



Examining the Impact of Emotional Intelligence on Project Success in Small-Scale Aviation Projects

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study aims to investigate the role of soft skills, particularly emotional intelligence, in resolving conflicts and addressing task interdependency within multidisciplinary teams in the aviation sector. While project management has traditionally emphasized hard skills like technical expertise, the significance of soft skills has often been overlooked. This research focuses not only on defining small-scale projects and their characteristics, but also on understanding the contribution of soft skills to project success. Additionally, we introduce the variable of task interdependence into our model, recognizing its heightened relevance in time-constrained small-scale projects compared to larger infrastructure projects.

Design/Methodology: Quantitative research technique with cross sectional survey design was used in the study. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to collect the responses. Survey questionnaires were distributed to suitably qualified project employees working in selected airports of Pakistan. Multiple regression analysis was done to test the hypotheses based on data collected from 275 participants involved in small-scale aviation projects.

Findings: The results depicted the relationship between emotional intelligence and project success, mediated by the task interdependency; however, contrary to the claims made in past researches, conflict modes did not mediate the relationship between EI and PS, hence paving way for novel insights into the project management field with specific application in the small-scale projects where this was not explored earlier. The positive relationship between emotional intelligence and project success did not allow conflict modes to affect project outcome.

Originality/Value: This study is the first of its kind to be conducted in the aviation industry of Pakistan. The study adds value by reiterating the role of emotional intelligence on influencing project success and not enabling conflict modes to negatively affect the project outcome in projects conducted by small teams in the aviation sector.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Conflicts Management, Task Interdependency, Small-Scale Projects, Aviation Management.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Aviation industry has traditionally been a volatile discipline in Pakistan and hence exposed to several external factors including political environment, economic growth, fuel and labor cost. Besides the acquisition of aircrafts in airline sector and construction of premises in airport sector, aviation industry is continuously evolving itself by designing projects in order to keep abreast with the global aviation industry (Addepalli *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, there are several small-scale aviation projects, which are characterized by such factors as short duration, low budget, quantifiable resources, tools & techniques, which play an important role in the development of the existing infrastructure of airlines and airports.

Though tasks and processes are easily measurable in small-scale projects, the issues underlying the small-scale aviation projects are inherently complex due to the teams that carry out these projects in aviation sector are multidisciplinary in nature. Therefore, difference in opinions, ideas and expertise give rise to conflicts, which affect the outcome of projects (Kuthyola *et al.*, 2017). Conflicts in any project involving multidisciplinary teams are inevitable. These can be process-related conflicts, task-related conflicts or conflicts that arise due to the relationship among team members (Wu *et al.*, 2017). In small-scale aviation projects, the situation based on difference of thoughts, concepts and expertise can stir up a conflict among team members. During the situation of conflict, Ghorbani (2023) argued that soft-skills such as, emotional intelligence, rather than technical skills, helps in diffusing conflicts among team members. Emotional intelligence counts towards an important competency that defines one's capability to understand and regulate self and other's emotions. A research carried out on large-scale infrastructure projects correlated EI with the performance of team members and found out that individuals having high level of EI deal with uncertainties in a better way (Khosravi *et al.*, 2020).

Emotional intelligence and its association with the success of project has been studied thoroughly and researchers like Ashkanasy & Dorris (2017), Dasborough *et al.* (2022) and Khosravi *et al.* (2020) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and conflicts. They argued that during conflicts, emotionally intelligent manager can reduce the harmful impact of conflicts and increase the performance of projects. Most importantly, the contribution of task-interdependence has been largely overlooked in major large-scale projects, let alone the small-scale aviation projects (Delerue & Sicotte, 2020). The objective of this research is to study the contribution of emotional intelligence in the success of small-scale aviation projects and to examine the role of EI in managing conflicts and task-interdependencies. The extensive research on project success has predominantly focused on the correlation between technical expertise (hard skills) and project outcomes, especially within the context of larger infrastructure projects. However, there exists an overlooked aspect in the realm of project management research, particularly pertaining to teams with diverse competencies: task interdependency, which encompasses the interconnectedness of tasks. This facet is especially critical for smaller projects that must navigate the challenges of cost, schedule, and quality while operating within stringent time constraints. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the significance of soft skills in the context of small-scale projects. Notably, this research not only explores the relationship between soft skills and enhanced project success, but also introduces a novel variable: task interdependency. Recognizing that in small-scale projects with limited timeframes, project triumph hinges not solely on technical prowess but also on the application of soft skills, this study aims to unveil the holistic factors driving project success.

