

Collaborating Conflict Management Style and Work Overload Among Nurses: Moderating Role of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

The present study aimed to examine the relationships between collaborating conflict management style, Work Overload, and emotional intelligence of healthcare professionals working in hospital settings. The sample comprised of 300 nurses with the age ranged from 25-60 years working in Hail Region. The cross-sectional survey approach with a convenient sampling technique was used to collect data from the participants. The conflict management styles were measured with Rahim's Organizational Conflict Inventory, Work Overload was measured using Reilly's Role Overload Scale, and emotional intelligence was measured using Wong and Law's Emotional Intelligence Scale. The data were analyzed using SPSS and Hayes process Macro for moderation analysis. The findings depict an association among study variables with the moderating role of emotional intelligence among conflict management style and work overload in nurses working in hospital settings. The research's implications and suggestions were also discussed to provide insight for implementation purposes.

Keywords: Conflict Management, Healthcare, Work Overload, Emotional Intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Today's competition in the work environment and individual differences steadily increase conflict among employees. Conflict is defined as an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within a group of individuals (Rahim, 1983). Conflict between nurses is considered a very important issue in the healthcare environment all over the world. The most important causes of conflict among nurses are differences in management strategies, the perceptions of employees, staff shortages, differences in objectives, and competition between working groups. Some of the most important sources of conflict in nursing settings are limited staff resources in the unit, resulting in work overload, differences in goals among work groups, and disagreement between the leaders' or head nurses' demands and the subordinates' or staff nurses' own orientation and staff perspectives (Kantek & Kavla, 2007). In addition, antecedents of conflict in nursing work environments are individual characteristics (differences in values, demographic dissimilarity), interpersonal factors (lack of trust, injustice or disrespect, inadequate or poor communication), and organizational factors (interdependence, changes due to restructuring) (Almost, 2006)

In healthcare organizations, ineffective conflict management causes unhealthy working conditions, power games, patient dissatisfaction, a reduction in the quality of care, and an increase in healthcare costs (Kantek &

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Kavla, 2007). All conflicts, whether they are functional or not, are essentially emotional because conflicts arise from individuals' or groups' perception of threats to their agendas (Jordan & Troth, 2021).

Emotional intelligence is an important concept for nurses in healthcare to understand the views and demands of patients and for manager nurses to develop relations that promote successful management (McQueen, 2004). Bar-On(Bar-On, 1997) defined emotional intelligence as a multifactorial array of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills, and facilitators that influence one's ability to recognize, understand, and manage emotions; to relate with others; to adapt to change and solve problems of a personal and interpersonal nature; and to efficiently cope with daily demands, challenges, and pressures. Emotional intelligence is an important factor that can measure individuals' performance in their professional lives beyond their daily lives, increase or decrease their success, contribute to the measurement of managerial qualities, and improve organizational communication and interaction. In addition, emotional intelligence plays a key role in the effective management of conflicts and the selection of strategies used to deal with conflicts in professional life .

Emotional intelligence should be viewed in two dimensions: first, the nurse's perception and understanding of the patient's emotions; second, the nurse's utilization of these perceptions to achieve the goal of managing complex situations regarding quality patient care(Freshwater & Stickley, 2004). Enhancing emotional intelligence skills helps nurses to cope with the emotional demands of the healthcare environment, which can be stressful and exhausting, and lead to burnout. Emotional intelligence offers a framework to enhance collaboration, positive behaviors during conflict, and healthy relationships in the clinical care environment(Codier et al., 2008). Deshpande and Joseph (Deshpande & Joseph, 2009) found that the level of emotional intelligence of nurses is medium.

There are primarily five strategies (integrating, dominating, avoiding, obliging, and compromising) that individuals use in conflict management. Studies show that nurses use different strategies. Nevertheless, nurses around the world were reported to use the avoiding, compromising, and obliging strategies more often (Hendel et al., 2005; Valentine, 2001; Vivar, 2006). Studies conducted in Turkey showed that nurses tend to use the integrating, dominating, and obliging strategies more often (Şahin, 2005). In particular, there was a positive relationship between a high level of emotional intelligence and the integrating strategy, the latter of which is considered the most effective for the parties involved, and for minimizing the consequences of the conflict (Jordan & Troth, 2002; Morrison, 2008). In light of this, the relationship between conflict management strategies and emotional intelligence needs to be investigated within the nursing context.

