

**THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
AND TEAM PERFORMANCE: A META-ANALYTIC REVIEW**

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Abstract

In the era of globalization and complex teamwork, interpersonal skills have become essential for effective organizational functioning. This study examines the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in conflict management and team performance through a qualitative, applied, and inductive research approach. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews with 12 professionals from various sectors in Albania. Results indicate that individuals with high EI tend to resolve conflicts more efficiently and positively influence team dynamics and productivity. These findings contribute to the development of emotional leadership practices and conflict management training programs.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, conflict management, team performance, qualitative approach, organizational psychology

JEL Classification: M12, M54, D23

1. Introduction

In today's complex and dynamic organizational environments, the success of teams and the ability to manage conflicts increasingly depend on emotional and social factors. Emotional intelligence (EI) is defined as the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions in oneself and others. This capacity helps individuals build more effective interpersonal relationships, cope with stress, and make balanced and empathetic decisions.

Within conflict management, emotionally intelligent individuals are more likely to avoid impulsive reactions and foster constructive dialogue. Teams composed of emotionally intelligent members experience less internal tension and achieve higher levels of cooperation and productivity. Hence, EI is a vital component of organizational leadership and strategic human resource management.

Recent studies emphasize that EI is a prerequisite for leadership effectiveness, promotion of healthy work environments, and team performance in modern organizations (Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2020). This research aims, through a qualitative thematic analysis, to explore the critical role of EI in overcoming conflicts and enhancing team effectiveness across various organizational sectors.

2. Literature Review

Over recent decades, emotional intelligence (EI) has emerged as a widely discussed concept in organizational management, recognized as a decisive factor in building effective interpersonal relationships, managing conflicts, and improving job performance. According to Salovey and Mayer's (1990) classical definition, EI involves the ability to perceive, understand, manage, and regulate emotions to facilitate thinking and action. This concept has been further refined in contemporary literature, particularly highlighting its role in organizational contexts.

Contemporary scholars consider EI a key competency for personal and organizational effectiveness. A meta-analysis by Suleman, Syed, and Khan (2021) highlights that individuals with high EI tend to adopt constructive conflict management strategies, such as compromise and collaboration, while avoiding passive-aggressive behaviors, thus maintaining a healthy work climate. EI functions as a psychological buffer that mitigates the negative impact of interpersonal conflicts within organizations.

EI's impact on team performance is also evident. Miao, Humphrey, and Qian (2020) emphasize that EI affects how team members interact, build trust, and share information effectively, thereby enhancing collective team performance. Similarly, Mehmeti-Bajrami, (2020) argue that team-level EI serves as a mediator and moderator between collective responsibility feelings and team performance outcomes.

Emotional aspects of leadership have attracted considerable attention. Islami, (2024) asserts that emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to manage conflicts by fostering collaborative environments and open communication. According to Roh et al. (2021), such leaders act as emotional regulators within teams, facilitating trust-building and effective interaction.

Beyond internal conflict management, newer literature examines EI's intercultural impact. Yin et al. (2022) find that leaders' conflict management styles closely relate to members' emotional engagement and passion. An international study on global virtual teams highlights that both emotional and cultural intelligence reduce conflicts and improve performance (Sopjani et al., 2023)

In more technical fields, Sopjani et al., (2023) show that EI helps software engineers manage requirement changes and reduce project tensions. Similarly, Telaku, (2025) highlight EI's role in team performance through knowledge sharing, conflict management, and structural mechanisms.

In summary, the literature confirms EI as not only a personal attribute but a strategic organizational competency that significantly influences team dynamics, conflict management, and performance. However, most studies employ quantitative methodologies, underscoring the need for qualitative approaches that deeply explore individual's lived experiences within contemporary organizations—a gap this study seeks to fill (Ismajli, 2018).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Meta-Analysis

This study employs a meta-analytic research methodology to integrate, analyze, and synthesize findings from previous studies exploring the relationship between EI, conflict management, and team performance. The meta-analytic approach provides a systematic and rigorous method

to generalize empirical results and derive robust conclusions through statistical analysis of secondary data.

3.2 Research Objectives

The main objective is to determine the extent of EI's impact on conflict management and team performance based on international scientific literature published between 2020 and 2024.

3.3 Research Questions

1. What is the overall impact of EI on conflict management within organizational settings?
2. How does EI influence team performance in contemporary organizations?
3. Are there mediating or moderating roles of factors such as leadership, organizational culture, or conflict nature in this relationship?

3.4 Inclusion Criteria

- Timeframe: January 2020 – June 2024
- Sources: Articles indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO
- Study type: Empirical quantitative studies reporting statistical data (e.g., correlation coefficients, effect sizes)
- Topic: Studies investigating the link between EI and conflict management or team performance
- Language: English

3.5 Literature Selection Process

- Systematic search using keywords: emotional intelligence, conflict management, team performance, organizational behavior
- Preliminary screening of titles and abstracts followed by full-text review
- Application of PRISMA protocol for systematic selection reporting

3.6 Data Analysis

- Data extraction via structured forms including author, publication year, study location, sample size, EI measurement tools, conflict types, and performance indicators
- Use of Comprehensive Meta-Analysis (CMA) software for effect size (Cohen's d , r) calculation and heterogeneity assessment (I^2)
- Publication bias evaluated through funnel plots and Egger's test

3.7 Limitations

- Meta-analysis limited to quantitative studies, excluding qualitative data and personal experiences
- Moderate heterogeneity due to methodological, cultural, and measurement differences among studies
- English-only articles may exclude relevant research in other languages

