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RESEARCH PAPER

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Leadership Styles and Workplace Dynamics among University Students

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) has gained increasing scholarly attention as a core factor shaping leadership effectiveness and organizational interactions. While substantial research has been conducted in Western contexts, its significance among university students in Pakistan has yet to be adequately examined. This study explores the influence of EI on leadership styles—specifically transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire—and on workplace-like dynamics such as collaboration, conflict management, and team satisfaction. Employing a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 350 university students active in student organizations. Quantitative findings, based on the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) and the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X), indicated strong associations between EI and transformational leadership ($r = .52$, $p < .001$) as well as between EI and group satisfaction ($r = .45$, $p < .001$). Complementary interviews with 20 student leaders underscored the role of empathy, cultural awareness, and adaptability in fostering inclusive and cooperative dynamics. The results highlight the potential of EI to strengthen leadership capacities within Pakistan's collectivist educational context, suggesting that targeted EI development should be integrated into university leadership and professional training programs.

| **KEYWORDS** | Emotional Intelligence, Transformational Leadership, University Students, Workplace Dynamics, Pakistan, Team Cohesion, Collectivism |

Introduction

A contentious dispute breaks out over the planning of an impending cultural event during a busy student council meeting at a Pakistani Universities. A number of individuals engage in heated debates, each supporting their own vision. A student leader subtly steps in as the tension builds. By when both people's concerns are acknowledged, their frustrations are understood, and a solution that incorporates several viewpoints is proposed, the conflict ends and an agreement is made. Although being commonplace, this instance demonstrates the value of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in group and leadership contexts. Not just a corporate or organizational term, emotional intelligence (EI) is an essential feature of everyday interactions, particularly in higher education settings where students frequently take part in leadership and group initiatives. motivated actions.

Mayer and Salovey (1997) define emotional intelligence as the ability to identify, use, understand, and successfully control emotions. Unlike traditional intelligence tests, which focus more on cognitive or analytical capabilities, emotional intelligence (EI) places greater emphasis on the social and emotional skills required to manage complex interpersonal relationships. Scholars such as Goleman (1995) contend that technical proficiency is only one aspect of good leadership; emotional intelligence (EI) plays an even bigger role. Leaders with high emotional intelligence (EI), who can regulate their emotions, empathize with others, and motivate teams toward shared goals, develop cooperative and

resilient organizational cultures. There are leadership opportunities outside of the classroom at universities.

Students often assume roles in clubs, societies, and departmental councils where they are tasked with organizing events, managing conflicts, and ensuring team coordination. These environments serve as pseudo-workplace contexts, offering a microcosm of the challenges students will encounter in professional life. Leadership in such settings does not merely involve delegating tasks but requires the ability to inspire, negotiate, and sustain harmonious relationships. In this regard, EI is not only relevant but arguably indispensable. Despite the global recognition of EI as a predictor of effective leadership and positive workplace outcomes (Walter, Cole, & Humphrey, 2011), there remains a notable gap in research focusing on its application among Pakistani university students. Much of the existing literature has been conducted in Western, individualist cultures where autonomy and independence are emphasized. In contrast, Pakistan is characterized by a collectivist cultural orientation, shaped by social interdependence, family ties, and Islamic values of empathy, compassion, and community welfare (Batool, Khalid, & Saeed, 2023). This cultural backdrop may significantly amplify the ways in which EI influences leadership styles and workplace-like dynamics, making Pakistan a distinctive context for inquiry.

To conceptualize leadership styles, this study draws upon the typology proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994): transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate by articulating a vision, fostering innovation, and attending to followers' needs. Transactional leaders emphasize structure, rewards, and compliance with established norms. Laissez-faire leaders adopt a hands-off approach, often withdrawing from active decision-making. Previous studies suggest that EI is most strongly associated with transformational leadership because of its emphasis on empathy, emotional awareness, and individualized consideration (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000). However, the degree to which this association holds true in non-Western student contexts remains unclear.

