Impact of need for Affiliation on the relationship between Emotional intelligence and integrating style of conflict resolution

Dissanayake, W.D.M.B.K.
Department of Business Management, Faculty of Business Studies & Finance
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka
bimba@wyb.ac.lk

Kodagoda, D.T.D.
Department of Human Resources, Faculty of Management & Finance,
University of Colombo

Abstract

The research was conducted to gain an insight into how the Need for Affiliation (nAff) influences the relationship between Emotional intelligence (EI) and the integrating style of conflict resolution among state university undergraduates in Sri Lanka. Undergraduate disputes have frequently being a regular heading in many mainstream dialogues in the county, this study is expected to provide a deep understanding of the issue from the perspective of the impact of nAff on the link between EI and integrating style. The nAff as a moderating factor on the relationship between EI and integrating style of conflict resolution has persisted unexplored in the context of Sri Lankan state university undergraduates. Consequently, a study was conducted with the aim of providing an insight to bridge the prevailing gap. The investigation was based on a survey conducted with the participation of 388 undergraduates containing ten (10) state universities in Sri Lanka. Extensively used scholarly work tools were used to ensure the credibility of research in which EI was measured using Wong and law EI scale, nAff was measured using Unified Motive Scales (UMS), and conflict resolution strategies (integrating style) measured using Rahim's Organizational Conflict Inventory-II. Moderated multiple regression analysis (hierarchical multiple regression) was applied to evaluate the moderating impact and level of interaction of nAff on the nexus between EI and integrating styles of conflict resolution. The results signify that emotionally intelligent people prefer to use the integrating style to resolve conflicts. The results of the hierarchical multiple regression analysis revealed that nAff (moderating variable) enhanced the relationship between EI and integrating style. It indicates that those who are emotionally intelligent and have a high need for affiliation have a stronger preference to choose the integrating style. Conclusively, research has contributed to understanding the role of nAff in defining the relationship between EI and conflict resolution styles and it confirms that higher EI combined with a higher need for affiliation increase the chances of selecting a more productive and collaborative conflict resolution approach.

Keywords: nAff, EI, Integrating conflict resolution style, State University, Undergraduates

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a natural consequence of diversity occurred due to cognition and social interaction aspects of human behavior (Popescu and Vasilescu, 2012) thus it has an inevitable appearance in the social context (Darling and Walker, 2001). There is a multiplicity of views about the conflict; as a negative phenomenon that must be avoided at any cost (Jehn, 1997; Pondy, 1967; Robbins and Judge, 2013) and as a concept (if well managed) has a potential to deliver functional results (De Dreu and Van de Vliert, 1997). Fleetwood (1987) suggests that since conflict is unavoidable, managers must be able to recognize the sources of conflict, view its constructive as well as destructive potential, learn how to manage conflict, and to implement conflict resolution techniques effectively. Predominantly the conflict management strategies determine whether the outcomes are constructive or destructive (Park and Antonioni, 2007).

Emotional Intelligence (EI), an antecedent of conflict resolution strategies (Shih and Susanto, 2010). It was elaborated that human conflict does not exist in the absence of emotions (Jones, 2000) while Bodtker and Jameson (2001) favorably argue that if a person to be in a conflict he must be emotionally charged. Consequently, conflict is an emotionally created and emotionally driven process and proper identification of emotion involved in a conflict process exposes the opportunities to orchestrate the conflict management productively (Jordan and Troth, 2004; Eadie and Nelson, 2001; Bodtker and Jameson, 2001). Further Human behavior is essentially formed under the influence of the person's motivations to achieve specific goals (Raeisi et al. 2012).

However, despite the fact that there is research conducted in testing the isolated impact of EI on conflict (Rahim, et al., 2002; Chan, Sit, and Lau, 2014; Bodtker and Jameson, 2001) and motivation on conflict (Mrayyan et al, 2008; Bell and Blakeney, 1977), scholars have not yet attempted to address the integrative impact of the EI and motivation towards selecting a conflict resolution strategy. It is important to test the simultaneous impact of both the EI level of a person associated with the motivational drive on the selection of a conflict resolution strategy to have a more accurate result.