The aim of this study is to investigate the moderating role of emotional intelligence in the conflict management and work overload of nurses.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

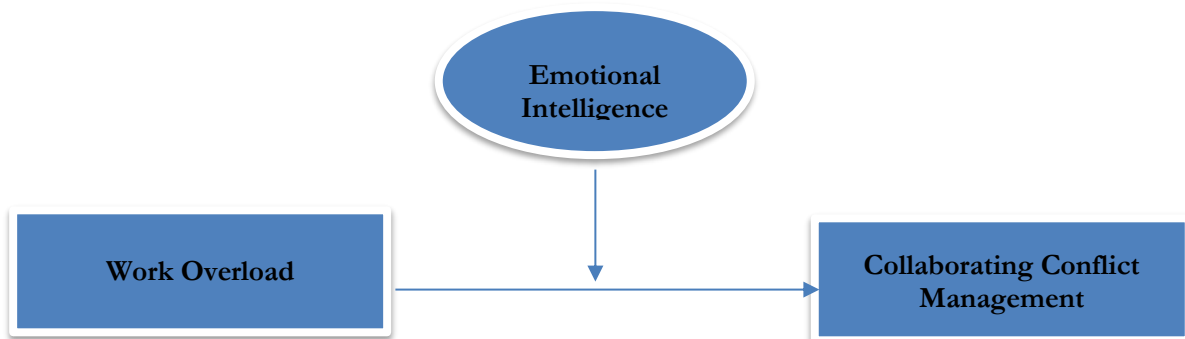


Figure 1: *Conceptual diagram of Study Variables*

METHOD

Objective

The research was aim to investigate the association between conflict management, work overload and emotional intelligence

Hypothesis

Collaborating conflict management and work overload are positively correlated among nurses

Emotional intelligence is a moderator among conflict management and work overload among nurses.

Instruments

Reilly’s Role Overload Scale

To assess role overload, Reilly Role overload scale was used which consisted of 13-items with an alpha reliability of .88. Although most studies did not evaluate the scale's uni-dimensionality, it has been widely used.

Collaborating Scale (ROCI-II)

For measurement of collaborating conflict management style Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) was used. ROCI-II used to measure collaborating, avoiding, competing, accommodating, and compromising. It has an alpha reliability of .81. Seven item subscale of ROCI-II was used to measure collaborating conflict management style.

Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale

To provide a concise assessment of emotional intelligence (EI) appropriate for workplace research, the Wong, and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLIES; Wong & Law, 2002) was used which consist of 16 item scale with alpha reliability of .83.

Procedure

The research focuses on health care professional specially nurses, the sample included only currently employed nurses in the Hail Region. The age range varied from 20 years to 60 years. The questionnaire was self-administered, and a cover letter was included to encourage respondents to express their opinions concerning the factors being examined thoughtfully. Through the convenient sampling method, the research's target population primarily consisted of nurses working in different healthcare organizations. The study excluded the questionnaires incomplete and biased responses.

RESULTS

Table 01 Moderating Effect of Emotional Intelligence for Work Overload in Predicting Collaborating Style (N = 300)

Predictors	Collaborating Style			
	B	95% CI		
		T	LL	UL
Constant	28.86***	104.60	26.23	27.28
Work Overload	-.25***	-9.42	-.31	-.18
EI	.10***	6.98	.07	.12
Work overload × EI	.008***	4.69	.00	.02
R ²	.36			
F	51.84***			

Note. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit; EI = Emotional Intelligence. ****p*<.001

Table 01 presents the moderating impact of emotional intelligence on the preference for work overload in predicting collaborative style. The table reveals a statistically significant interaction ($\beta = .007$; $p < .001$) between work overload and emotional intelligence. This indicates that emotional intelligence significantly moderates the relationship between work overload and collaborating style. The moderator accounts for 37% of the variance in the outcome through the interaction term.

