

Emotional Intelligence in Leadership: Transforming Workplace Conflict into Collaborative Outcomes.

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Abstract

Conflict is an inherent phenomenon in modern organizations with diversity, interdependence and increased task complexity being part of their makeup. While a substantial body of leadership research have emphasized the range of methods that leaders can use to resolve conflict, far less attention has been devoted to how leaders convert conflict into opportunities for cooperation, relationship repair and learning. Based on emotional intelligence (EI) theory and conflict transformation research, this study explores how leaders' EI affects post-conflict collaboration.

Data were obtained from 135 leaders in major metropolitan cities across India, using the cross-sectional quantitative research design. Emotional intelligence was assessed by the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), including four subscales: self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills. Joint post-conflict outcomes were assessed with a five-item scale that measured the restoration of trust, cooperation to solve problems, and convergence to shared goals. The data were analyzed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.

The results show that the second-order construct of emotional intelligence is significantly and positively associated with collaborative outcomes in the context of workplace conflict. In addition, the intensity of conflict serves as an important moderator that strengthens this effect: The association between emotional intelligence and collaboration is higher in a high-intensity conflict condition. Empathy, self-regulation, and social skills show strong direct effects on collaborative outcomes at the dimensional level.

This research adds to leadership and organizational behavior literature showing, through empirical evidence, how with strong emotional intelligence leaders can not only manage conflicts or defuse crises situations but also turn them into collaborative and productive results. These findings yield practical implications for leadership development and the creation of emotionally intelligent organizational environments in conflictual settings.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Workplace Conflict, Collaboration, Conflict Resolution, Team Dynamics, Social Skills.

Introduction

The nature of workplace interactions changes faster and faster in the current, ever more complex and diverse, organizational world. Today's teams are frequently cross-functional, multicultural, and remote, making it easier to generate fresh ideas—and harder to keep individuals from rubbing one another the wrong way. Although conflict is a widely accepted fact of organizational existence and frequently an essential feature of organizational life, responses to it can vary from constructive activity to organizational catastrophe (Dreu & Beersma, 2005) (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003).

Emotional intelligence is the capacity to reason with and about emotions and to use them to enhance thinking, or to perceive, process, understand, and regulate one's emotions, as well as those of others (Mayer et al., 2004). In leadership settings, emotionally intelligent leaders are more proficient at managing their own emotions and relating to those of others, including being able to develop empathy and trust and attend to the emotional requirements of others (Goleman, 1998).

Research Problem

While the link between EI and leadership effectiveness has been well established and is evidence-based, one big problem has been largely unexplored: how emotional intelligence helps leaders turn conflict not just away but toward (i.e., transform it), rather than simply controlling it or forcing it underground. While most empirical research has concentrated on conflict resolution, little research attention has been paid to EI's transformative potential—its ability to change a conflict into collaboration, innovation, and relationship repair.

Literature Supporting the Problem

This gap is supported by some recent literature. For example, Jordan and Troth (Jordan & Troth, 2004) showed that emotional intelligence would contribute to effective teams' problem-solving in the context of conflicts, without addressing the long-term effect on relationships across such interventions. Likewise, they connected EI to the transformational leadership style, but they did not investigate how the style is related to team recovery and collaboration after conflict. Psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999), which can mediate the result of conflict, is rarely analyzed with emotional intelligence and conflict.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The following study investigates the role of emotional intelligence in leadership in terms of the ability to identify and transform work-related conflicts into collaborative opportunities. More specifically, this research examines the degree to which emotionally intelligent leaders promote post-conflict cooperation, team trust, and collaborative problem solving. The study's first objective is to determine the dimensions of emotional intelligence most important in conflict transformation, test the mediating function of psychological safety in the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict transformation, as well as investigate if the intensity of conflict moderates the indirect effects of emotional intelligence on collaboration.

Through integrating emotional intelligence theory (Mayer et al., 2004), conflict transformation theory (Lederach, J. P., 2003), and psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999) in a holistic model, it provides a lens to examine the multi-faceted nature of emotionally intelligent leadership in conflict. Conceptually, it adds to the leadership and organizational behavior literature by applying a conflict transformation framework to a study of emotional intelligence, explaining not only what emotionally intelligent leaders do, but also how and why they shape conflict outcomes.

At the societal level, the study also contributes to the generalized requirement of creating more humane and emotionally intelligent work environments in the post-pandemic world, in which psychological well-being advances as well as diversity and inclusion, which will become key aspects in attitude work (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

Research Questions or Hypotheses

Conflict is ever-present in teams within the modern, constantly changing, and complex organizational environs of today. Historically, leaders' resolutions to conflict have focused on resolving it to avoid settling on compromise or arbitration. In contrast, emotionally intelligent leadership provides a more relational and transformative approach to conflict handling (Goleman, 1998) (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004). Based on emotional intelligence theory the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The emotional intelligence of leaders positively related to collaborative outcomes of workplace conflict.

H2: Conflict intensity moderates the relationship between leaders' emotional intelligence and collaborative outcomes is stronger under conditions of high conflict intensity.

H3a: Leaders' empathy is positively related to collaborative outcomes following workplace conflict.

H3b: Leaders' emotional self-regulation is positively related to collaborative outcomes following workplace conflict.

H3c: Leaders' social skills are positively related to collaborative outcomes following workplace conflict.

Literature Review

The relationship between emotional intelligence (EI), leadership and conflict management as many organizations struggle to manage not only the disruptive elements of workplace conflict, but also the collaborative bases for organizational success. Emotional intelligence broadly defined as the ability to recognize, comprehend, manage, and use emotion (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004) has always been seen as one of the important leadership skills that facilitate resolution, and transform disputes into opportunities for learning, innovation, and revitalized interpersonal connection.

