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**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ) AND  
ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT AMONG EMPLOYEES WITH AN EMPHASIS ON  
INTERPERSONAL CONFLICTS (CASE STUDY: BANKS OF BEHBAHAN, IRAN)**

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**ABSTRACT**

Undoubtedly, attention to emotions in organizations is considered as a need in today's competitive markets and this issue requires identifying the emotional status of the employees and the effective management of these emotions in order to control conflict within an organization. Interpersonal conflict is one of the major factors leading to the loss of talented manpower, which results in group conflicts and organizational conflicts; therefore, the present study attempts to investigate the relationship between the elements of emotional intelligence and interpersonal conflict among bank clerks of the city of Behbahan, southwest of Iran. The statistical population of this study includes all the employees of the banks in the city of Behbahan, 40 of whom were randomly selected as our sample during the months of May and June 2015. The results of the inferential analysis reveals a positive significant relationship between the factors of emotional intelligence among employees and also a positive significant relationship between the different elements of interpersonal conflicts, however, there was a negative significant relationship between the factors of emotional intelligence and the factors of interpersonal conflict.

**Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Interpersonal Conflicts, Bank Clerks, Organizational Conflicts**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most interesting and important fields of study in recent years is the issue of emotional intelligence, which has many applications in different professional and social fields. The present theories of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983), and the theories of emotional intelligence (Mayer and Salovey, 2000; Goleman, 1995) focus on the importance of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence has become an increasingly important concept in workplaces, workshops and conferences; it has been developed to help employees and managers to understand the importance of emotional intelligence and its implication at the workplace of organizations (Abraham, 2000).

With the emergence of the communication age and the importance of the value of human communications and also strategic organizational opportunities, the theories of human emotional intelligence has been significantly popular and is one of the mostly discussed issues in organizations. Many scholars have investigated emotional intelligence in their scientific research in the past decades. Many researchers have shown that emotional intelligence can predict many business outcomes. It seems that emotional intelligence can be an evolved form of

focusing on human resources within an organization, and it can be a modern and efficient tool in the hands of competent business leaders and theoreticians in the marketplace for directing people in an organization and the customers outside the organization and keeping the customers satisfied and reducing conflict (Parsa, 2004). Emotional intelligence is a subject trying to explain and interpret the position of emotions and feelings in making people more capable. Managers who possess emotional intelligence are effective leaders who achieve goals with maximum efficiency, satisfaction and employees' loyalty (Mokhtaripour, 2008).

The development of an organization is dependent to facing conflicts; reducing destructive conflicts can provide the best situation for the survival of an organization. Therefore, the aim of reducing conflicts is not to avoid them, but to manage them. The way we make decisions against conflicts can be destructive or constructive; the constructive method of facing conflicts helps us to look at success from different aspects, but the negative way of dealing with conflicts can lead to destruction. Conflict is considered as an inevitable and inseparable element of organizational life which mostly happens due

to different personality characteristics of different people within an organization. People are different in their skills, interests, abilities, and other personality traits. Awareness of the personality differences of people in an organization can assist the managers of the organizations, because when managers accept that people are different in their intrinsic and learned the skills, they will not expect the same behavior from all employees. Among different organizations, banks have been more interested in searching competition advantage, because they know they need to have a balance between the logical and emotional dimensions. People who have a healthy relationship, and feel value, support, trust, and importance will have a better mental health and will be more efficient and beneficial. In such an environment, controlling conflict in a constructive way can be possible (Shirkhani, 2010).

After reading the related literature, the authors of the article realized the importance role of emotional intelligence and controlling conflict within an organization, therefore the present study attempts to investigate this issue in the banks of the city of Behbahan, so that the results can be implemented and managed to deal with these conflicts, help the development and invrease of the awareness

and performance levels of the managers and employees of this organization.

Emotional intelligence is a series of non-cognitive abilities and skills which increase an individual's ability to deal with environmental pressure and stress, and in so doing, it seems that the variable of emotional intelligence is the factor related to job stress among managers and employees, and is a way of dealing with conflict (Rogers et al., 2006). Awareness of emotional intelligence in an organization can assist managers to solve many problems, because when the accept that humans are different in their emotional intelligence, they will not expect similar behavior from the whole staff. Many managers tend to be strict, and they are unable to have a good relationship with their employees, thus, they cannot make a change in their business environment, organizational culture, and technological and professional processes. Such managers, despite having good technical knowledge, cannot be successful. Research has shown that a manager or technician with high emotional intelligence and high technical experience can be more prepared and skilled in dealing with emerging conflicts, organizational and group weaknesses and presents mistakes, vagueness in communication, having a bad relationship; they can be more aware of

valuable and beneficial secrets (Cooper, 1997).