Sri Lankan university undergraduates are known to adopt a hostile approach to conflict resolution. It is evident through the frequent student clashes, staff-student conflicts, and rivalry (Ruberu, 2003). The closing of universities due to student unrest as well as the postponement of admissions and examinations due to students not participating in the scheduled programs and frequent student protests have given university administration a serious problem. Student conflict has transformed from being focused on intra-university issues to a national issue

(Weeramunda, 2008; Hennayake, 2008). University undergraduates are known to be the finest intellect among Sri Lankan advanced level students and are the prospected prominent drivers of the country. These privileged few are the cream of the nation with all the potential to take the country to new heights (Hennayake, 2008). Hence addressing the critical behavioral issues of them is obligatory. Thus this research was conducted with the aim of analyzing the integrative impact of the EI and motivation towards selecting a conflict resolution strategy bridging the aforementioned research gap.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conflict and conflict resolution

The conflict has continued to exist everywhere from the very beginning of society. It is a natural consequence of diversity that occurred due to cognition and social interaction aspects of human behavior (Popescu and Vasilescu, 2012) thus it has an inevitable appearance in the social context. Thomas (1992) defines conflict as "the process which begins when one party perceives that another has frustrated or is about to frustrate, some concern of his" (p. 891). While conflicts remain static, the way people perceived the same evolved with time. Some viewed conflict with a negative connotation and discussed it with such terms as violence, destruction, and irrationality. In this arena, conflict was identified as an inevitable outgrowth of the social class system or organization hierarchy; hinders the performance of organizations; dysfunctional which essentially needed to be avoided (Jehn, 1997; Pondy, 1967; Robbins and Judge, 2013). Others suggest conflicts are beneficial and enhance organizational performances, thus proposed its acceptance and the utilization of its outcomes for the betterment of organizational performance.

Conflict Resolution strategies refer to particular behavioral patterns that a person prefers to employ when confronting a conflict situation (Rahim, 2002; Rahim, et al., 2002; Ma, 2005). Amongst many models of conflict resolution strategies (Kilmann and Thomas, 1977; Rahim, 1983) the study considered the integrating style of Rahim's five types of interpersonal conflict handling model (Rahim, 1983). Rahim's five types of conflict handling styles as shown in figure 1, were named as integrating, obliging, compromising, dominating, and avoiding which were founded along two basic dimensions; concern for self (the extent to which a person attempt to satisfy own needs) and concern for others (the extent to which a person tries to satisfy other's needs).

Concern for self

High   Low
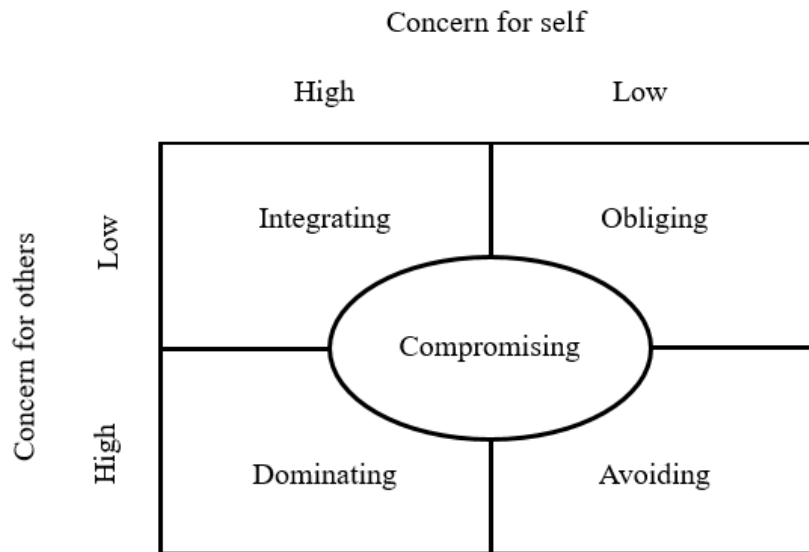
Figure 1: Rahim's five interpersonal conflict styles (Rahim, 1983, p.369)