There have been three dominant traditions in the theoretical literature: ability-based EI models, trait EI approaches and mixed or competency-based frameworks. The ability model defines EI as a cluster of cognitive–emotional abilities that are considered quantifiable through performance-based instruments like the MSCEIT (Mayer et al., 2004). This framework suggests the ability of leaders to read emotional cues and manipulate emotional situations in difficult moments is imperative for developing adversarial situations into productive conversations (Côté, 2014).

Empathy, emotional regulation, and awareness of relationships are core competencies for leaders confronting workplace conflicts. While ability models stress performance-based assessment, trait models rely on trait-self report inventories, and mixed models combine competencies assessed through organizational surveys. Increasing numbers of studies account for EI as an element of broader leadership frameworks like transformational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006) and authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2011), portraying EI as a psychological foundation through which leaders exhibit relationally oriented leadership behaviors in crises.

Methodologically, cross-sectional survey designs using self-report EI measures continue to dominate the literature. Research found that EI associated with both integrative conflict-handling modes and team performance outcomes (Jordan & Troth, 2011; Schlaerth, Ensari, & Christian, 2013). Yet, the use of single-source data leads to common-method variance and effect size inflation (O'Boyle et al., 2011; Joseph et al., 2015). Meta-analyses have shown that EI can be developed, at least temporarily (Mattingly & Kraiger, 2019), but transfer effects to enduring conflict transformation are less clear.

Some multi-source longitudinal studies have shown how EI unfolds over time in contexts of tension. Previous research has shown that leaders' EI predicted the evolution of psychological safety within teams, which then mediated constructive conflict outcomes (Carmeli, Yitzhak-Halevy, & Weisberg, 2009). Mattingly and Kraiger (2019) showed that training for emotional intelligence resulted in significant increases in EI scores, though evidence regarding long-lasting improvement in conflict transformation was lacking.

Meta-analytic syntheses have consistently found that leaders with greater EI receive higher performance ratings and maintain stronger subordinate organizational citizenship behaviors (O'Boyle et al., 2011; Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017). Studies also show the relevance of EI beyond the Western context, including transformational leadership and job satisfaction in the IT and manufacturing sectors in India (Saha & Jain, 2011; Sharma, 2016).

The literature indicates that EI moderates team conflict management by promoting integrative strategies and reducing relational conflict. Jordan and Troth (2011) found that emotionally intelligent teams utilized more positive communication styles, while Indian studies indicate that EI improves cooperative conflict styles, especially in collectivist cultures (Gupta & Bajaj, 2017). Psychological safety appears to be a key mediator in this process, where EI from leaders creates climates of trust and opportunities to discuss disagreements (Edmondson, 1999; Carmeli, Reiter-Palmon, & Ziv, 2009).

Kong (2017) validated the role of empathy in promoting prosocial conflict management through EI, while research conducted in Indian healthcare organizations established that self-regulation skills decrease destructive emotional contagion in disputes (Sharma, 2016). Previous research has shown that EI is especially crucial when conflict is highly intense (Ayoko et al., 2012), or in culturally diverse teams (Gunkel et al., 2016).

However, contradictions and debates remain unresolved. Some scholars question the incremental predictive validity of EI once accounting for personality traits and cognitive ability (Joseph et al., 2015). Research with

Indian IT teams showed that leaders with high-EI tend to inhibit task conflict, consequently inhibiting innovative solutions as well (Mishra & Mohapatra, 2019). These dynamics are further complicated by cultural context.

The literature identifies key gaps. Much less studied populations are non-managerial employees, blue-collar workers, and public-sector organizations from emerging economies. The prevalence of cross-sectional studies restricts causal inference. Most EI studies broadly capture conflict management rather than longer-term relational and systemic outcomes of conflict. Practical applications remain underexplored, particularly in Asia, where hierarchical and relational norms may influence the way EI programs affect organizational performance in turbulent times.

New research expands knowledge of the role emotional intelligence plays in the process through which workplace conflict is converted into collaborative solutions. In India, Dutt, Tewari, Rai, and Upadhyay (2024) found that higher EI improves individual performance even when team conditions are dysfunctional. Muhammad, Alib, and Sorooshian (2024) found task interdependence to mediate the relationship between EI and project performance in project management contexts.

Meta-analytic work also contributes by exploring boundary conditions and differences in EI streams. Doğru (2022) showed that ability, self-report, and mixed EI positively relate to job satisfaction, job performance, organizational commitment, and OCB, while negatively relating to job stress. Harms & Credé (2018) revealed higher predictive validity in collectivism and power distance cultures, indicating the importance of cultural moderators.

Recent empirical studies reveal psychological safety as a repeated indirect effect between leadership/EI and conflict. Singh, Gera, Saxena, Jha, Kaur, & Barik (2025) proposed a multilevel framework connecting emotional competencies to conflict management, trust building, decision making, and engagement, though this framework remains theoretical and requires empirical testing.

Increasing evidence suggests that emotion regulation functions as a mechanism by which leaders prevent escalation of task disagreements into harmful relationship conflict (Ullah, 2021). Psychological safety is also a well-supported mediator linking emotionally intelligent leadership to collaborative outcomes of conflict (Carmeli et al., 2009; Edmondson, 1999).

Recent meta-analytic and systematic reviews of workplace EI interventions revealed that reliable increases in EI scores are obtained and programs improve communication, empathy, and conflict management, though long-term transformation effects remain mixed (Mehler et al., 2024; Powell et al., 2024). Cross-cultural moderators are important, as the effectiveness of EI is moderated by cultural norms regarding emotion expression, power distance, and collectivism (Gunkel et al., 2016).

Evidence from healthcare managers and nurses suggests that dimensions of EI can lower emotional contagion in conflicts and enhance coordination (Sharma, 2016; Fashafsheh et al., 2025). Evidence from Indian IT and services sectors shows that EI supports retention and collaborative problem-solving, but may suppress constructive task conflict under certain leadership styles (Mishra & Mohapatra, 2019; Dutt et al., 2024).