The contribution of this research is to provide a framework to the managers and subordinates on how to diffuse conflicts among the project staff by using emotional intelligence, particularly, when multiple teams, having different expertise, are involved in executing tasks. It also proposes timely information processing and decisions under the influence of emotional intelligence in small-scale aviation projects where time and

resources are limited. The incorporation of variable, such as, task interdependence also suggests new dimensions to the researchers to integrate potential variables and evaluate the success of project with different perspective.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Extensive research has been done to investigate the factors of project success and past literature includes work related to the skills, competencies and abilities of project management professionals which positively influence the performance of the projects. This section will provide details of theoretical framework and literature references of past studies related to the variable's under-discussion. Livesey (2017) states emotionally intelligent individuals being mindful of their emotions as well as the emotions of others. Since the first stage of emotional intelligence is self-awareness, it is quite evident that a person who is comfortable with his emotions understand other people's feelings and sentiments as well thereby reducing disputes among team members. Stephens & Carnelli (2016) postulated that disputes cannot be resolved unless a person is aware of self and other's emotions, but more often than that, awareness of emotions is not enough; rather, the ingenuity to express those emotions on the right time and at the right place is a pre-requisite. Hence, the emotional intelligence theory (EIT) answers the bases for accumulating and sharing emotions through knowledge alliance, for instance, knowledge sharing demands positive attitude of individuals which not only helps in overcoming differences among team members, but also improves the performance of employees in various ways (Wu *et al.*, 2018). Another study examined the relationship between task performance of a team and project success and found that efforts of team members were significantly mediated through information sharing (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). Nguyen *et al.* (2019) in their research discussed the social awareness (emotions of others) which increases the perception of employees about each other's interpretation of an event thereby creating a stable environment for the mitigation of any uncertainty or conflict.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to understand and manage emotions in self and others (Livesey, 2017). Modern day researchers defined it as the 'set of abilities which determine one's effectiveness in dealing with self and other's emotions (Crowne *et al.*, 2017; McClellan *et al.*, 2017). In the light of these approaches, researchers determined the role of emotional intelligence by successfully integrating it with the performance of large-scale projects (Livesey, 2017) as well as small-scale projects (Varshney & Varshney, 2020).

In modern project management practices, since the past decade, human soft skills have dominated the technical skills and they are now considered as the mandatory skill at work place (Khosravi *et al.*, 2020; Hanif & Tariq, 2014). The relevance and importance of soft skills, such as, emotional intelligence, helps in regulating emotions and maintaining healthy relationship among team members (McClellan *et al.*, 2017). As suggested by some researchers like Ashkanasy & Dorris, (2017) and Wu *et al.*, (2017), measuring emotional intelligence through Goleman's self and peer review provides a clear and concise picture of how emotional intelligence incorporates with the performance in the work place. For instance, Zhang *et al.* (2018) contended in their research carried out in academics-related work place and found out that EI is undoubtedly associated with the team-task performance. The relationship among team members gradually develops upon interacting under the influence of EI and creates a high-density friendship network which helps in completing the project on time and with higher success rate. Similarly, research carried out in services industry indicated that higher level of EI in individuals creates the ability of self-enhancement, more adaption to different situations and discourages the aggressive and self-defeating thoughts (Zhang *et al.*, 2020). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: *Emotional Intelligence is significantly associated with project success.*

Project Success

The evaluation of project performance is not subjective to a single factor; moreover, concluding the project within the estimated time and cost doesn't necessarily prove that the project is concluded successfully (Ika & Pinto, 2022). Traditionally, the success factor was considered as the execution and inference of a project according to the triple constraints (time, cost, scope); however, modern approaches look upon several factors and do not see the success factor figuratively (Radujković & Sjekavica, 2017). For instance, Willumsen *et al.* (2019) in their research examined those organizations which had flexible environment regarding the frustration of employees and the empirical evidences proved that 'listening attentively' to the employees' concerns verily help in lowering down their negative thought process. This process not only overcomes the concerns of employees regarding the specific task but it propagates throughout the entire processes of project implementation and helps to accomplish the objectives of project.