Integrating style (high concern for self and others) - attempt to satisfy the concerns of both parties and tries to achieve a win-win solution that is mutually beneficial for both parties (Robbins and Judge, 2013). The style involves openness, exchange of information, and examination of differences to reach an effective solution that is acceptable to both parties. The integrating style is associated with problem-solving, which leads to creative solutions (Antonioni, 1998) and with the ultimate goal of reducing conflict by using collaboration rather than minimizing organizational conflicts (Barbuto Jr and Xu, 2006). The style is also described as problem-solving, collaboration, cooperation, solution-orientation, and win-win or positive-sum style). According to Gross and Guerrero (2000), the integrative style is generally perceived as the most appropriate, most effective, and highly competent style in managing conflicts.

Emotional Intelligence

Salovey and Mayer (1990) who propounded EI defines it as an individual's ability to recognize emotions of one's own and others' in a manner that allows him or her to monitor them, distinguish among different emotions, and use this information effectively in shaping one's behavior. Goleman (1998), identified EI under four dimensions of self-awareness, self-management, empathy, and social skill and defined it as the capacity for recognizing our feelings and the feelings in others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in us and our relationships. People who have the ability to recognize and monitor their own feelings and able to recognize and deal with the feelings of others have advantages in all areas of life,

while those who cannot get control over their emotional lives battle constantly and this prevents them to produce continued work and clear thoughts.

EI perspectives were different on the characteristics and dimensions used resulting in different interpretations by distinctive theorists. EI conceptualized by Wong and Law (2002) following Salovey and Mayor's (1990) in terms of four dimensions as self-emotional appraisal [SEA], others emotional appraisal [OEA], regulation of emotion [ROE], and use of emotion [UOE]. An escalating amount of scholars suggest EI has a considerable possibility to act as a predictor of workplace behavior in organizations and can contribute to the understanding of relationships in the work context (Salovey and Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998; Spielberger, 2004). individuals with well-developed EI can identify and control their own emotions and those of others, they are less likely to be paralyzed by fear, hijacked by negative emotions, and strangled by anxiety and all of which have negative effects on both individual and team performance (Lam and Kirby, 2002).

The link between EI and conflict is obvious. Human conflict does not exist in the absence of emotion (Jones, 2000). Conflicts are human behavior and arise as a result of an emotional process. Bodtker and Jameson (2001) argue that if a person to be in a conflict he must be emotionally charged and one is not aware that one is in conflict unless he recognizes that he is emotional about something. Jordan and Troth (2002), has supported the same by exclaiming if the conflict involves the perception of threats to individual goals, then it is naturally emotional. Similarly, Jordan and Troth (2004) put forward the notion that all conflicts (functional or dysfunctional) are intrinsically emotional since a conflict involves the perception of threat to an individual or group. in light of the above findings, scholars argue that conflicts are inherently an emotionally created and driven process thus EI and conflict management are certainly interconnected to one another (Jordan and Troth, 2004; Eadie and Nelson, 2001; Bodtker and Jameson, 2001; Jones, 2000).

Understanding the role of emotions in conflict and conflict management is essential to manage them more effectively (Bodtker and Jameson, 2001). Scholars have remarked that EI plays an important role in efficiently resolving conflict (Jordan and Troth, 2002; Bodtker and Jameson, 2001) and it is expected, that people with a high level of EI will learn and use conflict management skills instantly within the organizational settings solve the conflict faster and in a better way, have superior conflict resolution skills, engaging in greater collaboration and

consequently contribute to better team performance through the ability to be aware of and manage emotions facilitate functional conflict resolution (Cherniss and Adler, 2000; Desivilya and Yagil, 2005; Goleman, 1998; Jordan and Troth, 2004). Therefore this study also presumes that EI may lead people to choose more advantageous styles of handling interpersonal conflicts. The higher the EI, constructive conflict resolution styles were selected, and vice versa.