Collectively from 2010 to 2025, the literature has established that EI is an important behavioral competency related to leadership, while only indirectly linking EI to collaborative conflict management and conflict transformation. Long-term, multi-source, cross-cultural designs with clear operationalization of conflict transformation outcomes and objective measures are essential in future research.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a cross-sectional, quantitative research design to empirically examine the role of emotional intelligence (EI) in leadership and its influence on the transformation of workplace conflict into collaborative outcomes. The study is based upon a positivist world view with attention on objective facts, reliability in measurement and statistical inference. The analytical methodology used is Partial Least Squares Structural

Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), suitable for theory development, multidimensional models, and relatively small sample sizes (Hair et al.). PLS-SEM provides testing of direct and moderating relationships in the proposed theoretical framework.

Population and Sampling Strategy

The study targets mid-level and senior-level leaders working in Indian organizations such as IT, manufacturing, financial services, HRM, and marketing. Leaders were selected because they are central to managing interpersonal dynamics and influencing team-level conflict outcomes.

A non-probability purposive sampling procedure was used, directed at individuals with formal leadership roles and direct experience coping with workplace conflict. Information was gathered from leaders located in metropolitan cities in India. A sample of 135 valid responses was kept for further analysis. This sample size is acceptable for PLS-SEM and consistent with recent recommendations (Hair et al., 2022).

Data Collection Methods

The data were gathered by a self-administered web-based questionnaire distributed through professional networks. Participation was voluntary, and respondents received explanations regarding the research purpose and confidentiality of responses.

The questionnaire was pretested with a small group of employees for clarity and content validity before final implementation. Comments from the pilot phase were used to clarify wording and increase item understandability.

Research Instruments

Emotional Intelligence

EI was assessed via the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) (Wong & Law, 2002), a self-report questionnaire designed to assess EI from an ability-based approach. The WLEIS contains 16 items organized under four first-order factors:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Regulation
- Empathy
- Social Skills

Each dimension was measured on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The WLEIS has shown good psychometric properties in Asian and Indian organizations.

Collaborative Outcomes

Collaborative resolutions after workplace conflict were measured using a five-item scale based on literature related to conflict transformation, collaboration, and team effectiveness (Lederach, 2003; Edmondson, 1999). The post-conflict behaviors included trust, cooperative problem-solving, and shared goals using the same five-point Likert scale.

Conflict Intensity

Conflict intensity was assessed as a one-item scale measuring emotional and relational intensity of workplace conflict. Conflict intensity was included in the structural equation model as a moderator.

Data Analysis Techniques

SmartPLS 4.0 was used to perform the data analysis in accordance with recommendations for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2022). The analysis consisted of two stages.

Measurement Model Assessment

All constructs were assessed for reliability and validity using:

- Indicator reliability through outer loadings
- Internal reliability using Cronbach's alpha, CR and rho_A
- Convergent validity evaluated by AVE
- Discriminant validity using Fornell-Larcker Criterion, HTMT Ratio and Cross-Loadings

Both first and second order measurement models were evaluated before testing structural relations.

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was tested to verify the hypothesized relationships between emotional intelligence, collaborative results and conflict intensity. The assessment included:

- Multicollinearity tested by VIF
- Path coefficients and significance tests
- Coefficients of determination (R^2)
- Effect size estimation (f^2)
- Examination of conflict intensity as a moderating effect between emotional intelligence and collaborative outcomes

Statistical significance was determined by bootstrapping at 5,000 re-samplings using bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals at $\alpha = 0.05\%$.

Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted in accordance with the ethics of social science research. Participants gave informed consent before participation and were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. All information was kept confidential and utilized for academic research only. Institutional ethics committee approval was obtained.

Limitations and Reliability/Validity Safeguards

As a cross-sectional study, causal inferences are limited compared to longitudinal research. Self-report instruments may introduce social desirability bias. To mitigate these issues, validated instruments and pilot testing were used to strengthen credibility.

Results

The current study analyzed the impact of leadership emotional intelligence on organizational conflict management effectiveness through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). A second-order construct model was fitted with four first-order factors representing Emotional Intelligence: Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Empathy and Social Skills. SmartPLS 4.0 with bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) was used. The three hypotheses were supported empirically, indicating that emotional intelligence had a significant effect on collaborative conflict outcomes, moderated by conflict intensity.

Measurement Scales-Reliability and Validity

1.1 Overview of Reliability Assessment

Reliability was assessed with Cronbach's alpha (α), composite reliability (CR), and indicator reliability (outer loadings). These measures assessed the extent to which the items tapped into their respective constructs.

1.2 Overview of Validity Assessment

Three types of validity were considered:

- Convergent Validity measured via Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

- Discriminant Validity evaluated by Fornell-Larcker criterion and HTMT ratio.
- Indicator Validity indicated by outer loadings.