In the current era, project faces many challenges which encompasses several elements to achieve the objectives of project successfully, such as, personal competencies, attitude towards a problem, human behavior, stakeholder's satisfaction and so on (Kozhakhmetova *et al.*, 2019). For instance, Ghorbani (2023). investigated the personal competencies and came to the conclusion that manager's leadership capabilities have positive affect on project success. Similarly, Jena & Satpathy (2017) in their research evaluated the critical success factors of project and proposed that team cohesiveness, ethical behavior and organization's reputation are responsible for the successful conclusion of a project. Many researchers focused on the technical skills of employees as well such as Amollo & Omwenga (2017) evaluated the projects in industrial estate and came up with the conclusion that software proficiency is a necessary skill for a manager.

Hence, it is quite reasonable to say that project success is a subjective term that depends on critical success factors including, but not limited to, technical skills and soft skills.

Conflict Modes

Thomas (1974) explained conflict as a "perception of participants in a group about a certain object (related to task, process or relationship) which creates a sense of indecisiveness, frustration or uncontrolled emotions. Robin (1996) defined conflict as a dispute which emphasizes on opposing a matter. There are three types of conflicts that usually emerge during the implementation of project and the literature of project management focused profoundly on these three types of conflicts. They are, task conflict, process conflict and relationship conflict (Khosravi *et al.*, 2020).

Task Conflict as A Mediator Of EI-PP Link.

Task conflict refers to the conflict that arises due to the methods and means of task that has to be performed by team members. Wu *et al.* (2017) in his research stated that task conflict arises due to the interdependencies and level of understanding about a certain task. Additionally (Lu & Wang, 2017) contended in their research that views about the content of task may vary from person to person and the exchange of the opinions about how the specific task has to be performed can result in task conflict. The conflict pertaining to the content of task results in various drawbacks. For instance, Yan *et al.* (2016) in their research stated that the trust issue emerges among team members which compel individuals to withdraw themselves or make them take less interest in performing task. Similarly, they said that the climate of mistrust decreases the quality of team work and results in bad performance. (Yan *et al.*, 2016)

Moreover, task conflict restricts information processing and make the decision-making ability foggy (De Clercq & Pereira, 2023). Several studies also confirmed the negative influence of task conflict on performance, such as, De Dreu & Weingart (2003) in their meta-analysis study reported that task conflict negates cooperative behavior and affect perceived group performance. The resultant disputes not only affect the functional assets

of an organization but they also effect the intellectual asset of organization (Kelly & Kaminskienè, 2016). During ongoing task executions, intellectual assets determine the strength of organization by combining information, expertise and efforts of team members into a meaningful and successful task execution. The information processing theory (IPT) also validates the importance of intellectual asset regarding the mitigation of negative influences of conflict and how it overcomes the situation which is destined to negatively impact the success factors (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Based upon this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H2: *Task conflict mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and project success.*

Process Conflict as a Mediator Of EI-Pp Link

Process conflict refers to the team member's insight about allocation of resources and predefined procedures that have to be followed in order to complete the task (de Vries, 2020). Accounted for the 50% of project failure, the incompetency of managers consequently adds up to the poor management, lack of equal opportunities and poor work environment (Aqqad *et al.*, 2019). In this regard, emotional intelligence, as a key competency of managers provides a framework for an organization to set priorities according to the skills set of employees and increase sociability among them so the chain of information propagation does not face any disruptions.

Several studies examined the influence of process conflict and agreed upon their destructive outcomes. For instance, Wu *et al.* (2017) in their research examined the conflicts in the context of relationship building and trust. In their study they found out that process conflicts deteriorate harmony and friendly environment among team members. Likewise, Wu *et al.* (2018) investigated the effects of conflicts on internal and external stakeholders and how the organization's conflicts with external stakeholders (vendors, contractors) affect the performance of internal stakeholders. The results suggested that the negative perception of stakeholders influenced the two constraints (cost and time) of project management and subsequently generated an uncertain environment for the internal stakeholders.