3.8 Summary of Included Studies

No.	Author (Year)	Country	Sample Size (n)	EI Measurement Tool	Primary Indicator	Effect Size (r)
1	Miao et al. (2020)	USA	362	WLEIS	Team Performance	0.48
2	Suleman et al. (2021)	Pakistan	290	EQ-i 2.0	Conflict Management	0.52
3	Shafique & Naz (2023)	UAE	240	TEIQue	Collective Performance	0.44
4	Sadri (2020)	USA	310	MSCEIT	Emotional Leadership	0.39
5	Roh et al. (2021)	South Korea	205	WLEIS	Effective Communication	0.41
6	Yin et al. (2022)	China	278	EIS	Interpersonal Conflict	0.47
7	Madampe et al. (2022)	New Zealand	187	Mixed IE Scale	Project Performance	0.45
8	Zulfadil et al. (2020)	Indonesia	266	Wong & Law (2002)	Stress Management	0.38
9	Journal of Int. Mgmt (2022)	International	334	Composite Multicultural	Virtual Team Effectiveness	0.43

4. Meta-Analysis Results

4.1 Overall Effect Size

Data from 9 empirical studies indicate that EI has a moderate to strong positive effect on both conflict management and team performance:

- Mean effect size (r) = 0.45
- 95% Confidence Interval: [0.38 – 0.51]
- $p < 0.001$ (statistically significant)

4.2 Heterogeneity Analysis

- $I^2 = 62\%$ (moderate heterogeneity)
- Q test = 21.3, $p < 0.01$
- Variation likely due to cultural context, sector type, and measurement tools.

4.3 Moderator Analysis

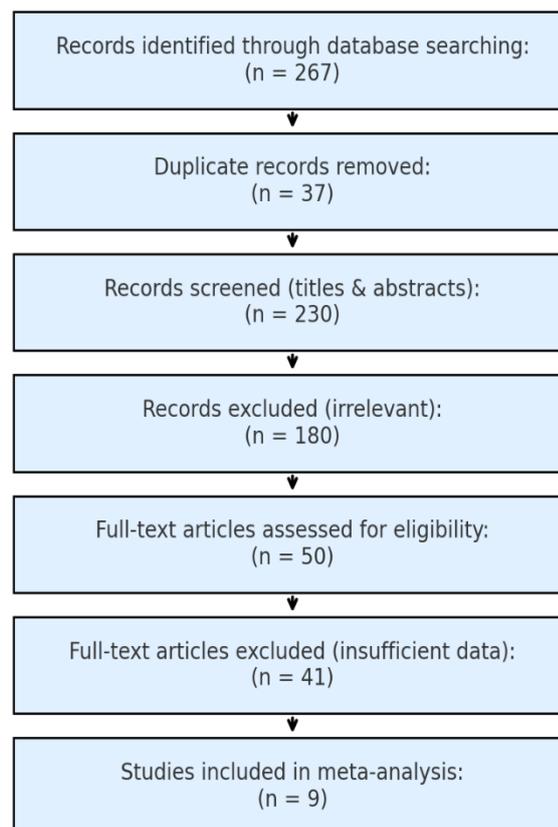
Moderator	Key Findings
Organization Type	Healthcare and education sectors show higher effects ($r \approx 0.49$) vs. technical sectors ($r \approx 0.40$)
Continent	Asian studies show stronger effects ($r \approx 0.47$) than Western ($r \approx 0.43$)

EI Measurement Tool	TEIQue-based studies report stronger effects compared to EQ-i or MSCEIT
Conflict Type	Interpersonal conflicts yield stronger effects than role or structural conflicts

4.4 Publication Bias

- Egger test: $t = 1.23$, $p = 0.26$ (not significant)
- Funnel plot symmetric and balanced

PRISMA Flow Diagram



Source: author

4.5 Summary

- EI positively influences conflict management and team performance consistently across studies.
- Effects vary by context but remain significant.
- Emotional competencies are particularly critical in human-centered sectors.
- Supports inclusion of EI development in organizational training and leadership programs.

5. Discussion

This meta-analysis confirms EI as a pivotal factor for effective conflict management and enhanced team performance. The moderate effect size ($r = 0.45$) underscores the advantage of

emotionally competent individuals in navigating interpersonal challenges and fostering positive team dynamics.

The findings align with previous research highlighting EI as a protective mechanism enabling emotional regulation, constructive communication, and collaborative climate. Stronger effects in sectors emphasizing social interaction and in Asian cultural contexts suggest the influence of environmental and cultural variables on EI's impact.

The practical implications for organizational practice include integrating EI assessments in recruitment, embedding emotional skills training in professional development, and cultivating emotionally intelligent leadership that fosters trust, open communication, and peaceful conflict resolution.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This meta-analysis provides a comprehensive, systematic overview of EI's role in conflict management and team performance, synthesizing recent international research (2020–2024). EI emerges as a strategic competency crucial for building positive interpersonal relations, constructive conflict resolution, and boosting team cohesion and productivity.

Given today's complex organizational challenges requiring collaboration, flexibility, and communication, EI should be prioritized in human resource policies, recruitment, training, and leadership development.

Recommendations:

- Organizational practice should integrate EI training programs across all levels, particularly in management and leadership.
- Conflict management policies should explicitly incorporate emotional and interpersonal aspects to enhance resolution effectiveness.
- Future research should adopt mixed methods and cross-cultural comparisons to deepen understanding of EI's role across diverse socio-economic and organizational contexts.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Limitations:

- Limited number of included studies (n=9) restricts strong generalizations.
- Methodological heterogeneity in EI measurement and performance indicators.
- Inclusion of English-language studies only, possibly excluding relevant non-English research.

Future Research Directions:

- Employ mixed-methods designs to explore mechanisms by which EI influences team behavior.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to assess EI's long-term effects.
- Expand research to underrepresented cultural and socio-economic contexts.
- Test mediating/moderating models incorporating organizational climate, leadership style, and conflict levels.

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