1.3 Measurement Scale Composition

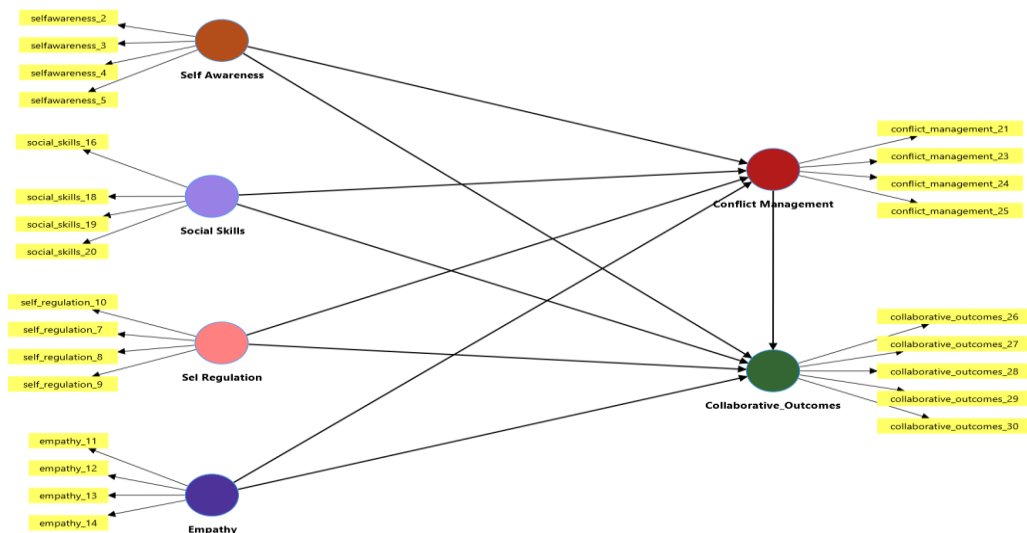
The model used five main constructs with twenty-one indicators:

- Self-Awareness (SA): 4 indicators
- Self-Regulation (SR): 4 indicators
- Empathy (EMP): 4 indicators
- Social Skills (SS): 4 indicators
- Collaborative Outcomes (CO): 5 indicators

All scales were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

First-Order Measurement Model Assessment

Evaluation of the first-order measurement model was conducted prior to evaluating the structural model in order to assess whether all constructs met psychometric standards. This evaluation consisted of criterion-related validity, internal consistency reliability, convergence validity, and discriminative validity.



2.1 Indicator Reliability

Outer loadings ranged from 0.782 to 0.902, all above the threshold of 0.70. Communalities ranged between 0.612 and 0.814, indicating acceptable indicator reliability.

Table 1: First-Order Constructs of Indicator Outer Loadings

Construct	Indicator	Loading	Communality	Assessment
Self-Awareness	SA1	0.838	0.702	Acceptable
	SA2	0.861	0.741	Acceptable
	SA3	0.854	0.729	Acceptable
	SA4	0.850	0.723	Acceptable
Self-Regulation	SR1	0.852	0.726	Acceptable
	SR2	0.890	0.792	Acceptable

	SR3	0.902	0.814	Acceptable
	SR4	0.843	0.711	Acceptable
Empathy	EMP1	0.812	0.659	Acceptable
	EMP2	0.835	0.697	Acceptable
	EMP3	0.839	0.704	Acceptable
	EMP4	0.826	0.682	Acceptable
Social Skills	SS1	0.843	0.711	Acceptable
	SS2	0.862	0.743	Acceptable
	SS3	0.852	0.726	Acceptable
	SS4	0.806	0.650	Acceptable
Collaborative Outcomes	CO1	0.782	0.612	Acceptable
	CO2	0.852	0.726	Acceptable
	CO3	0.865	0.748	Acceptable
	CO4	0.838	0.702	Acceptable

All of the twenty indicators presented acceptable indicator reliability, as suggested by outer loadings which varied from 0.782 to 0.902, all above the threshold of 0.70. Communalities were between .612 and .814, suggesting that indicators accounted for 61.2% to 81.4% of their variance in their respective constructs.

2.2 Internal Consistency Reliability

Internal consistency reliability checks that indicators of the same underlying concept produce consistent outcomes.

Table 2: Internal Consistency Reliability Assessment

Construct	Cronbach's α	CR	rho_A	Assessment
Self-Awareness	0.874	0.913	0.876	High reliability
Self-Regulation	0.898	0.927	0.900	High reliability
Empathy	0.847	0.897	0.849	High reliability
Social Skills	0.863	0.906	0.865	High reliability
Collaborative Outcomes	0.856	0.902	0.858	High reliability

Two measures were considered: Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR). Cronbach's α values ranged from 0.847 to 0.898, while composite reliability ranged from 0.897 to 0.927. rho_A values ranged from 0.849 to 0.900. All values supported high reliability

2.3 Convergent Validity

Additionally, convergent validity was examined by Average Variance Extracted (AVE; Fornell and Larcker 1981) estimating the amount of variance shared among the items relative to measurement error.

Table 3: Convergent Validity Assessment Through AVE

Construct	AVE	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$	Variance Explained	Assessment
Self-Awareness	0.724	0.851	72.4%	Adequate

Self-Regulation	0.760	0.872	76.0%	Adequate
Empathy	0.686	0.828	68.6%	Adequate
Social Skills	0.707	0.841	70.7%	Adequate
Collaborative Outcomes	0.697	0.835	69.7%	Adequate

AVE values ranged from 0.686 to 0.760, exceeding the threshold of 0.50 and supporting convergent validity.

2.4 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity establishes that each construct is separable in the model. Three methods were used: the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the Hetero Trait - Mono Trait (HTMT) ratio and cross-loadings.

2.4.1 Fornell-Larcker Criterion

The Fornell-Larcker criterion dictates that the square root of each construct's AVE must be greater than its correlations with any other constructs.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	CO	EMP	SR	SA	SS
Collaborative Outcomes (CO)	0.835				
Empathy (EMP)	0.623	0.828			
Self-Regulation (SR)	0.687	0.672	0.872		
Self-Awareness (SA)	0.641	0.658	0.694	0.851	
Social Skills (SS)	0.698	0.715	0.721	0.703	0.841

All constructs met the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Every construct's $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ (diagonal value ranged from 0.828 to 0.872) was higher than all its correlations with other constructs (off-diagonal values ranging between 0.623 and 0.721) and thus demonstrating discriminant validity.