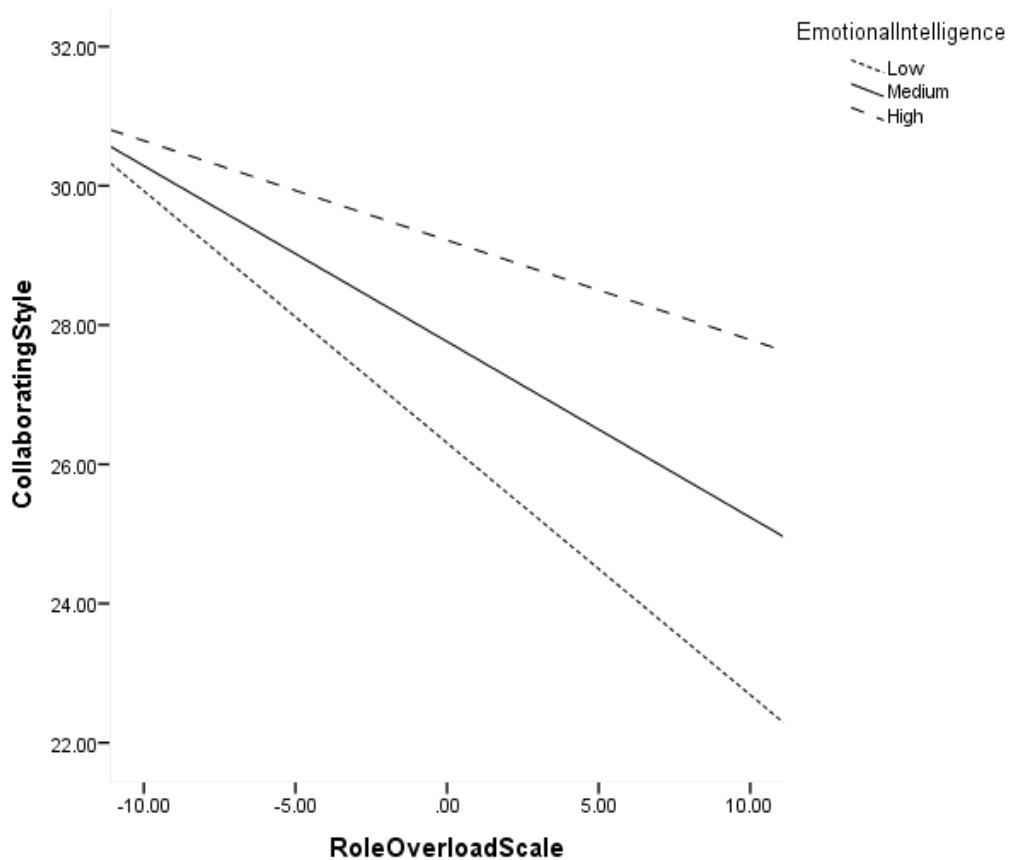


Figure 1. Graph showing the moderating effect of emotional intelligence for work overload in predicting collaborating style.

The graph depicts a noteworthy interaction between work overload and emotional intelligence, featuring three lines corresponding to low, medium, and high levels of emotional intelligence. Across all three levels, the lines display a negative slope, indicating that individuals with higher emotional intelligence exhibit collaborating styles. However, the negative association is less prominent among individuals with low emotional intelligence compared to those with medium and high emotional intelligence. Consequently, the interaction term implies that individuals with low emotional intelligence tend to exhibit fewer collaborating styles for the same values of low emotional intelligence.

DISCUSSION

The study investigates the relationship between work overload, emotional intelligence, and conflict management styles. It focuses was to measure the relationship of work overload and conflict management with moderating role of emotional intelligence.

For measurement purposes the Reilly's Role Overload Scale, Wong and Law's Emotional Intelligence Scale and Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory–II was used to measure collaborating conflict management style. The research comprised a sample of (N = 300) healthcare professionals especially nurses in healthcare organizations.