In addition to leadership styles, this study considers workplace-like dynamics, including team cohesion, conflict resolution, and motivation, as central outcomes influenced by EI. University student groups mirror many aspects of professional workplaces: they require collaboration across diverse personalities, involve high-stakes decision-making (e.g., event organization, project deadlines), and necessitate negotiation of competing interests. Students with high EI are more likely to facilitate collaboration, minimize interpersonal conflicts, and sustain group morale. Conversely, low EI may contribute to miscommunication, rigidity, and group fragmentation. The relevance of EI becomes even more pronounced when viewed against Pakistan's cultural and social context. Collectivist societies tend to value harmony, respect for authority, and the maintenance of social bonds. These cultural values align closely with key components of EI, such as empathy, perspective-taking, and conflict management. For instance, Islamic ethical principles emphasize the virtues of patience (*sabr*), compassion (*rahma*), and mutual respect, all of which parallel dimensions of EI (Alam & Akhtar, 2020). Thus, within Pakistan, EI may not only facilitate effective leadership but also resonate with broader cultural and religious expectations of interpersonal behavior.

Yet, despite these compelling intersections, systematic empirical research on EI, leadership, and workplace-like dynamics in Pakistani universities remains limited. Much of the available work has focused on organizational employees, corporate managers, or teachers, leaving a significant gap regarding student leadership development. This oversight is notable given that today's university students are tomorrow's professionals, policymakers, and leaders. Understanding how EI shapes their leadership behaviors and team interactions is essential for designing educational interventions that enhance both academic and professional outcomes.

This study is significant for several reasons. First, it extends the scholarship on emotional intelligence beyond Western, corporate, and individualist settings to a South Asian, collectivist, and academic context. Second, it highlights the role of EI in shaping not only leadership behaviors but also the quality of group interactions within higher education, a domain where teamwork and leadership skills are increasingly emphasized. Third, it carries practical implications for policy and practice. If Emotional Intelligence is found to meaningfully enhance leadership and team outcomes, campuses may consider integrating EI development programs into student training, orientation conferences, or leadership workshops. Such petitions can prepare students not only for academic success, but also for their potential role in professional and civic participation.

All measured emotional intelligence is a solid context for understanding workplace relationships and management team among Pakistani students. By placing this study on the cultural norms of collectivism and Islamic ethics, he seeks hypothetical rich and practically applicable expectations. Estimates suggest that the results contribute to the support of growth cases of research on emotional intelligence and ingenuity in leadership development in the Pakistani structure of higher education.

Literature Review

Foundations of Emotional Intelligence

The concept of emotional intelligence (IS) has become important in psychology and leadership research over the past 30 years. Mayer and Salovey (1997) define emotional intelligence (EI) as a set of four interconnected abilities. Use emotions to accurately recognize emotions, clarify reasoning, and clarify any emotional meaning and emotional control you have in your social. These abilities to enable people to read emotional signals and respond and adjust their actions in response to changes in social states are the basis of healthy interpersonal tactics.

Goleman's innovative work in 1995, Discourse, Presentation of Emotional Intelligence (IS) in Surrounding Organizations and Leadership (IS), studied psychology outside of EI. He defined emotional intelligence (EI) as a set of skills that distinguish leaders who succeed in simple abilities, such as dynamism, self-control, self-awareness, sympathy, and social skills. Unlike traditional intelligence (IQ), which pays more attention to cognitive abilities, emotional intelligence focuses on how emotional skills affect solutions, command work, and adaptation. This inequality was particularly evident in leadership studies, where human management capabilities are generally beyond technical knowledge. Recent research shows the important role that emotional intelligence (EI) plays in group and organizational contexts.

For example, Mérida-López, Extremera, and Rey (2023) show that leaders with higher emotional intelligence strengthen relationships, educate team unity, and reduce workplace stress. Their solutions suggest that relational resources such as emotional intelligence (EI) influence group outcomes and are not single attributes. In high-rate scenarios such as healthcare, education, and student leadership, emotional intelligence leaders (EIs) can remain edited to select followers and inspire them. These results provide a stepping stone in the student context. There, management comes with a balance between academic expectations and interpersonal issues. Scientists warn against the adoption of a vision of a single size world despite the fundamental concepts depicting emotional intelligence (IS) as a universal advantage. Cultural, institutional, and historical factors can influence and influence outcomes (Walter, Cole and Humphrey, 2011). This underscores how important it is to explore emotional intelligence (EI) under the collectivist and educational conditions of Pakistan, where emotional capabilities can meet cultural norms of sympathy, harmony and respect.