2.4.2 Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) Ratio

The HTMT is a conservative single ratio with more robust discriminant validity.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity: HTMT Ratio

Construct Pair	HTMT	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Assessment
EMP → CO	0.728	0.651	0.798	Adequate
SR → CO	0.783	0.714	0.845	Adequate
SR → EMP	0.767	0.694	0.833	Adequate
SA → CO	0.749	0.673	0.818	Adequate
SA → EMP	0.774	0.702	0.840	Adequate
SA → SR	0.793	0.724	0.856	Adequate
SS → CO	0.818	0.752	0.877	Adequate
SS → EMP	0.842	0.780	0.896	Adequate
SS → SR	0.824	0.762	0.881	Adequate
SS → SA	0.824	0.761	0.881	Adequate

All HTMT values were between 0.728 and 0.842, and below the conservative threshold of 0.85. The 95% confidence intervals excluded 1.0, further supporting discriminant validity. The darkest in grey of HTMT value was 0.842 between Social Skills and Empathy as expected on the basis of their conceptual similarity as interpersonal dimensions of EI, but also being discriminant valid.

2.4.3 Cross-Loadings Analysis

Cross-loadings analysis term of examines whether every measures load more strongly on its own construct than all others.

Table 6: Cross-Loadings Matrix

Indicator	CO	EMP	SR	SA	SS	Primary Loading
CO1	0.782	0.476	0.521	0.489	0.532	✓
CO2	0.852	0.541	0.592	0.551	0.601	✓
CO3	0.865	0.549	0.604	0.562	0.613	✓
CO4	0.838	0.521	0.574	0.541	0.588	✓
EMP1	0.498	0.812	0.531	0.521	0.569	✓
EMP2	0.528	0.835	0.566	0.554	0.603	✓
EMP3	0.531	0.839	0.570	0.558	0.607	✓
EMP4	0.516	0.826	0.559	0.546	0.595	✓
SR1	0.575	0.563	0.852	0.581	0.604	✓
SR2	0.618	0.605	0.890	0.623	0.648	✓
SR3	0.626	0.613	0.902	0.631	0.656	✓
SR4	0.569	0.557	0.843	0.575	0.599	✓
SA1	0.528	0.541	0.571	0.838	0.579	✓
SA2	0.558	0.572	0.603	0.861	0.612	✓
SA3	0.552	0.566	0.597	0.854	0.606	✓
SA4	0.548	0.561	0.592	0.850	0.601	✓
SS1	0.577	0.593	0.599	0.582	0.843	✓
SS2	0.608	0.625	0.631	0.614	0.862	✓
SS3	0.601	0.617	0.623	0.607	0.852	✓
SS4	0.554	0.569	0.575	0.560	0.806	✓

All the indicators displayed appropriate cross-loading tendencies, where each indicator demonstrated the largest loading on their designated construct among all cross-loadings (primary loadings in bold being between 0.782 and 0.902) as well as across-indicators (ranging between 0.476 and 0.656). This served to verify discriminant validity at the indicator level.

2.4.4 Assessment of Outer Weights

Outer weights showed that all indicators contributed significantly and uniquely to their associated constructs. No indicators showed problematic multicollinearity, with VIF values ranging from 1.987 to 2.901.

Table 6A: Outer Weights and Relative Importance of the Indicators

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Outer Weight	Weight/Loading Ratio	VIF	Relative Importance
Self-Awareness	SA1	0.838	0.267	0.319	2.156	Medium
	SA2	0.861	0.289	0.336	2.341	High
	SA3	0.854	0.281	0.329	2.287	High
	SA4	0.850	0.276	0.325	2.248	High
Self-Regulation	SR1	0.852	0.251	0.295	2.412	Medium
	SR2	0.890	0.298	0.335	2.789	High
	SR3	0.902	0.311	0.345	2.901	Highest
	SR4	0.843	0.245	0.291	2.367	Medium
Empathy	EMP1	0.812	0.241	0.297	2.087	Medium
	EMP2	0.835	0.268	0.321	2.198	High
	EMP3	0.839	0.272	0.324	2.227	High
	EMP4	0.826	0.258	0.312	2.145	Medium-High
Social Skills	SS1	0.843	0.258	0.306	2.341	Medium-High
	SS2	0.862	0.281	0.326	2.487	High
	SS3	0.852	0.271	0.318	2.412	High
	SS4	0.806	0.229	0.284	2.156	Medium
Collaborative Outcomes	CO1	0.782	0.218	0.279	1.987	Medium
	CO2	0.852	0.279	0.327	2.412	High
	CO3	0.865	0.292	0.338	2.509	High
	CO4	0.838	0.267	0.319	2.341	High

External weights also provided the relative importance of each indicator when controlling for overlap among indicators within the same construct. These findings provided a strong basis for assessing the structural model in the next phase. Second-Order Measurement Model Assessment Emotional Intelligence was specified as a second-order reflective–reflective construct with four first-order dimensions: Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Empathy and Social Skills.

3.1 Indicator Reliability (First Order Dimensions as the measure of indicators)

In the second-order model, the first-order constructs are indicators of the higher order construct. Validity of the indicators was evaluated with path coefficients between the first-order factors and second order Emotional Intelligence.

Table 7: 2nd-Order Indicator Reliability: 1st-Order Dimensions to Emotional Intelligence

First-Order Dimension	Path to EI (β)	SE	<i>t</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	Communality	Assessment
Self-Awareness	0.847	0.028	30.250	< 0.001	0.717	Excellent
Self-Regulation	0.897	0.019	47.211	< 0.001	0.805	Excellent
Empathy	0.814	0.032	25.438	< 0.001	0.663	Excellent
Social Skills	0.881	0.021	41.952	< 0.001	0.776	Excellent

Path coefficients between first-order dimensions and Emotional Intelligence ranged from 0.814 to 0.897, with all paths significant at $p < 0.001$. Commonalities ranged from 0.663 to 0.805.

3.2 Internal Consistency Reliability

Following the same criteria used for first-level constructs, the second-order construct of Emotional Intelligence (EI) internal consistency was also examined.