Need for Affiliation

Human motivation is the psychological drive that guides a person towards achieving a goal, underlying reason for 'how' and 'why' people behave as they do (Hegar, 2012), account for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal (Robbins and Judge, 2013) which ultimately direct the behavior (Mrayyan et al, 2008). The Need for achievement (nAch), need for Power (nPow), and the need for affiliation (nAff) was identified as the three prime motivational drivers (McClelland, 1987). nAch drives a person to put his maximum effort to achieve the goals; do better and to aspire to a standard of excellence, nPow is the desire to control and influence others; to have responsibility for their performance; to have an impact on others (Uduji and Ankeli, 2013). nAff is to establish and maintain cordial relations with other humans; often choose to spend time with close friends or significant others and satisfy the need of having a personal relationship (Raeisi et al, 2012; Uduji and Ankeli, 2013). The importance of each of these needs varies from person to person (Lilly, Duffy, and Virick, 2006). The same was validated by Rybnicek, Bergner, and Gutschelhofer (2017), the study revealed that relevant brain areas were more activated when the rewards were closely matched with a person's need level (nAch, nAff, nPow). It confirms that when individuals presented with rewards that are more closely to their desired needs, those rewards were perceived as more rewarding (Schultheiss et al, 2008; Rybnicek et al, 2017).

A person with a basic need or desire to be with other people, seek, and grab the opportunities to interact with other people, said to be driven by the nAff (McClelland, 1987). nAff was defined as the desire for friendly and close interpersonal relationships spending more time maintaining social relationships, joining groups, and wanting to be loved (Ramlall, 2004), choose to spend time with close friends or significant others rather than be in any other setting, are sensitive to others' reactions to them also prefer collaborative, non-competitive activities (Uduji and Ankeli, 2013) and exhibit strong conformity to the wishes of other people to maintain a friendly relationship (Lilly, Duffy, and Virick, 2006).

**EI, nAff and integrating style of conflict resolution**

The study of Christie et al, (2007) revealed that people, who have a higher ability to regulate their emotions, were found more likely to be motivated by achievement needs, those who reported high in understanding other's emotions were motivated by affiliation needs. It was claimed that conflict and human motivation are two closely related concepts (Barbuto Jr and Xu, 2006). nAff positively correlated with the smoothing (cooperative) style (Jones and White, 1985). People with high EI interact well with people and possess good interpersonal skills (Goleman, 1998) and prefer collaborative conflict resolution styles (Jordan and Troth, 2002; Jordan and Troth, 2002a). Goleman (1998), suggested that individuals with high EI will have superior conflict resolution skills, engaging in greater collaboration. This assertion is based on the belief that individuals with high EI work to maintain relationships. Similarly, McClelland (1987), propose people who have affiliation motive seek social approval. This type of people typically desire to be fond of others and want others to like them, prefer to avoid conflict and competition with others (Lilly, Duffy, and Virick, 2006), tend to elude problems arising from interpersonal incompatibilities, and readily adjust their values or beliefs to those of others to secure positive social relationships (Chatman and Barsade, 1995). In light of the above literature, it can be assumed that there may be a complementing effect so as to an emotionally intelligent person who is driven with nAff, wanting to maintain a better relationship with others thus tend to select a more smooth conflict resolution strategy due to high concern on their counterparties.

There are many studies available on EI and conflict resolution strategies (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2002; Bodtker and Jameson, 2001; Chan, Sit, and Lau, 2014; Di Fabio and Blustein, 2010; Jordan and Troth, 2004), EI and human motivational needs (Christie et al, 2007; Jones and White, 1985; Essop, 2015) and human motivational needs and conflict resolution (Fodor, 1985; Bell and Blakeney, 1977). As per the literature review, no study has been carried out in searching for how nAff of individual influence on the established relationship of EI and integrating conflict resolution strategy within the Sri Lankan context. Thus this study attempts to bridge the said gap by analyzing the moderating impact of nAff on the relationship between EI and integrating conflict resolution strategy.