Leadership Styles in Educational Contexts

Leadership style is an important factor that defines the implementation of groups and organizational culture. Bass and Avolio's (1994) full-range leadership model identifies three primary styles: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire.

- **Transformational leadership** inspires followers by articulating a compelling vision, encouraging intellectual stimulation, and providing individualized consideration. Leaders adopting this style empower others to exceed expectations and foster innovation. In education, transformational leadership has been associated with higher student engagement, motivation, and satisfaction (Aziz, 2025).

- **Transactional leadership** emphasizes structure, rewards, and punishments. While effective for maintaining order, it often limits creativity and initiative.

- **Laissez-faire leadership** reflects avoidance of decision-making and minimal involvement in team processes. While sometimes interpreted as empowering, it is frequently associated with group inefficiency and dissatisfaction.

In the context of universities, leadership styles profoundly shape student experiences. Research indicates that student leaders who adopt transformational practices create more inclusive and dynamic environments, encouraging participation across diverse groups (Davis & Peake, 2022). Conversely, transactional approaches may sustain short-term compliance but fail to inspire long-term commitment. Pakistani universities present unique leadership challenges. Student leaders must balance academic obligations with organizational responsibilities while navigating diverse teams characterized by linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic differences. Batool, Khalid, and Saeed (2023) observed that effective Pakistani student leaders often adopt adaptive leadership styles, combining elements of transformational inspiration with transactional structure. This implies that flexibility may be necessary for effective leadership in student environments, with emotional intelligence (EI) acting as the link that allows leaders to modify their approach in response to changing circumstances.

The EI–Leadership Nexus

Many fields of study have explored the connection between leadership and emotional intelligence. O'Boyle, Humphrey, Pollack, Hawver, and Story (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of studies on EI as a predictor of leadership effectiveness and concluded that EI affected leadership effectiveness moderately, with correlation ranging from r =.30 to.50. This suggests that managers of teams, motivators, and inspirers of higher emotional intelligence (EI) are more effective than those with lower EI. Studies have time and time again shown that there is a strong connection between revolutionary leadership and emotional intelligence. Barling, Slater, and Kellway (2000) discovered that high EI leaders had a greater tendency to practice change-oriented behaviors like inspiring followers, developing creativity, and responding sensitively to their needs. These leaders develop emotionally supportive cultures that enhance group productivity and trust.

In a collectivist society, cultural traditions improve the link between emotional intelligence and leadership. According to Al Iss and Mahmud (2017), empathy and emotional regulation are extremely important in a collectivist environment where group maintenance and group cohesion are important. This allows for compliance with the values of the community, so emotional intelligence (EI) is particularly relevant to Pakistani leaders in education. Researchers warn against extrapolating these conclusions. Walter et al. (2011). In this sense, trading leadership can be effective in cultures and businesses that make hierarchical observations very important, regardless of the level of employment

insurance. Furthermore, Lease's leadership cannot always show separation, but it represents a style of mandate that is accepted by the culture.

The link between leadership and Emotional Intelligence is becoming more apparent in Pakistan. According to Aziz (2025), universities Emotional Intelligence workshops enhanced the understanding of oneself, compassion, and conflict-resolution skills of student leaders. These results support the usefulness of EI for higher education institutions by indicating that it may be enhanced through focused initiatives. Yet there is still a dearth of studies, in particular regarding when it comes to examining the relationship between EI and various leadership philosophies in student groups.

Workplace Dynamics in Student Settings

Through group projects, organizational activities, and cooperative events, university settings frequently mimic workplace dynamics. Similarly to professional settings, these environments present coordination, dispute resolution, and motivational issues. According to Davis and Peake (2022), student organizations educate students to the leadership and teamwork needs of the real world, acting as "training grounds" for professional readiness. These group outcome fields are assigned by the manager's ability to control emotions and create a pleasant atmosphere, as well as the skills to enact decisions. Emotional intelligence has a major impact on this dynamic. Mérida Lopezet al. (2023). When leaders are emotionally sensitive, cooperation is more fluid. After discovering emotional shades and intervening before questions.