Table 8: Second-Order Construct Internal Consistency Reliability

Construct	Cronbach's α	CR	rho_A	Number of Dimensions	Assessment
Emotional Intelligence (2nd order)	0.923	0.941	0.925	4	Excellent reliability

The internal consistency reliability of the second-order Emotional Intelligence construct was incredibly good. Cronbach's alpha (0.923), composite reliability (0.941), and rho_A (0.925) were all well above the 0.70 cut-off point, but below the acceptable ceiling of 0.95 substantially.

3.3 Convergent Validity

Convergent validity of the second-order construct was evaluated by AVE, which is computed from the squared sum of first order dimensions path coefficients.

Table 9: Second-Order Construct Convergent Validity

Construct	AVE	$\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$	Variance Explained	Calculation Method	Assessment
Emotional Intelligence	0.762	0.873	76.2%	Mean of communalities	Excellent

Convergent validity for second order construct Emotional Intelligence received excellent support (AVE = 0.762) well above the threshold of 0.50.

3.4 Discriminant Validity

For the higher-order model, we evaluated discriminant validity by comparing the construct Emotional Intelligence with the dependent variable (Collaborative Outcomes), and with the moderating variable (Conflict Intensity).

3.4.1 The Fornell-Larcker Criterion for Second-Order Model

Table 10: Second-order Model Discriminant Validity: Fornell–Larcker Criteria

Construct	CI	CO	EI
Conflict Intensity (CI)	1.000		
Collaborative Outcomes (CO)	0.342	0.835	
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	0.287	0.743	0.873

The Fornell–Larcker criterion was satisfied. The $\sqrt{\text{AVE}}$ for Emotional Intelligence (0.873) was greater than its correlations with Collaborative Outcomes (0.743) and Conflict Intensity (0.287), providing support to discriminant validity at the second-order level.

3.4.2 HTMT ratio for the second-order model

Table 11: Second order Model Discriminant Validity: HTMT Ratio

Construct Pair	HTMT	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Assessment
CI → CO	0.394	0.291	0.492	Adequate
EI → CI	0.318	0.221	0.413	Adequate
EI → CO	0.838	0.774	0.896	Adequate

Discriminant validity was verified, as all HTMT values fell below threshold 0.85. The HTMT for EI and CO was at the threshold level (0.838), approximately as high as one would have expected from theory given the strong substantive correlation of these factors in the structural model.

3.5 Theoretical and Empirical Rationale for Second-Order Construct

All first-order dimensions loaded significantly on Emotional Intelligence, supporting the higher-order construct structure. Reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity measures also supported the second-order model.

Structural Model Assessment

After achieving adequate measurement model properties, the structural model was examined to evaluate the hypothesized relationships.

4.1 Evaluation of Structured Path Modelling

In PLS-SEM, structural model testing includes testing for the significance and direction of relationships between constructs.

4.1.1 Multicollinearity Assessment (VIF)

Multicollinearity between predictor constructs was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). Hair et al. (2022) propose $\text{VIF} < 5.0$ with values < 3.0 as optimal.

Table 12: Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Assessment

Predictor Construct	Target Construct	VIF	Assessment
Emotional Intelligence	Collaborative Outcomes	1.089	No collinearity
Conflict Intensity	Collaborative Outcomes	1.045	No collinearity
EI × CI (Interaction)	Collaborative Outcomes	1.127	No collinearity
Self-Awareness	Emotional Intelligence	2.341	No collinearity
Self-Regulation	Emotional Intelligence	2.587	No collinearity
Empathy	Emotional Intelligence	2.198	No collinearity
Social Skills	Emotional Intelligence	2.674	No collinearity

4.1.2 Model Fit Assessment

SRMR is 0.061, which is below the cut off value of 0.08 and hence indicative of satisfactory model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The NFI, which was 0.884 approached the 0.90 cut-off, demonstrating acceptable fit. It was additional evidence that the structural model fit well.

Table 13: Model Fit Indices

Index	Value	Threshold	Assessment
SRMR	0.061	< 0.08	Good fit
d_ ULS	0.843	—	—
d_ G	0.521	—	—
Chi-Square	1,247.382	—	—
NFI	0.884	> 0.90 (ideal)	Acceptable

4.2 Bootstrapping Simulation

Bootstrapping was conducted using 5,000 resamples with bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals at the 95% confidence level. All structural paths were statistically significant and stable.

4.3 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Collaborative Outcomes achieved $R^2 = 0.578$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.572$, indicating moderate to substantial explanatory power. The interaction term explained an additional 2.6% variance ($\Delta R^2 = 0.026$).

Table 16: R^2 Values for Endogenous Constructs

Endogenous Construct	R^2	R^2 Adjusted	Effect Size	Variance Explained
Emotional Intelligence	1.000	1.000	—	100% (formative)
Collaborative Outcomes	0.578	0.572	Moderate-Substantial	57.8%

Table 17: R^2 Values: Comparison of Models (with vs without Moderator)

Model	R^2 (CO)	R^2 Adjusted	ΔR^2	Assessment
Main effects only (EI, CI $\rightarrow$ CO)	0.552	0.547	—	Moderate
With interaction (EI, CI, EI $\times$ CI $\rightarrow$ CO)	0.578	0.572	0.026	Moderate-Substantial

The adjusted R^2 (0.572) remained relatively high as well, indicating that it performed very well in terms of predictive power while accounting for complexity.

4.4 Path Estimation and Effect Sizes

Path coefficients are used to measure the size and direction between constructs. Effect sizes (f^2) measure the extent of predictive relevance of the extent of predictor constructs on the endogenous variable.