It is evidence that emotional intelligence generally requires a special attention in all organizations which use human resources as their main assets, and specifically in banks. Some of these necessities are mentioned as follows:

- 1- Emotional intelligence increases individual and group work; people with high emotional intelligence cooperate better and understand others better.
- 2- Emotional intelligence can be useful in increasing individual's creativity to deal with conflicts and problems.
- 3- It is an important factor in hiring and promoting employees.
- 4- It makes decisions easier and results in better customer care.

The aim of the present study is to determine whether there is a significant relationship between the variables of emotional intelligence and interpersonal organizational conflicts among the bank clerks of the city of Behbahan. Therefore, this study seeks to emphasize on emotional intelligence as an important factor to improve organizational conflicts and the performance of the bank clerks of the city of Behbahan.

### **1.1. Emotional Intelligence**

Currently, two main approaches can be mentioned in defining emotional intelligence:

- 1- The original and non-mixed approach, Ability Approach, which defines emotional intelligence as an intelligence including emotions.
- 2- Common and combined approaches, Mixed Approach, which combines emotional intelligence with other skills and characteristics such as mental health, inspiration and the ability to communicate with others, and emphasizes on a combination of them (Noori and Nasiri, 2004).

In the form of common and mixed approaches, a different model was proposed by Bar-On (1997), which defines emotional intelligence as a series of non-cognitive abilities, efficiencies and skills that influence a person's ability to achieve success and deal with issues and environmental pressures (Amini, 2005).

### **1-2. Conflict**

By definition, an organization is a place for developing and increasing conflicts and disagreements. However, contrary to its nature, organizational managers and researchers have little information about the management of conflict; this lack of information can be particularly noticeable in the management of Iran, and has caused

numerous problems for organizational managers and other people involved in organizations. Managers generally have a negative attitude toward conflicts, and are scared of conflicts and try to avoid them. The reason of this fear is the lack of information about the nature and characteristics of conflict. Conflict is a phenomenon which has positive and negative effects on the performance of individuals and organizations; the proper and effective use of conflict results in better performance and improves the levels of organizational health, whereas, it's improper use leads to a poorer performance, lots of conflict and chaos in an organization. It is clear that the effective use of conflict requires learning the skills in managing and controlling it, which is nowadays considered as one of the most important management skills. This section tries to explain the concept of conflict, and different approaches toward conflicts (traditional approach, human relations approach, interactive approach), different types of conflicts and their causes, positive and negative aspects of conflict, and the management of conflict (Eshraghi, 2008).

## **2. HYPOTHESES**

The main hypothesis tested in this study is as follows:

There is a significant relationship between

emotional intelligence and interpersonal conflicts among the bank clerks of the city Behbahan. To this end, more detailed sub-hypotheses are investigated as follows:

1- There is a significant relationship between the variables of interpersonal conflicts (boss, subordinates, and peers) among the bank clerks of the city Behbahan.

2- There is a significant relationship between the variables of emotional intelligence (the awareness and expression of personal emotions, cognitive emotions, understanding outside emotions, controlling and managing emotions) among the employees.

3- There is a significant relationship between the variables of interpersonal conflict (boss, subordinates, and peers) and emotional intelligence (the awareness and expression of personal emotions, cognitive emotions, understanding outside emotions, controlling and managing emotions) among employees.

## **3. LITERATURE OF THE STUDY**

In his study, Shah Bahrami (2010) found no significant relationship between the managers' emotional intelligence and controlling strategies; a positive significant relationship with problem solving, and a negative significant relationship with indifference. In a research titled "Examining the Relationship of Public and Private Schools Managers' emotional intelligence of

the City of Tehran with Conflict Management Strategies”, Sarbakhshi Raad and Bakhtiari (2010) showed that there is a positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence and problem-solving strategies and indifference but there was no significant relationship between emotional intelligence and controlling strategies.