H3: *Process conflict mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and project success.*

Relationship Conflict as a Mediator of EI-PP Link

Relationship conflict denotes a conflict that arises due to the incompatibility of personalities in a team (Vaux & Kirk, 2018). Work place is often comprised of employees with different social backgrounds. Unlike the task and process conflict, relationship conflict exhibits a greater extent of harmful impact on the performance of team (Khosravi *et al.*, 2020). Wu *et al.* (2017) in their research stated that relationship conflict leads to the unwillingness to attend to the concerns of others and give rise to anger, despair and frustration. Additionally, a researcher said that relationship conflict often results in three outcomes; a fragile decision quality, reduced information sharing and ineffective cognitive functioning (Wang *et al.*, 2019).

Empirical evidences have been found pertaining to the role of emotional intelligence in solving relationship conflict. For instance, Khan *et al.* (2022) said that emotionally intelligence individuals who are mindful to the emotions of others and create an environment where discussions, opinions and views are welcomed. Additionally, Rezvani *et al.* (2019) stated in their research that EI creates emotional awareness among team members and their attention focused on the more important tasks and objectives. It also paves way for the strong bond and instead of confrontations, it develops mutual understanding among team members.

H4: *Relationship conflict mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and project success.*

Task Interdependence

Task interdependence refers to the combined effort of team members on a specific task under the rules and regulations set by an organization to share information, expertise and resources (Campagna *et al.*, 2016). Although every individual has different perspective for the execution of a task, which can result in conflicts; however, Fong *et al.* (2018) in their research argued that interdependency may not necessarily bring negativity among team members; rather it sponsors knowledge sharing and creativity traits in personality.

Task Interdependence as a Mediator of EI-PP Link

Researchers such as Dong *et al.* (2017) and Campagna *et al.* (2016) stated that interdependency results in team quality and develops trust in a project work-place. Complexities can emerge at any level of project implementation and disputes are a common phenomenon; however, trust-based relationships influence a cooperative behavior and allow members to resolve disputes efficiently, hence facilitating an effective task accomplishment (Rezvani *et al.*, 2018). Encapsulating the arguments with Information processing theory (IPT), the human soft-skills such as emotional intelligence encourages better communication, establishes a trustful environment, promotes cooperation and suggests fruitful opinions in times of conflict and interdependencies (Wu *et al.*, 2017). In addition to these factors, EI fosters sociability among team members and helps them to lower down the negative impacts of conflict (Yan *et al.*, 2016).

Regarding the task-interdependency and project success relationship, D'Silva *et al.* (2016) contended in their research that necessary congruence and mutual understanding, is integral to uphold the relationship within the team, augments the success factor of project; however, there are two prospects of task-interdependency, either the dependency increases or decreases the performance of project. Therefore, if we look in the context of small-scale aviation project, multidisciplinary teams have to keep aside all the differences in order to achieve their objective. On the other hand, Kuthyola *et al.* (2017) evaluated a relationship between the culture of organization and performance of the team members and came to the conclusion that those organizations which keep high standard for quality of information, employees' concerns and problem-solving attitude, they usually generate a favorable environment for empathy, willingness and cooperation. Information processing theory (IPT) in this regard adds that through quality information processing, those members who rely on each other's efforts produce beneficial results for the success of project. (Hwang *et al.*, 2019).

Hence, we hypothesize that

H5: Task interdependency mediates the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and project performance.

Proposed Research Model

Fig. 1 mentioned below is the illustration of the proposed research model with the mentioning of the mediation paths.

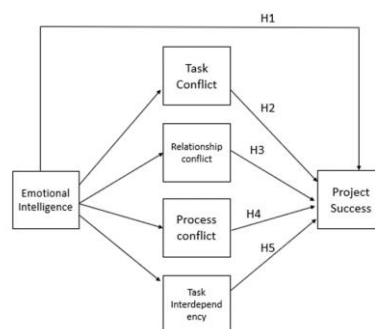


Figure 1. Research model (with mentioning of hypotheses)