Social integration is highly valued in Pakistan, so emotional intelligence (EI) may become more important. According to Batool et al. (2023). However, leaders with weak emotional intelligence show differences, especially in various workplaces. Despite these ideas, few studies have studied the specific mechanisms in which emotional intelligence (EI) influenced similar dynamics to worker in student organizations. For example, little is known about how EI influences motivation in limited resources, or how it interacts with collectivist cultural norms to influence conflict resolution. These shortcomings must be met to develop a context-enabled leadership training program.

Pakistani Cultural Context

Leadership practices and relationships with others are significantly influenced by culture. As a collectivist society, Pakistan places a strong emphasis on hierarchy, collaboration, and community welfare. The aforementioned values, which emphasize empathy, justice, and compassion in interpersonal relationships, are derived from Islamic teachings as well as South Asian customs (Alam & Akhtar, 2020). Leadership are expected to uphold group peace, honor cultural sensitivity, and exhibit moral responsibility in these situations. Since Emotionally Intelligent leaders are adept at identifying others' viewpoints, handling interpersonal conflicts, and maintaining positive group dynamics, EI closely matches these expectations. Al Issa and Mahmud (2017) found that leadership influences are greater in collectivist societies where emotional intelligence follows social norms. Therefore, EI is particularly useful for Pakistani students in negotiations on issues of multicultural universities and multinational universities.

Nonetheless, the collectivist environment presents unique challenges. While the observations of authorities may prevent direct participation, focusing on harmony can lead to silence for those who disagree. As a result, leaders must find a balance between the cultural values of unity and the need for critical thinking and creativity. Emotional intelligence (EI) provides managers with the tools they need to maintain unity and reviews a variety of perspectives. Despite its cultural significance, there is still a lack of research into the role of EI in Pakistani universities. The Journal of Psychology and Social Psychology (2024) reports that student activity is on the rise in Pakistan. However, detailed research

into the relationship between emotional intelligence and student management is still lacking. Given the growing importance of student organizations to stimulate civic activity and professional preparation, this gap underscores the urgent need for localized research.

Synthesis and Gaps in the Literature

The research project reveals several important results.

i. In global contexts, Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a strong predictor of leadership success, especially transformative leadership.

ii. Group outcomes in educational contexts are influenced by leadership types; for instance, transformational leadership promotes higher levels of satisfaction and engagement.

iii. Emotional Intelligence (EI) is particularly pertinent in student groups since it improves workplace dynamics, such as team cohesion, motivation, and dispute resolution.

iv. The relationship between Emotional Intelligence & leadership is regulated by cultural factors, with socialist ideals strengthening EI's capacity to promote inclusivity and harmony.

There are still huge gaps, though. A lot of research has been done in corporate, organizational, or Western contexts; student leadership in South Asia region has received less attention. The distinct dynamics of student groups are typically overlooked by the paucity of empirical study in Pakistan, which is frequently restricted to the teacher or management populations. Furthermore, little study has been done on how cultural values and emotional intelligence combine to affect group outcomes and leadership behaviors. This review emphasizes the need for context-specific research that looks at how EI works in Pakistani colleges, where particular leadership issues are brought about by cultural norms, budgetary constraints, and student activism. Both scholarly conversations and practical initiatives, such as Emotional Intelligence training modules in college curricula, can gain from closing these gaps.

Hypothese

Drawing upon established theoretical and empirical literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Higher levels of EI are positively correlated with transformational leadership among university students.

H2: EI positively predicts team cohesion and effective conflict resolution in student-led organizations.

H3: Collectivist cultural values strengthen the influence of EI on both leadership styles and workplace-like dynamics.

Conceptual Framework

The proposed idea states that emotional intelligence (EI), which in turn affects the working environment in student groups, primarily determines leadership styles. Specifically, EI is expected to support transformative leadership by enhancing. The ability of leaders to inspire, sympathize and direct their peers towards a common goal. And in the opposite case, the minimum level of emotional intelligence is associated with transactions