In his research, “Examining the Effects of Teaching Emotional Intelligence on Conflict and Managing Styles of the Nurses of Razi Psychological Hospital in Tehran”, Akhond Lotfali (2009) concluded that teaching emotional intelligence had a positive significant influence on the managing styles of conflict among nurses.

Findler, Windol, and Morbarak (2007) have done some research about conflict among managers in the global society, relationship patterns among variability, capacity, organizational culture, efficient employees, job satisfaction and organizational loyalty. The results indicated that by increasing the culture and salary of the employees, their job satisfaction and in turn their loyalty to the organization increases, and there is also a positive significant relationship between job satisfaction and organizational loyalty.

Leung (2009), in his study with the title of “Conflict Management and Emotional Intelligence” showed that the determining

factors between emotional intelligence and conflict management strategies are as follows:

- 1- Relationships and interpersonal relations;
- 2-Worrying about oneself;
- 3-Worrying about others;
- 4- Modifying, interpreting and redefining conflict situations.

This study indicates that as long as at least two of these factors are present at the same time, soon after the formation of conflict, it can be avoided or resolved:

- 1- High emotional intelligence of the employees;
- 2- Employees’ concern and attention toward others;
- 3- Customers’ concerns toward others

Sosanto (2010) has shown that different levels of emotional intelligence may directly affect communication skills and conflict management.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The present study is descriptive – qualitative, and can be considered practical. Correlational research includes trying to determine the relationship between different variables by using correlational coefficient. The objective of correlational study is determining the effects of the changes in one

or more independent variables on one or more dependent variables (Delavar, 2001).

This descriptive study includes all the bank clerks of the city of Behbahan as its statistical population, 40 of who have randomly been selected during the months of May and June 2015.

In the quantitative research method, questionnaires are one of the main tools of data collection. Since the present study is quantitative, these questionnaires were used to collect the data: Palmer and Stough Emotional Intelligence Inventory (2001) including 31 questions, and Organizational

Conflict Questionnaire, including nine questions which evaluates the dependent and independent variables. The independent variable of the present study is planning, and the dependent variable is the performance of the staff. Extensive statistical techniques very used in order to analyze the data. In the descriptive statistics, frequency, percentage, average and etc. were employed; in the inferential statistics, Pearson's correlational coefficient and the SPSS software very used to analyze the data.

## 4.2. Descriptive Statistics

### 4.2.1. Distribution of Respondents by Age and Gender

Age	Respondents	
	Number	Percentage
20-30	5	12.5
31-40	17	42.5
41-50	15	37.5
51-60	3	7.5
Total	40	100

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age and gender

Gender	Respondents	
	Number	Percentage
Male	30	75
Female	10	25
Total	40	100

### 4.2.2. Distribution of Respondents by Education Level and Marital Status

Education Level	Respondents	
	Number	Percentage
Diploma	1	2.5
Associate's Degree	5	12.5
BA	29	72.5
MA	5	12.5
Total	40	100

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by education level and marital status

Marital Status	Respondents	
	Number	Percentage
Single	8	20
Married	32	80
Total	40	100

**4.3. Inferential Statistics**

The main hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal conflicts among the bank clerks of the city Behbahan.

Since Emotional Intelligence Inventory and Interpersonal Conflict Questionnaire were answered and scored, and transformed into quantitative data, the Pearson’s correlational coefficient was used to determining the relationship between the variables.

**Table 3: Pearson’s correlational coefficient between emotional intelligence (EQ) and interpersonal conflicts among bank employees**

	Emotional Intelligence	Interpersonal Conflict
Pearson’s correlational coefficient	1	0.276
Sig.	0	0.000
Number	40	40

The results of the correlational coefficient show that the null hypothesis is rejected and H1 is accepted; which means there is a positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence (EQ) and interpersonal conflict among employees.

**Sub-hypotheses**

Sub-hypothesis One:

There is a significant relationship between interpersonal conflict (boss, subordinates and peers) among the bank clerks of the city Behbahan.