Conceptual Model

In this study, EI was applied as an antecedent of integrating conflict resolution styles. The use of EI was based on the affective event theory (AET) that state human behavior is driven by

emotions and as conflicts is also a human behavior it too arises as a result of an emotional process (Jordan and Troth, 2004; Eadie and Nelson, 2001; Bodtker and Jameson, 2001). Higher EI might generate a sympathetic feeling that encourages individuals to consider other interests when they want to solve conflicts. In this situation, a win-win solution may become a priority in resolving the conflicts among individuals to satisfy everyone's interests. As a result, high emotionally intelligent people may prefer the integrating style. People with high nAff prefer to spend more time maintaining social relationships, joining groups, and wanting to be loved (Ramlall, 2004), and positively linked with preference to select smoothing conflict resolution style (Jones and White, 1985). Since they are relationship-oriented; the integrating style can be considered as their preferred conflict resolution style. Consequently, nAff was brought in as a moderator for the study.
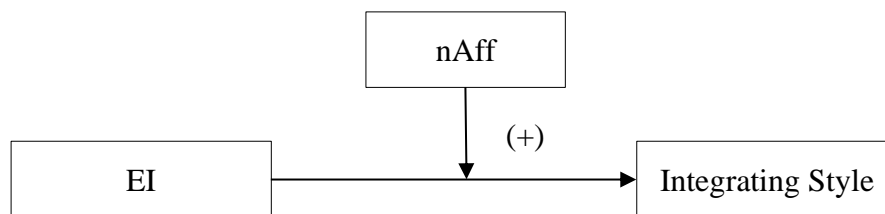
Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

The results of the studies consistently showed that individuals with high EI preferred to seek integrating solutions when confronted with conflict (Jordan and Troth, 2002; Jones, 2000; Shih and Susanto, 2010; Gross and Guerrero, 2000; Chan, Sit, and Lau, 2014). Integrating conflict resolution pattern is positively related to positive emotions and self-efficacy and a climate of concern for organizational interest (Jones, 2000). Goleman (1998) suggested that individuals with high EI will have superior conflict resolution skills, are better able to negotiate and effectively handle, using an integrative approach to develop new solutions to satisfy both parties' concerns. This assertion is based on the belief that individuals with high EI work to maintain relationships (Jordan and Troth, 2002). Emotionally intelligent people may more possibly consider other people's needs and interests in solving conflict. Thus, a win-win solution produced by integrating style facilitates an opportunity to apply their concerns in resolving the conflicts among individuals to satisfy everyone's interests (Shih and Susanto, 2010). Further emotionally intelligent people are more like to select integrating and compromising styles because those styles may have more beneficial outcomes in terms of efficacy and suitability (Gross and Guerrero, 2000; Morrison, 2008). Based on the above arguments it was hypothesized that;

H1: EI positively related to integrating conflict resolution strategy

As per McClelland's human motivational need theory, people are driven by nAff, nAch, and nPow motives which define their behavior within an organization. People who are high in EI interact well with people and possess good interpersonal skills (Goleman, 1998) as well the people who have affiliation motive seek social approval and typically desire to be fond of others and want others to like them (Lilly, Duffy and Virick, 2006). Also, nAff positively linked with preference to select the smoothing conflict resolution style (Jones and White, 1985). Thus there may be a complementing effect so as a high emotionally intelligent person who drives from affiliation need to prefer an integrating conflict resolution style which directs towards concerning other party's needs through attempting to satisfy the concerns of both parties and tries to achieve a win-win solution which is mutually beneficial for both parties (Robbins and Judge, 2013). Synthesizing the above literature, the researchers hypothesized that nAff will strengthen the positive relationship between EI and integrating conflict resolution strategies that focus on high concern for others. Consequently, the following hypothesis was developed.

H1a: NAff moderates the relationship between EI and integrating style

METHODOLOGY

The study was positioned within a paradigm of positivism phenomenology with a quantitative research approach followed by survey strategy and statistical analysis. The research was deductive as it started with examining the existing literature to establish a possible connection among the three key concepts of EI, nAff, and integrating conflict resolution strategy through testing established hypotheses. The prevailing pool of rich literature base was exploited to develop hypotheses that are to be tested and confirmed. A survey strategy was used to research since it attempts to explain what is happening in the social context and generalize the study findings. The study conducted a cross-sectional analysis where data was collected at a given time horizon only.

