - Regulation of emotion	0.360	21.466	1.760

Source: Author's calculations

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker criterion

	OEA	ROE	SEA	UOE	TC	TI	TP
OEA	0.860						
ROE	0.347	0.923					
SEA	0.437	0.541	0.812				
UOE	0.462	0.626	0.614	0.835			
TC	-0.093	-0.127	-0.171	-0.143	0.893		
TI	0.420	0.414	0.485	0.524	-0.304	0.877	
TP	0.407	0.409	0.443	0.471	-0.259	0.788	0.848

Source: Author's calculations

Table 5. HTMT ratio analysis

	OEA	ROE	SEA	UOE	TC	TI	TP
OEA							
ROE	0.378						
SEA	0.504	0.610					
UOE	0.532	0.696	0.724				
TC	0.103	0.138	0.195	0.158			
TI	0.457	0.435	0.543	0.579	0.321		
TP	0.453	0.440	0.511	0.532	0.281	0.848	

Source: Author's calculations

Structural model assessment

The path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values were evaluated using a bootstrapping procedure (with 1000 samples) (Hair et al., 2017). Table 6 demonstrates that emotional intelligence improves team performance(β

= 0.514, P-value < 0.01) and team innovation ($\beta = 0.543$, P-value < 0.01). As noted in H1 and H2, the data also shows that emotional intelligence has a strong and favorable relationship with team effectiveness. These findings are consistent with previous studies of Shih & Susanto (2010) and Lee & Wong (2019). Next, emotional intelligence has a negative effect on task conflict ($\beta = -0.168$, P-value < 0.01), confirming H3. Emotionally intelligent people are skilled at regulating their emotions as well as understanding the emotions and feelings of others. It enables them to establish long-term cooperations with their coworkers and to foster a harmonious work environment, which serves as the foundation for new ideas and solutions (Suliman & Al-Shaikh, 2007). Finally, task conflict is detrimental to team performance ($\beta = -0.172$, P-value < 0.01) as well as team innovation ($\beta = -0.212$, P-value < 0.01). It is in line with the arguments of De Wit et al. (2012), Neck et al. (2017), and Jiang et al (2013).

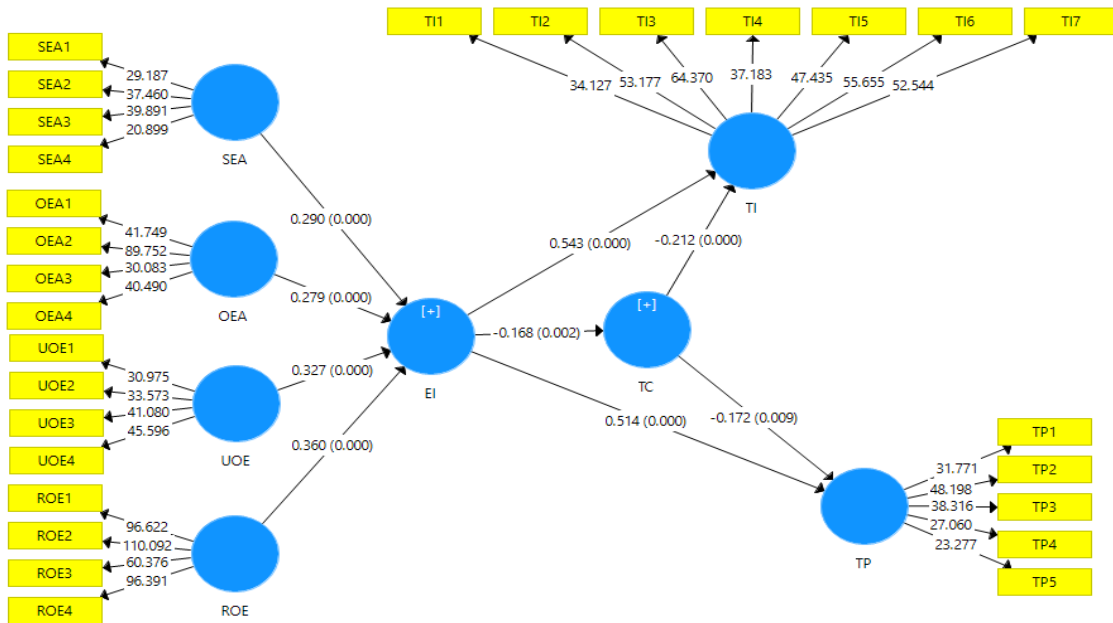


Figure 2. Results of the structural model

Furthermore, the effect size f^2 is utilized to examine if an exogenous construct has a considerable impact on an endogenous construct. The levels of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 were used to characterize small, medium, and large effects, respectively (Chin, 1998). Table 6 shows that the f^2 values for all combinations of endogenous and exogenous constructs are more than 0.02. In addition, we also use the omission distance of 7 to determine the Q^2 predictive relevance for task conflict, team performance, and team innovation. All the Q^2 values are more than zero, showing that the model is predictive (Hair et al., 2017).

Table 6. The outputs of structural equation modeling

Hypotheses	Coefficients (β)	P Values	f^2	Support
H1: Emotional intelligence → Team performance	0.514	0.000	0.381	Accepted
H2: Emotional intelligence → Team innovation	0.543	0.000	0.461	Accepted
H3: Emotional intelligence → Task conflict	-0.168	0.002	0.029	Accepted
H4: Task conflict → Team performance	-0.172	0.009	0.043	Accepted
H5: Task conflict → Team innovation	-0.212	0.000	0.071	Accepted

Source: Author's calculations

4. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the links among emotional intelligence, task conflict, and team effectiveness in the setting of Vietnamese companies. While many prior studies in the West and the United States suggest that task conflict improves team creativity and performance, these correlations are reversed in this study. Furthermore, our research suggests that emotional intelligence aids in the management of task conflicts, hence enhancing team effectiveness.

The findings from this study have managerial implications. Team members and leaders should be aware of how their teammates react to task conflicts. Empathy, emotional control, and conflict management principles should be trained to teams who tend to respond badly to confrontations. These skills will be used in the workplace to aid team leaders and members in resolving disagreements and improving team effectiveness.

Managers should implement programs to develop employees' emotional intelligence. Personal emotional intelligence shows itself in four ways: individuals can examine their own emotional level, appraise the emotional levels of others, understand how to use their emotions, and manage their own emotions. Managing team members' emotional intelligence helps to develop and strengthen strong team connections, create a cooperative working atmosphere, and reduce task disputes in teams. When team members' tensions and disputes are eliminated, they will have a common voice and goals to work together to boost team performance, generate new ideas, or think creatively. Furthermore, managers must encourage team cooperation based on the achievements of each group so that individuals understand their responsibilities in teams and collaborate to obtain better outcomes.

However, more varied teams and organizational situations should be the focus of future research to evaluate if our findings are generalizable, since different types of teams and team context components may change the aforementioned relationships..

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