H1 represents the association between emotional intelligence and project success. H2, H3, H4 and H5 represent the mediation path.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilized a cross sectional design and quantitative research method by using survey questions to analyze the relationship between variables and hypotheses testing. The study of factors contributing to the success of small-scale projects has been overshadowed by the fast-paced nature of their completion. Consequently, researchers have predominantly directed their attention towards larger projects and the factors that drive their success. With its distinct emphasis on small-scale projects, especially in sectors like aviation where they are pivotal, this cross-sectional study carries notable importance. It serves as a foundational step, offering researchers an initial framework to delve into the intricate interplay between emotional intelligence and project success, particularly in the context of small-scale projects. As the first study of its kind, its primary objective is to lay the groundwork for preliminary insights in this domain. There are 1200 project-related staff working in different airports in Pakistan. Purposive sampling technique was used to collect data since the objective was to target suitable individuals based on characteristics of participants that were required by research for meaningful results (Bernard, 2017). Only those participants were selected who were involved in 3 or more than 3 projects in aviation sector. In addition to knowledge and experience, a researcher argued that participant's willingness and interest are main factors in purposive sampling technique (Etikan *et al.*, 2016). For this purpose, a complete anonymity was kept while carrying out survey and not a single individual was persuaded to fill out the questionnaire against his/her will. For eligibility criteria of small-scale project, only those projects were considered which were to be completed in 4-6 months duration. Out of the population of 1200, 20% sample size was considered for data analysis. The data was collected from the professionals who are involved in small-scale aviation projects. According to CAA Pakistan website, there are 139 airports and airfields in Pakistan and the data is collected from major airports located in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Multan, Faisalabad and Sialkot. The purpose of collecting data from these airports was that the project-staff working in these airports is well trained and equipped with modern tools & techniques, and regional offices of civil aviation authority in these airports and staff working on projects are prioritized and well supervised. Participants rating for all variables were based on 5 point Likert-scale from 'strongly disagree to strongly agree' and from 'always to never' (conflict modes only). More information on the scales used in research is available in Table 1.

Table 1. Scale References.

Variables	Items	Scale references
Emotional Intelligence	16	Wong & Law, (2002),
Project Success	5	Joslin & Muller , (2015),
Conflict Modes	9	Jehn & Mannix, (2001)
Task Interdependence	4	Jarvenpaa and Staples (2001)

The scale for emotional intelligence is categorized in four parts consisting of 16 items for evaluating emotional intelligence in individuals (Wong & Law, 2002). This scale has been used in researches related to human cognitive abilities (Wu *et al.*, 2017; Ashkanasy & Dorris, 2017). For project success, the adopted scale is developed by Joslin and Muller (Joslin & Müller, 2015) and previously used to evaluate performance of project. (Gruden & Stare, 2018; Khosravi *et al.*, 2020). Conflict modes were evaluated using a scale adopted

from Jehn and Mannix which consists of 9 items (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). For task interdependence, scale developed by Javernappa & Staples (2001) has been adopted.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed among project staff working on small-scale aviation projects at the airports as mentioned. We received 320 responses with a response rate of 64%. Out of these, 55 were considered incomplete or with deficiencies. 275 feedbacks were considered accurate and used for analysis. Table 2. shows the participants' information.

To test the hypothesis, we employed multiple regression analysis method to analyze variables, which is best suited for the models having more than 3 variables (Hair *et al.*, 2011), For this purpose, statistical software such as SPSS (version 25) and smart PLS (version 3) is used to conduct tests for our hypotheses.

Table 2. Participant's Information.

Demographics	Male (n=240)		Female (n=35)		Total (n= 275)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean
Age	34.45	5.8	24.13	8.1	29.17
Experience	8.2	3.9	4.1	1.92	6.21
	Frequency				
Education	Male		Female		
Diploma	67 (27.9%)		1 (2.80%)		68 (24.7%)
Undergraduate	73 (30.4%)		15 (42.8%)		88 (32%)
Graduate	65(27.08%)		14 (40.0%)		79 (28.7%)
Post graduate	35 (14.5%)		5 (14.2%)		40 (14.5%)

In the current study, we employed two tests in order to see the reliability of the scale. The first test is convergent validity and the second test is discriminant validity. In convergent validity, three indices were calculated, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted.

Table 3. Convergent Validity.