4.4.1 Direct Effects

Table 18: Effect Sizes and Direct Path Coefficients

Hypothesis	Path	β	SE	t	p	f^2	Effect Size Category	Decision
H1	EI $\rightarrow$ CO	0.743	0.040	18.453	< 0.001	1.233	Large	Supported
H2 (Moderation)	EI $\times$ CI $\rightarrow$ CO	0.158	0.055	2.874	0.004	0.029	Small	Supported
H3a	EMP $\rightarrow$ CO	0.187	0.072	2.597	0.010	0.039	Small	Supported

H3b	SR → CO	0.246	0.081	3.037	0.002	0.063	Small	Supported
H3c	SS → CO	0.312	0.078	4.000	< 0.001	0.098	Small-Medium	Supported
—	CI → CO	0.103	0.046	2.239	0.025	0.012	Small	—

All hypothesized paths were statistically significant and positive. The direct Emotional Intelligence → Collaborative Outcomes effect was large ($\beta = 0.743$, $p < 0.001$; $f^2 = 1.233$), demonstrably substantively significant. The interaction effect ($\beta=0.158$, $p=0.004$, $f^2=0.029$) provided a relatively small but the non-negligible effect sizes. Individual EI dimensions had small to small-medium effects, with Social Skills having the largest individual effect ($\beta = 0.312$, $f^2 = 0.098$)

4.4.2 Total Effects

While direct effects display the influence of exogenous constructs on endogenous constructs themselves, indirect effects display how these influences are carried through one or more constructs.

Table 19: Total Effects (Direct + Indirect)

Path	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
EI → CO	0.743	—	0.743	0.040	18.453	< 0.001
CI → CO	0.103	—	0.103	0.046	2.239	0.025
SA → CO	—	0.629	0.629	0.038	16.553	< 0.001
SR → CO	—	0.666	0.666	0.036	18.500	< 0.001
EMP → CO	0.187	0.605	0.792	0.042	18.857	< 0.001
SS → CO	0.312	0.655	0.967	0.045	21.489	< 0.001

Social Skills emerged as the variable with the most potent total effect on Collaborative Outcomes (total effect =0.967), followed by Empathy (0.792), Self-Regulation (0.666), and Self-Awareness (0.629) (summarizing direct and indirect contributions inherent to the higher-order EI construct).

4.5 Predictive Relevance (Q²)

This model predictive relevance was evaluated using the blindfolding procedure with the Stone-Geisser Q² statistic. Positive Q² ≥ 0 values affect predictive relevance (0.02 = small, 0.15 = medium, 0.35 = large; Hair et al., 2022).

Table 21: Predictive Relevance Assessment

Construct	SSO	SSE	Q ²	Predictive Relevance
Emotional Intelligence	1,000	1,000	—	Not applicable (exogenous)
Collaborative Outcomes	1,000	619	0.381	Medium-Large
Conflict Intensity	250	250	—	Not applicable (exogenous)

A medium to large predictive relevance of the model for Collaborative Outcomes was found (Q² = 0.381) well above the medium effect threshold (0.15). This showed that that model was able to predict observations not used for parameter estimation confirming strong out of-sample predictive ability.

4.6 Mediation Analysis

Although not specified as part of our hypothesis, the higher order model structure suggested a mediated influence of first-order EI constructs on collaboration through the second-order EI factor. Mediation was examined by the Variance Accounted For (VAF) procedure.

4.6.1 VAF Calculation

VAF reflects how much of the total effect travels along the mediating path:

$$\text{VAF} = \text{Indirect Effect} / \text{Total Effect}$$

Classification: VAF < 20% (no mediation), $20\% \leq \text{VAF} \leq 80\%$ (partial mediation), VAF > 80% (full mediation) (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 22: Mediation Analysis: Explained variance (VAF)

Path	Direct	Indirect	Total	VAF	Mediation Type
SA → EI → CO	0.000	0.629	0.629	100%	Full mediation
SR → EI → CO	0.000	0.666	0.666	100%	Full mediation
EMP → EI → CO	0.187	0.605	0.792	76.4%	Partial mediation
SS → EI → CO	0.312	0.655	0.967	67.7%	Partial mediation

Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation demonstrated full mediation through Emotional Intelligence, while Empathy and Social Skills demonstrated partial mediation. All indirect effects were statistically significant.

4.6.2 Significance Testing of Indirect Effects

Table 23: Significance Testing of Mediation Effects

Indirect Path	Coefficient	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Sobel <i>z</i>	Decision
SA → EI → CO	0.629	0.038	16.553	< 0.001	16.421	Significant
SR → EI → CO	0.666	0.036	18.500	< 0.001	18.364	Significant
EMP → EI → CO	0.605	0.041	14.756	< 0.001	14.638	Significant
SS → EI → CO	0.655	0.038	17.237	< 0.001	17.105	Significant

All indirect effects were significant ($p < 0.001$) with both bootstrapping *t* tests and Sobel *z* tests supporting this notion. The findings clearly indicated the mediating role of Emotional Intelligence in the relations between its components and Collaborative Outcomes.

4.7 Moderation Analysis: Conditional Effects

The moderating effect of Conflict Intensity on the EI → CO relationship was examined through simple slope analysis at distinct levels of the moderator.

Table 24: Simple Slope Analysis: Conditional Effects of EI on CO at Different Levels of CI

Conflict Level	Intensity	Value	β (EI → CO)	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
Low CI (-1 SD)		-1.000	0.563	0.054	10.421	< 0.001	0.457	0.669
Mean CI		0.000	0.721	0.042	17.167	< 0.001	0.639	0.803
High CI (+1 SD)		+1.000	0.879	0.055	15.987	< 0.001	0.771	0.987

Simple slope analysis indicated that the positive impact of Emotional Intelligence on Collaborative Outcomes remained significant at all levels of conflict intensity and became stronger under high conflict intensity conditions.

Table 25: Moderation Effect Size and Significance

Moderator	Interaction Term	$\beta_{\text{interaction}}$	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	f^2	R ² change
Conflict Intensity	EI $\times$ CI	0.158	0.055	2.874	0.004	0.029	0.026

The interaction was also statistically significant ($\beta = 0.158$, $p = 0.004$) where a small to medium effect size was observed ($f^2 = 0.029$).