or light checkered tactics. There, emotional awareness plays a small role in the management of the group. Therefore, thanks to the indirect process of EI leadership style, this affects outcomes such as team cohesion, conflict resolution, and collective motivation. The structure also emphasizes the cultural aspects of collectivism as a prohibition. In societies like Pakistan, where empathy, community orientation and interdependence are deeply integrated into social norms, the impact of emotional intelligence (EI) on leadership and labor relations will likely be greater. As a result, we believe that the model is a culturally located resource for emotional intelligence (EI), which emphasizes dual functions in the promotion of comprehensive group conditions and development of appropriate leadership, as well as individual capabilities.
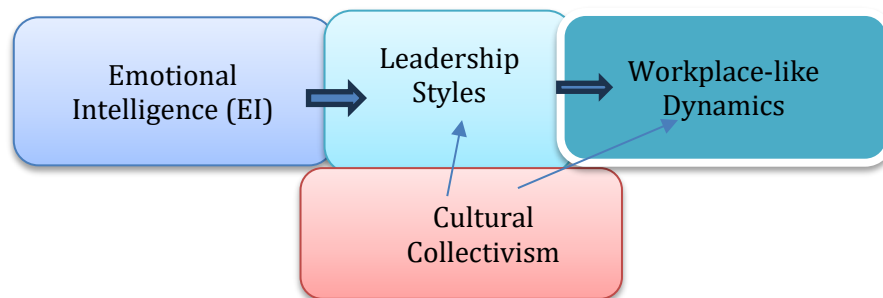

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of EI, Leadership Styles, and Workplace Dynamics

Material and Methods

Participants

The study utilized a convenience sample of 350 university students drawn from three higher education institutions in Pakistan: The University of Lahore, Quaid-i-Azam University, and the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). The sample comprised both undergraduate and postgraduate students actively engaged in extracurricular organizations, including debate societies, cultural clubs, student unions, and event management committees. These organizations were selected because they function as pseudo-workplace environments in which participants assume leadership roles, collaborate in teams, and negotiate conflicts, thereby reflecting workplace-like dynamics within academic contexts.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 25 years (M = 21.4, SD = 2.1). Of the total sample, 45% (n = 158) identified as male and 55% (n = 192) as female, providing a relatively balanced gender representation. Inclusion criteria required that participants be enrolled full-time at their respective universities and have at least six months of active membership in a student organization, ensuring relevant exposure to leadership and team-based activities. Exclusion criteria included students not currently affiliated with any extracurricular group, as the study sought to capture the interplay between emotional intelligence, leadership styles, and workplace-like dynamics within organizational contexts. Despite the fact that convenience sampling limits generalizability, it offered a practical means of identifying individuals with firsthand experience in academic leadership techniques, especially since student volunteers were readily available and the study was exploratory in nature.

Design

Relationships between student groups' emotional intelligence (EI), workplace interactions, and leadership ideologies. This design's goal was to integrate the benefits of both qualitative and quantitative methods, enabling a more comprehensive examination of the research questions. The quantitative component included standardized self-report

questions to assess leadership philosophy, emotional intelligence, and teamwork. In addition to allowing statistical testing of hypothesized links, these data provide a scientific foundation for identifying correlations and prediction effects. Through semi-structured interviews with a subgroup of student leaders (n = 20), the qualitative component examined lived experiences, contextual factors, and culturally specific manifestations of emotional intelligence in leadership practices. This has improved quantitative results. In addition to the results triangulation, this combination of approaches allowed us to better understand how cultural collectivism influenced group dynamics and leadership in the Pakistan academic environment.

Measures

Emotional Intelligence

The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, 2002) has been used to measure emotional intelligence. Four branches make up the MSCEIT's operationalization of emotional intelligence (EI): (1) recognizing emotions; (2) employing emotions to direct thought; (3) comprehending sentiments; and (4) feelings of control. Together, these branches provide a thorough evaluation of emotional intelligence (EI) by capturing distinct aspects of emotional functioning. The Urdu version of the MSCEIT was employed to ensure linguistic and cultural accessibility. Prior to data collection, the translation was subjected to back-translation procedures and pilot testing with 30 students to confirm semantic clarity and cultural relevance. Internal consistency reliability for the overall scale in the current study was $\alpha = .85$, consistent with previous research. Higher scores indicated greater proficiency in recognizing and regulating emotions, both in oneself and in others.