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Cr	Ave
Emotional Intelligence	0.77	0.822	0.494
Project Success	0.81	0.830	0.458
Task interdependence	0.73	0.802	0.522
Process conflict	0.71	0.916	0.612
Relationship conflict	0.79	0.855	0.532
Task conflict	0.78	0.925	0.616

Upon employing convergent validity test, all the variables in (table 3.) have the Cronbach's alpha value greater than 0.7 while the average variance extracted values are above the cut off value of 0.5, which is valid according to Fornell & Larcker (1981). Hence our scale has convergent validity.

Table 4. HTMT

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1) Emotional Intelligence						
2) Project Success	0.152					
3) Task Interdependence	0.203	0.289				
5) Process Conflict	0.471	0.124	0.395	0.231		
6) Task Conflict	0.605	0.141	0.121	0.297	0.553	
7) Relationship Conflict	0.338	0.262	0.238	0.539	0.271	0.201

For assessing discriminant validity, Henseler & Chin (2010) suggested an HTMT (heterotrait-monotrait) test. For this purpose, HTMT test was carried out as indicated by (table 4.) where all the values are below the cut off value of 0.85. Hence our model has convergent and discriminant validity. After the convergent and divergent validity, we employed a covariance test to see how variables behave with relation to each other.

Table 5. Correlation matrix.

Variables	Mean	Sd	1	2	3	4	5	6
1) Emotional Intelligence	1.71	.31						
2) Project Success	1.79	.39	.030*					
3) Task Interdependence	1.87	.65	.139**	.216**				
4) Process Conflict	5.12	1.58	-.19*	-.08*	-.217	-.61		
5) Task Conflict	2.15	.51	-.003**	-.21*	-.541	-.4*	.213*	
6) Relationship Conflict	1.66	.54	-.037*	-.19**	.103	-.5*	.224	.116

** Significant at 0.01 * significant at 0.05

Table 5. shows the correlation matrix of variables that were tested for hypotheses. In this table each conflict mode showed a negative correlation with emotional intelligence and project success except task conflict, which showed positive correlation with project success. On the other hand, task interdependency depicted positive correlation with emotional intelligence as well as project success.

To find out the connection between independent variable (EI) and dependent variable (PS), a regression analysis was carried out while employing Hayes macro process. Findings were based on the coefficient of predictors and R² for each conflict modes and task-interdependency. Results are mentioned in below tables.

Table 6. Regression analysis (Project success).

X→Y				
Predictor	B	R	R-squared	P-value
EI	.084**	.363	.132	.000

X= EI (Emotional Intelligence), Y= PS (Project Success)

Table 6 indicates the effect of independent variable (X) on dependent variable (Y). The predictor shows a significant amount of effect on the dependent variable (R-squared= 0.132), while the p-value shows the

significance of this effect ($\beta = 0.084$, $p < 0.00$). Hence, we can establish that emotional intelligence has positive and significant effect on project success. In this case, our *hypothesis H1* has been accepted.

Table 7. Regression Analysis (Mediators)

Mediation Analysis (X > M > Y)						
Predictor	B		R-squared	P-value	Bias-corrected bootstrap	
					Lower	Upper
EI x TC	.015		.000	.894	-.207	.236
EI x RC	-.001		.001	.583	-.319	.092
EI x PC	-.065		.002	.182	-.299	.169
EI x TI	.471**		.049	.001	.194	.747

X= EI (Emotional Intelligence), Y= PS (Project Success), M= TC (Task Conflict), RC (Relationship Conflict), PC (Process Conflict), TI (Task interdependence).
 ** Significant at 0.01

Table 7 shows that R-square is displaying a significant change (R-square = .049) for task interdependence with a significant effect ($\beta = .471$, $p < 0.001$) and the p-value that is smaller than 0.01. The bias-corrected bootstrap shows no 0 between the upper and lower confidence hence showing the significance of the effect that exists due to the predictor variable (EI) on outcome variable (TI).

Mediation Analysis

We proposed that conflict modes and task interdependence mediate the EI-PS link. For this purpose, we employed mediation test using macro process with model 4 as suggested by Hayes (2009).

Table 8. Mediation Analysis.