The nature of the study aims to make statistical inferences of the population thus it is vital to select a representative sample. Therefore the research used a convenience sampling (non-probability sampling) technique as it allowed the researcher ease of access to the respondents who enable them to provide the desired information. Since the population is scattered around the country, this technique allowed the researcher to collect data at a lower cost and effort

within a shorter time duration. A sample of 397 undergraduates covering all academic levels was selected representing certain universities to assure the sufficiency of the sample size (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970). The response rate was around 98 percent (388).

The study based on the primary data gathered from the sample of 388 students as the unit of analysis of this study was individual undergraduate students. Since the study adopted a survey strategy, data were collected using a self-administered Likert scale questionnaire, and to enhance the validity and reliability of the research findings, the study used already developed and tested scales which is presented in table 1.

Table 1: Operationalization of the variables

Variable	Measurement
EI (Independent Variable)	Wong and law emotional intelligence scale (WLEIS) (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree) (Wong and Law, 2002)
Integrating Style (Dependent Variable)	Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCII) – Form C (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) (Rahim, 1983)
nAff (Moderator)	Unified Motive Scales (UMS) (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) (Schönbrodt and Gerstenberg, 2012)

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The Pearson correlations were performed to provide a deeper analysis of the direction and strength of the nexus between EI, nAff, and integrating style of conflict resolution. Table 2 illustrate the correlation results.

Table 2: Correlation matrix of the relationship among variables

		1	2
1	EI		
2	Integrating	.311**	
3	nAff	.238**	.269**

*Note. N=388, **p< .01, EI= Emotional Intelligence, nAff= Need for Affiliation,*

Source: Survey Data

Results indicate that, EI reported to have significant moderate correlation with integrating style ($r = .311$, $p < .01$) and nAff moderately associated with integrating style ($r = .269$, $p < .01$).

The hypothesis was tested using regression analysis. The relationship of the independent variable (EI) with the dependent variable (integrating style) was tested using a simple regression model. The statistical model is as follows;

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X$$

A simple regression was used to ascertain if there was a statistically significant relationship between EI and integrating style. EI and integrating style reported to have a moderately significant positive correlation, $r = .311$, $p < .01$. The regression results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Hypothesis testing based on the regression model: EI and Integrating style

Model	B	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	2.594	13.731	.000
EI	.233	6.766	.000
R	.326***		
R^2	.106***		
F	45.773		
Predictors: (Constant), EI			
Dependent Variable: Integrating style			

*Note. N= 388, ***p< .001*
Source: Survey Data

The results of the regression model indicated that the predictor variable explains 11 percent (11%) of the variance in the outcome variable ($R^2 = .106$, $F (1,386) = 45.773$, $p < .001$). It was found that EI significantly predicts the selection of integrating style as a conflict resolution

strategy (β =.233, p <.001). The two variable exhibits a significant positive relationship, hence the results of the research confirm hypothesis one (H1). Thus it can be concluded that EI positively related to integrating conflict resolution style.

A key objective of this research was to ascertain how nAff moderates the relationship between EI and the integrating style of conflict resolution. nAff is predicted to have a synergistic effect on the relationship between EI and the integrating style of conflict resolution. Results are indicated in table 4 and the statistical model is as follows;

$$Y = b_0 + b_1X + b_2Z + b_3XZ$$

Table 4. Hierarchical regression: moderating effect of nAff on the relationship between EI and integrating style

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
(Constant)	3.866	3.866	3.857
	(192.969)	(196.818)	(192.585)
EI	.233***	.198***	202***
	(6.766)	(5.693)	(5.826)
nAff	_	.158***	.161***
		(4.076)	(4.162)
EI_X_nAff	_	_	.121*
			(2.082)
F	45.773	32.120	23.044
R^2	.106***	.143***	.153***
ΔR^2	_	037***	.010*

 a. Predictors: (Constant), EI
 b. Predictors: (Constant), EI, nAff
 c. Predictors: (Constant), EI, nAff, EI_X_nAff
 d. Dependent Variable: Integrating Style