**Table 4: The relationship between interpersonal conflict factors (boss, subordinate, peers) among the staff of banks**

Type of conflict		Conflict with boss	conflict with subordinates	conflict with peers	Total conflict
Conflict with boss	correlational coefficient	1	0.225	0.235	0.600
	Sig.	0	0.001	0.001	0.000
	Number	40	40	40	40
conflict with subordinates	correlational coefficient	0.225	1	0.534	0.868
	Sig.	0.001	0	0.000	0.000
	Number	40	40	40	40
conflict with peers	correlational coefficient	0.235	0.534	1	0.741
	Sig.	0.001	0.000	0	0.000
	Number	40	40	40	40

Correlation test showed that H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted, i.e., there is a significant relationship between conflict between interpersonal conflict factors among the bank employees.

Sub-hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between the variables of emotional intelligence (the awareness and expression of personal emotions, cognitive emotions, understanding outside emotions,

controlling and managing emotions) among the employees.

The Table 5 show that the null hypothesis is rejected and the hypothesis is accepted; there is a positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence factors among the employees.

Sub-hypothesis 3- There is a significant relationship between the variables of interpersonal conflict (manager, employees, peers) and emotional intelligence (the

awareness and expression of personal emotions, cognitive emotions, understanding outside emotions, controlling and managing emotions) among the employees.

The test results in Table 6 show that H0 is rejected and H1 accepted, which means there is a negative significant relationship between emotional intelligence factors and interpersonal conflicts among employees.

**Table 5: The relationship between emotional intelligence factors and bank employees**

		Emotional awareness and expression	Cognitive Emotions	Understanding outside emotions	Controlling and managing emotions	Total EQ
Emotional awareness and expression	correlational coefficient	1	0.238	0.398	0.220	0.761
	Sig.	0	0.001	0.000	0.002	0.000
	Number	40	40	40	40	40
Cognitive Emotions	correlational coefficient	0.238	1	0.196	0.296	0.629
	Sig.	0.001	0	0.005	0.000	0.000
	Number	40	40	40	40	40
Understanding outside emotions	correlational coefficient	0.398	0.196	1	0.131	0.673
	Sig.	0.000	0.005	0	0.050	0.000
	Number	40	40	40	40	40
Controlling and managing emotions	correlational coefficient	0.220	0.296	0.131	1	0.562
	Sig.	0.002	0.000	0.050	0	0.000
	Number	40	40	40	40	40

**Table6. The relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal conflicts among bank employees**

		Conflict with boss	Conflict with subordinates	Conflict with peers	Total conflict
Emotional awareness and expression	correlational coefficient	-0.036	-0.369	-0.296	-0.335
	Sig.	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.000
	Number	40	40	40	40
Cognitive Emotions	correlational coefficient	-0.032	-0.254	-0.093	-0.136
	Sig.	0.050	0.000	0.049	0.050
	Number	40	40	40	40

Understanding outside emotions	correlational coefficient	-0.51	-0.242	-0.175	-0.184
	Sig.	0.047	0.000	0.013	0.008
	Number	40	40	40	40
Controlling and managing emotions	correlational coefficient	-0.086	-0.145	-0.123	-0.353
	Sig.	0.047	0.038	0.048	0.046
	Number	40	40	40	40
Emotional awareness and expression	correlational coefficient	-0.256	-0.396	-0.131	-0.276
	Sig.	0.46	0.000	0.050	0.000
	Number	40	40	40	40

## 5. CONCLUSION

The main hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and interpersonal conflicts among the bank clerks of the city Behbahan. The results of the correlational coefficient show that the null hypothesis is rejected and H1 is accepted; which means there is a positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence (EQ) and interpersonal conflict among employees.

Sub-hypothesis One: There is a significant relationship between interpersonal conflict (boss, subordinates and peers) among the bank clerks of the city Behbahan. Correlation test showed that H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted, i.e., there is a significant relationship between interpersonal conflict factors among the bank employees

Sub-hypothesis 2: There is a significant relationship between the variables of emotional intelligence (the awareness and expression of personal emotions, cognitive emotions, understanding outside emotions,

controlling and managing emotions) among the employees.

The above test results show that the null hypothesis is rejected and the hypothesis is accepted; there is a positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence factors among the employees.

Sub-hypothesis 3- There is a significant relationship between the variables of interpersonal conflict (manager, employees, peers) and emotional intelligence (the awareness and expression of personal emotions, cognitive emotions, understanding outside emotions, controlling and managing emotions) among the employees.

The test results show that H0 is rejected and H1 accepted, which means there is a negative significant relationship between emotional intelligence factors and interpersonal conflicts among employees.

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