Row	Project success (dv)	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Bias corrected bootstrap	
				Lower	Upper
1	Emotional intelligence → Task conflict	.132	-.0002	-.0179	.0129
2	Emotional intelligence → Relationship conflict	.026	.001	-.0097	.0275
3	Emotional intelligence → Process conflict	-.189	-.041	-.0480	.0139
4	Emotional intelligence → Task Interdependence	.081**	.024**	.0264	.1762

Upon testing our model and by looking at (Table 8), we found out that in mediation analysis, the indirect effect of conflict mode contributed almost 0 percent between the emotional intelligence and project success relationship; moreover, the bias-corrected bootstrap contained 0 between upper and lower confidence (LCI = -0.0179, UCI= 0.029). Hence, our *hypothesis 2* has not been supported. Based upon similar arguments, hypothesis 3 and 4 were also not supported (the bias-corrected bootstrap intervals have 0 between the lower and upper confidence intervals). The relationship of emotional intelligence and project success has been

mediated by task interdependence and the significance of this mediation is proved by the bias-corrected bootstrap (LCI = 0.02, UCI = 0.17). Hence our *hypothesis 5* has been accepted through the analysis.

5. DISCUSSION

The current study provides an insight into the role of emotional intelligence and its impact on project success as mediated by other factors like conflict modes and task interdependence. Results indicated that emotional intelligence in fact have a positive association with project success. This association is endorsed by the past studies as well, for instance, Khosravi *et al.* (2020) studied the role of EI in large-scale infrastructure projects and concluded that soft-skills, such as EI enhances the success of project. Similarly, Wu *et al.* (2017) and Rezvani *et al.* (2018) also proved the positive association of EI with the performance of projects. As this study is based on the self and peer assessment of EI in projects and the survey questions were based on four branch EI model depicting the management of self and other's emotions; therefore, it is quite reasonable to say that managers and team members with high level of EI verily increase the performance of small-scale projects in aviation industry. The connection between emotional intelligence and project success has been examined extensively in large infrastructure projects, yielding outcomes similar to those identified in our study focused on small-scale projects. Small-scale projects have not been thoroughly investigated due to their time constraints. It's often assumed that managing them is straightforward; however, these time limitations offer little room for adjusting our actions if problems arise. The necessity to meet tight deadlines sometimes overshadows concerns about quality and cost, leaving minimal space for strategic reconsideration. Therefore, it is crucial to assess the link between emotional intelligence and project success in the context of small-scale projects. This evaluation aims to determine whether emotional intelligence can enhance project success factors and bridge potential gaps in cost or quality.

The negative relation of conflict modes has also been established by looking at the correlation results. Task conflict (-.21, sig=0.05), process conflict (-.08, sig=0.05), and relationship conflict (-.19, sig=0.01) exhibit negative correlations with project success. Moreover, these findings align with those observed in the context of large infrastructure projects. This cross-sectional study aims to extend our understanding of conflict modes in small-scale projects, particularly within the dynamic Aviation sector. Given the sector's frequent and vital small-scale projects, this study's insights are pertinent. Numerous researchers have similarly confirmed the adverse correlation between conflict modes and project success, such as, Ashkanasy & Dorris (2017) in their research examined affective leadership during the conflicts related to task and came to the conclusion that task conflict reduces the ability of managers to think rationally in assigning the roles and responsibilities. Similarly, De Dreu & Weingart (2003) in their research explained that relationship conflicts breed negative emotions and affect the mutual cooperation in resolving complex problems. Moreover, regarding the process conflict, a researcher contended that it leads to a cloudy judgment about the procedures established to perform a task (Behfar *et al.*, 2011). Although, high level of EI in individuals tend to manage conflicts; however, conflicts themselves hold the negative impacts that reduce the level of EI in personality and consequently reduces the success factors of project. (Khosravi *et al.*, 2020)