*Note. * P<.05, ** P<.01, *** P<.001, ( ) = t stat, EI= Emotional Intelligence, nAff = Need for Affiliation*

Source: Survey Data

As shown in the table 4, the model indices in steps 1 ($F_{(1,386)} = 45.773, p < .001$), 2 ($F_{(2,385)} = 32.120, p < .001$) and 3 ($F_{(3,384)} = 23.044, p < .001$) are statistically significant. The model 1, 2 and 3 explains a variance of 11% (R^2=.106, $F_{(1,386)} = 45.773, p<.001$), 14% ($R^2$=.143, $F_{(2,385)} = 32.120, p<.001$) and 15% ($R^2$=.153, $F_{(3,384)} = 23.044, p<.001$) in the integrating style respectively. The statistical scores of the EI (β=.202, $p < .001$), nAff (β=.161, $p < .001$) and the interaction term (β=.121, $p < .05$) were significant. With the introduction of the interaction construct, the change of the R^2 value was significant (ΔR^2=0.010, $p <0.05$)

indicating that there is potentially significant moderation between EI and nAff on integrating style (β = .121, p < .05).

To identify the type of interaction effect, a simple slope analysis was performed. The simple regression lines at the low, average, and high levels of students nAff were plotted in a graph. Figure 5.1 illustrates the three simple regressions drawn to detect the type of interaction effect of the EI and nAff on preference to select the integrating style.
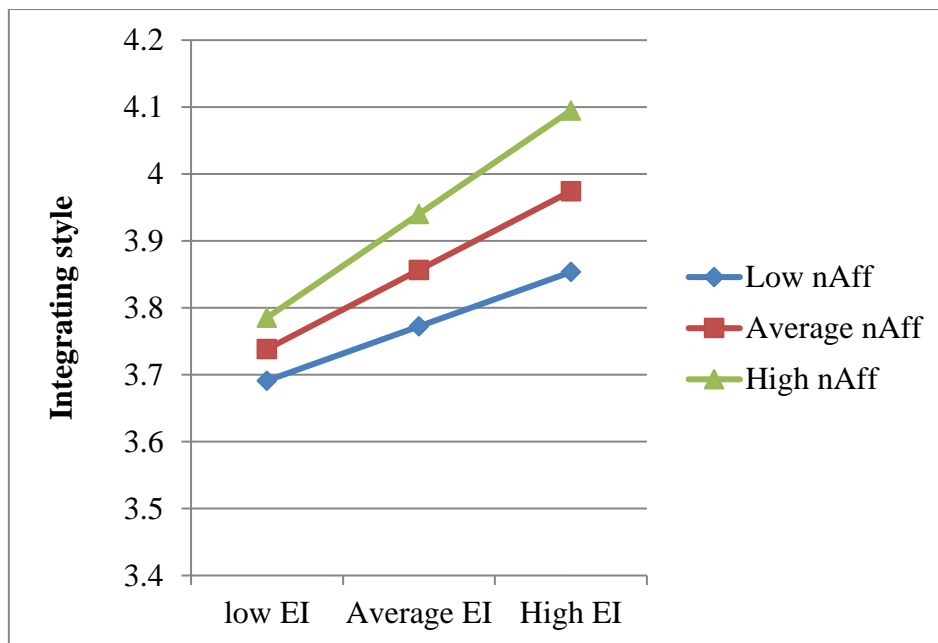
Figure 3: Moderating effects of nAff on the relationship between EI and integrating style
Source: Survey Data

The graph demonstrates that an increase in EI was significantly associated with the selection of integrating style, and this relationship was enhanced by nAff. It confirms that students who are high in EI driven with nAff have more preference to select integrating style to resolve conflicts. Consequently, it can be concluded that the model supports the hypothesis H1a and proves that there is a positive moderating effect of nAff on the relationship between EI and integrating style.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research proposed that nAff influence the students' decision of conflict resolution along with their level of EI. Referring to past literature, the influence of nAff as the moderating factor on the relationship between EI and integrating style specifically concerning the context of Sri

Lankan state university undergraduates remained unexplored. It is vital to test the influence of the level of EI and the motivational drive of a person in selecting a conflict resolution strategy to have a more accurate purview in finding solutions to undergraduate conflicts. The study provides a comprehensive insight into the aforementioned field.