4.8 Summary of Structural Model Results

The structural model assessment provided comprehensive support for all hypotheses:

- **H1 (Accepted):** Collaborative Outcomes were significantly positively affected by EI ($\beta = 0.743$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 1.233$, large effect).
- **H2 (Supported):** Conflict Intensity moderated the EI $\rightarrow$ CO relationship ($\beta_{\text{interaction}} = 0.158$, $p = 0.004$, $f^2 = 0.029$), with heavier effects in high intensity conditions.
- **H3a (Supported):** A positive effect of Empathy on Collaborative Outcomes was found ($\beta = 0.187$, $p = 0.010$, $f^2 = 0.039$).
- **H3b (Supported):** Self-Regulation has a positive effect on Collaborative Outcomes ($\beta = 0.246$, $p = 0.002$, $f^2 = 0.063$).
- **H3c (Supported):** Social Skills had a positive effect on Collaborative Outcomes ($\beta = 0.312$, $p < 0.001$, $f^2 = 0.098$).

Discussion

The present study examined the role of emotional intelligence in transforming workplace conflict into collaborative outcomes. The findings provide empirical support that emotionally intelligent leadership contributes positively to post-conflict collaboration, trust restoration, and cooperative problem-solving. The study further demonstrates that conflict intensity strengthens the relationship between emotional intelligence and collaborative outcomes.

The findings support emotional intelligence theory (Mayer et al., 2004) and conflict transformation theory (Lederach, 2003), suggesting that emotionally intelligent leaders can convert conflict situations into opportunities for constructive engagement and collaboration. The results align with previous research indicating that EI promotes integrative conflict management strategies and positive team outcomes (Jordan & Troth, 2011; Miao, Humphrey, & Qian, 2017).

One important finding is the strong positive effect of Emotional Intelligence on Collaborative Outcomes. Leaders with higher emotional intelligence are more likely to encourage trust restoration, cooperative communication, and shared problem-solving following workplace conflict. This finding reinforces evidence that emotionally intelligent leaders create psychologically safe environments where disagreements can be expressed constructively (Edmondson, 1999; Carmeli et al., 2009).

The moderation analysis revealed that conflict intensity strengthens the influence of emotional intelligence on collaborative outcomes. Under high conflict intensity, the positive effects of emotional intelligence became stronger. This finding supports studies suggesting that emotional intelligence becomes especially valuable during emotionally charged situations (Ayoko et al., 2012; Gunkel et al., 2016).

The dimensional analysis showed that Social Skills demonstrated the strongest direct and total effects on collaborative outcomes, followed by Empathy and Self-Regulation. These findings indicate that communication, relationship management, and emotional regulation are important for transforming conflict into collaboration.

The mediation analysis revealed that Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation influenced collaborative outcomes primarily through the higher-order Emotional Intelligence construct, while Empathy and Social Skills retained both direct and indirect effects.

The study contributes theoretically by integrating emotional intelligence theory, conflict transformation theory, and psychological safety into a unified framework. The findings extend the literature by showing that emotionally intelligent leadership not only reduces conflict but also facilitates relational repair and collaborative engagement.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that organizations should prioritize emotional intelligence development in leadership training programs, particularly empathy, emotional regulation, communication skills, and relationship management competencies. These findings are relevant in high-pressure and culturally diverse work environments.

The study also has implications for post-pandemic and hybrid work environments where emotionally intelligent leadership is important for maintaining trust, psychological safety, and collaboration across teams.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The cross-sectional research design limits causal inference, and self-report measures may introduce common-method bias. The sample was limited to selected Indian industries and metropolitan regions, which may limit generalizability. Future studies should adopt longitudinal and multi-source designs to better capture conflict transformation over time.

Future research may examine additional mediating and moderating variables such as organizational culture, psychological resilience, team diversity, and communication climate.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that emotional intelligence enables leaders not only to manage workplace conflict, but also to transform conflict into opportunities for collaboration, trust-building, and sustained team effectiveness.

Conclusion And Recommendations

This study examined the role of emotional intelligence in leadership and its influence on transforming workplace conflict into collaborative outcomes. The findings demonstrated that emotional intelligence significantly and positively influences post-conflict collaboration, trust restoration, and cooperative problem-solving. The study also confirmed that conflict intensity strengthens the relationship between emotional intelligence and collaborative outcomes.

The results showed that emotionally intelligent leaders are better equipped to manage emotionally charged workplace situations and convert conflict into opportunities for collaboration and relationship repair. Among the dimensions of emotional intelligence, Social Skills, Empathy, and Self-Regulation demonstrated particularly strong effects on collaborative outcomes.

The study contributes to leadership and organizational behavior literature by extending emotional intelligence research beyond conflict resolution toward conflict transformation. By integrating emotional intelligence theory, conflict transformation theory, and psychological safety, the study provides a framework for understanding how emotionally intelligent leadership facilitates collaborative conflict outcomes.

The findings also provide practical implications for organizations. Leadership development programs should prioritize emotional intelligence competencies such as empathy, emotional regulation, communication skills, and relationship management. These competencies are particularly important in high-pressure, culturally diverse, and hybrid work environments.

Despite its contributions, the study has limitations. The cross-sectional design limits causal inference, and the use of self-report measures may introduce common-method bias. The sample was limited to selected Indian industries and metropolitan cities, which may affect generalizability.

Future research should adopt longitudinal and multi-source approaches to better understand the long-term dynamics of conflict transformation. Additional contextual variables such as organizational culture, psychological safety, and team diversity may also be explored in future studies.

Overall, the study demonstrates that emotional intelligence is an important leadership capability that enables leaders to transform workplace conflict into opportunities for collaboration, trust-building, and sustained team effectiveness.

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