In our mediation analysis, it was observed that the mediating path (via conflict modes and task interdependency) partially proved its significance. Our findings indicated that conflict modes (task conflict, process conflict, and relationship conflict) do not act as mediators in the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and project success (PS). In contrast to previous claims, Wu *et al.* (2017) reported that conflict modes mediate the connection between communication and project success, and similarly, Khosravi *et al.* (2020) found that conflict modes mediate the link between emotional intelligence and project success. However, it's worth noting that both of these studies were conducted in the context of large-scale infrastructure projects. In contrast, our cross-sectional study focused on small-scale projects, revealing divergent dynamics

in the variables and yielding novel insights into the realm of project success factors. On the other hand, our 4th mediator, task interdependency mediated the EI-PS link positively and significantly (.471, p -value=0.001). Incorporating task interdependency as a new variable highlights the meaningful mediated relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and project success (PS) in our study. This introduces a fresh perspective and lays the foundation for future considerations of additional variables, such as risk intelligence. We researched for the reasons behind non-mediating conflict modes in literature and found two possible scenarios for non-interactive conflicts; first, poor decision-making skills and second, non-attended conflicts (Lehmann-Willenbrock *et al.*, 2011). Keeping the aviation industry of Pakistan in view, addressing the conflicts upon emergence is necessary, however, it is quite obvious that limited resources are responsible for not providing adequate path to address the conflicts. Besides, there are fewer training programs for the staff to get acquainted with soft-skills and use them to overcome the conflicts. On the other hand, lack of resources also blurs the decision-making skills and therefore, most of the time conflicts remain unattended and cognitive abilities like emotional intelligence are not availed in interactions to increase the performance of project. (Isa, 2015). Regarding the task interdependency, the results showed that it positively and significantly mediates the EI and PS relationship. In this regard, Information processing theory (IPT) validated our hypothesis and the results from analysis proved that during team-task, information and knowledge sharing is the critical factor to hold the team together (Nguyen *et al.*, 2019). As long as there is an adequate and updated information flow through the organization during project implementation, the team efforts will contribute positively towards the project success. Khosravi *et al.* (2020) in their research stated that interdependency is one of the reasons for the emergence of conflicts, therefore, we conclude that emotionally intelligent project managers will manage teams in a way that the chances of conflicts would be lowered among the team members.

6. CONCLUSION

This study provides useful insights into the soft-skills of project staff. The study in a sense delivers a perspective of the services industry's projects and specifically the projects carried out in aviation industry, which is one of its kind due to several research gaps pertaining to the situation of aviation industry in Pakistan. It is quite evident from this research that along with technical skills, human behavior can exercise significant impact on the performance of project. There is a lack of proper training and coaching regarding the soft-skills and the enhancement of personal competencies in aviation projects. As the EI significantly takes part in the performance of project, so higher level of EI in team members can boost the project success ratio. Similarly, during the conflicts, the avoidance of the problem generally pave way for more conflicting events, which lead to the decrease/failure in the performance of individuals and subsequently the project itself. In that case, managers and those of team members, who are emotionally intelligent and understand the sentiments of each other can address the conflicts and present potential ideas to solve complex problems. Not only that, this mode of action or behavior fosters better relationship among the team members and develops character to face the conflicts rather than avoid them. Moreover, if emotional intelligence is meant to understand others and self-behavior, it opens the door to encourage the conflicting opinions. It is observed that conflicting opinions and ideas not necessarily harm the objectives of project, but they can also bring in creativity and new ideas for the resolution of uncertain events as well.

Implications and Future Research

In the context of projects in Pakistan, top management merely involve themselves during the project implementation as long as the project objectives meet the requirement; however, EI demands the involvement of top-level management in order to monitor the behavior of subordinates and to give them useful insights during difficult situation. Analysis of the data demonstrated the positive influence of EI on performance of project, hence it is very important for the managers to evaluate the soft-skills in the project staff while

structuring a team for the project implementation. Managers should observe the reactions of team during an event which might hinder the objectives of project, and make sure that the emotions of team members are addressed properly to avoid conflicting situations.

For future researches on the subject, mediating variables can be explored further and current model can be extended with other forms of interdependencies as a mediating variable, such as, pool interdependency, reciprocal interdependency or sequential interdependency. Second, the data was collected from small-scale aviation projects, but other industries can also be evaluated to get useful insights. Data collected from different industries could bring useful and informative variations in the results. Third, the current research is based on quantitative research method; however, the relationship between variables can be analyzed based on qualitative research method (focus group discussions, structured interviews etc.) and new information can be extracted in project management field.

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