These results align with the existing literature by Johansen and Cadmus (2015) and Salvucci & Bogunovich (2010). Apart from that, according to Friedman et al. (2000), our results also show that people with higher emotional intelligence tend to use more of the collaborating Style to manage conflict with less work stress. Emotional Intelligence plays an essential role in how working women manage conflicts in the workplace. The results show that work overload is significantly related to all conflict management styles but in varying degrees.

The Collaborating conflict management styles were negatively related to work overload, suggesting that nurses who can manage their workload effectively are more likely to engage in productive conflict resolution strategies.

These findings can be linked to previous research investigating the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management. For instance, earlier research has demonstrated that people with high emotional IQ are better able to handle and resolve conflicts in the workplace. This is because they are better equipped to understand their emotions and those of others and can communicate effectively to reach mutually beneficial solutions.

These findings align with the existing literature by Johansen and Cadmus (2015) and Salvucci & Bogunovich (2010). They can be linked to previous research investigating the relationship between work overload, Emotional Intelligence, and conflict management.

The Collaborating and Compromising styles of conflict management are considered more productive and effective in resolving conflicts, as they are based on open communication and understanding of different perspectives.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research by Johansen and Cadmus (2015) and Salvucci and Bogunovich (2010), who have also discovered an association between emotional intelligence and the conflict resolution styles of collaboration and a positive relationship between emotional Intelligence and Collaborating and Compromising styles of conflict management. These findings offer additional confirmation for Friedman et al.'s (2000) findings, which have shown that individuals with higher emotional Intelligence tend to use more of the Collaborating Style in managing conflicts.

Additionally, research has suggested that improving emotional Intelligence can reduce occupational stress and improve employee performance (Darvish & Nasrollahi, 2011). This implies that interventions to enhance emotional intelligence skills among working women can improve their conflict management styles and overall job performance.

Possessing emotional Intelligence can lead to a reduction in task conflict. This suggests that interventions aimed at developing emotional intelligence skills among working women can improve their ability to manage conflicts in the workplace. Additionally, previous research has found a positive relationship between management experience and emotional Intelligence (Freudenthaler & Neubauer, 2005), which may have implications for how emotional Intelligence is developed and applied in the workplace. These results suggest that participants tend to use a collaborating style when confronted with conflict with their boss, as opposed to a compromising style (Pooya et al., 2013). This highlights the importance of considering individual and contextual factors when examining conflict management styles.

The results suggest that emotional intelligence is essential in predicting the use of collaborating Style in conflict management. Additionally, there appears to be a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and compromising and collaborating styles of conflict management. This implies that developing emotional intelligence skills among working women can improve their ability to use these conflict management styles effectively. Furthermore, these results are consistent with previous research by (Zhang et al., 2015), which found a positive relationship between managers' emotional Intelligence and compromising and integrating conflict management styles. This highlights the broader applicability of emotional intelligence skills in managing conflicts within and outside the workplace.

CONCLUSIONS

This study showed that nurses had conflicts mostly with their colleagues in the same unit, and they had conflicts which are related to work overload. In addition, the nurses with emotional intelligence are capable enough to overcome conflict with their colleagues at workplace. This study also determined that the conflict management strategies were affected by the nurses' level of emotional intelligence. This study identified a significant collaborating conflict management strategies and emotional intelligence scores. Because emotional intelligence affects conflict management strategies, it is essential that nurses' emotional intelligence levels should be improved.

Limitations

The study mainly focuses on the collaborating style of conflict management used by the nurses at workplace. Other conflict management strategies should also be explored with close association with work overload and emotional intelligence.

There is need to investigate differences related to the work environment by including other institutions where nursing services like primary healthcare facilities, secondary healthcare facilities, tertiary healthcare facilities, schools, nursing homes and workplaces.

Recommendations

Skills requiring a high level of emotional intelligence, such as problem solving, interpersonal relations, and stress management, play a key role in effective conflict management. There is a need for training programs designed to improve conflict management and emotional intelligence for nurses to effectively manage conflicts among them, which is inevitable in healthcare institutions.

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