The results of the statistical analysis revealed that integrating style was preferred by most of the students confirming the findings of Chan, Sit, and Lau (2014). This behavior may be a result of the cultural values held by the students. The study of Morris et al. (1998) affirms that cultural values influence conflict management behavior. Asian culture is lean towards collectivism where they value group goals over individual goals, group concerns over individual concerns, and collective needs over individual needs (Ting-Toomey, et al., 1991).

The outcomes concluded that EI is positively related to integrating conflict resolution styles. The findings are in conformity with several other research findings (Jordan and Troth, 2002; Jones, 2000; Shih and Susanto, 2010; Gross and Guerrero, 2000; Chan, Sit, and Lau, 2014).

The results support the positive moderating effect of nAff on integrating style. People who are high in EI interact well with people and possess good interpersonal skills (Goleman, 1998) as well people who have affiliation motive seek social approval and typically desire to be fond of others and want others to like them (Lilly, Duffy, and Virick, 2006). Studies suggest nAff positively linked with preference to select a smoothing conflict resolution style (Jones and White, 1985). Thus the findings may be a result of the complementing effect of a high emotionally intelligent person who driven from affiliation need concerning other party's needs through attempting to satisfy the concerns of both parties and tries to achieve a win-win solution which is mutually beneficial for both parties (Robbins and Judge, 2013) preferring an integrating conflict resolution style.

At the theoretical level, this research makes a significant contribution to understanding the role of nAff in defining the relationship between EI and the integrating style of conflict resolution. While prior researches have investigated the direct association between EI and conflict resolution strategies (Ashkanasy and Daus, 2002; Bodtker and Jameson, 2001; Chan, Sit, and Lau, 2014; Di Fabio and Blustein, 2010; Jordan and Troth, 2004), EI and human motivational needs (Christie et al, 2007; Jones and White, 1985; Essop, 2015) and human motivational needs and conflict resolution (Fodor, 1985; Bell and Blakeney, 1977), this research uniquely explore the relationship between EI and integrating style of conflict resolution strategies, with nAff modeled as the moderator. As the research concluded that nAff enhances the link between EI

and integrating style of conflict resolution strategy, it implies that to foster an environment to increase the chances of selecting a more productive and collaborative conflict resolution approach by a student, not only a higher EI would matter but also a drive for affiliation matters along with high EI.

Studies have shown that integrating style leads to creative solutions and generally perceived as the most appropriate, most effective, and highly competent style in managing conflicts. Studies have revealed a higher level of EI would direct people to select more collaborative conflict resolution styles (Antonioni, 1998; Ashkanasy and Daus, 2002; Bodtker and Jameson, 2001; Chan, Sit, and Lau, 2014; Di Fabio and Blustein, 2010; Jordan and Troth, 2004; Gross and Guerrero, 2000). This study has added to the literature that by increasing the students' level of EI along with stimulating their affiliation drives they can be lead to select more productive conflict resolution approaches such as integrating style. By giving them opportunities to enhance the affiliation with each other along with EI development programmes under University Grants Commission before the student enrollment with the universities (i.e. secondary education level and induction level) would yield better results.

The outcomes of the research should be examined in the light of several cautions to put the findings in perspective. These limitations have the potential to impact the generalizability of the research outcomes beyond the context of the present research. The study sample was limited to state university undergraduates, employed a non-probability sampling technique which acquires data using convenience sampling. In terms of the survey methodology, this research relied on self-reported data. Given the nature of the acquired data, the possibility of self-report bias may occur. Moreover, the model only examines only a fraction of human motivational needs, EI, and conflict resolution strategies where there may be other unmeasured factors such as personality, values, and culture that could influence. Future researchers could address the aforesaid limitations and direct their studies to address the gaps remaining.

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