Leadership Styles

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X; Bass & Avolio, 2004), a widely recognized tool for analyzing transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles, was used to evaluate leadership behaviors. Leader behaviors including intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and inspirational motivation are assessed by the transformational subscale. The laissez-faire subscale shows a lack of leadership accountability and decision-making, whereas the transactional subscale evaluates contingent reward and management-by-exception. Participants rated the items on a five-point Likert scale, where 0 meant "not at all" and 4 meant "frequently, if not always." The subscale reliabilities for the current sample, which ranged from $\alpha = .80$ to $\alpha = .90$, demonstrated strong internal consistency. The MLQ's recognized psychometric qualities and its suitability for use in educational environments made it suitable for determining the leadership inclinations of student leaders.

Workplace-like Dynamics

Using existing measures of team functioning, a new 15-item scale was created to evaluate workplace-like dynamics within student organizations. Items were adapted from Mérida-López et al. (2023) to capture three dimensions relevant to student-led settings: **team cohesion, conflict resolution, and motivation**. Example items included, "Our team works together effectively toward shared goals" (cohesion), "Conflicts in our group are resolved constructively" (conflict resolution), and "Members remain motivated to complete group tasks" (motivation). Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree"). The scale demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .82$). Exploratory factor analysis confirmed the three-dimensional structure, supporting the construct validity of the adapted instrument for use in the Pakistani student context.

Demographic Information

A short demographic questionnaire collected participants' **age, gender, field of study, academic level (undergraduate or postgraduate), and leadership role** within their student organization. These data were used to contextualize the sample and explore potential covariates in the analysis. Leadership role information, in particular, enabled differentiation between students serving as executive members (e.g., president, secretary) and those in general membership positions, thus offering insight into varying levels of leadership exposure.

Ethical Considerations

This study respected the principles of ethical research along with the participation of human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents who were confident in the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participation was voluntary and we were unable to withdraw funds. Ethical approval was guaranteed by the Facilities Management Council of the leading universities of leading researchers prior to data collection.

Procedure

Data collection was carried out in two stages with institutional review board approval and adherence to the ethical guidelines established by Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC). Google Forms was used to disseminate structured online surveys to participants in the first phase. Faculty facilitators, student society organizations, and official university mailing lists distributed the survey link. Informed consent was electronically obtained before to participation, and participants were reassured that their involvement would be voluntary and confidential. It took about twenty to twenty-five minutes to complete the survey. In order to gain a deeper understanding of leadership practices and the influence of emotional intelligence on group dynamics, a purposeful subsample of twenty student leaders was asked to take part in semi-structured interviews during the second phase. Each interview was conducted in either Urdu or English, depending on the participant's preference, lasted about thirty minutes, and was audio recorded with permission. In order to maintain accuracy for qualitative analysis, transcripts were prepared verbatim.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using **SPSS version 26**. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) summarized participant characteristics and scale scores. Pearson's correlation coefficients examined associations between emotional intelligence, leadership styles, and workplace-like dynamics. Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test predictive relationships, while controlling for demographic variables.

The thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to analyze qualitative data. Transcripts were examined by two separate coders to find recurrent themes and patterns. Discussion was used to resolve coding inconsistencies, resulting in significant inter-rater reliability ($\kappa = .78$). To guarantee conceptual clarity and compatibility with the goals of the study, themes were later refined.

Limitations

The study has limitations despite its contributions. Self-report assessments have the potential to introduce response biases and social desirability. Additionally, the cross-sectional design limits causal interpretations, making it more difficult to deduce temporal links between workplace-like dynamics, leadership styles, and emotional intelligence. It is

advised that future research use experimental or longitudinal designs to support causal assertions.

Results and Discussion

Quantitative Findings

The descriptive analysis revealed that participants reported moderate levels of emotional intelligence (EI; M = 4.20, SD = 0.80) and relatively high transformational leadership (M = 4.50, SD = 0.75). Team cohesion was also rated positively (M = 4.30, SD = 0.70). These results are summarized in Table1.Correlation analysis provided partial support for the study hypotheses. As expected, EI showed a strong positive association with transformational leadership (r = .52, p < .001). However, EI did not significantly relate to transactional leadership (r = .12, p = .14) or laissez-faire leadership (r = −.08, p = .22). Consistent with the second hypothesis, EI demonstrated significant positive relationships with team cohesion (r = .45, p < .001) and conflict resolution skills (r = .40, p < .001). Regression analyses further confirmed the predictive role of EI. As displayed in Table 3, EI emerged as a significant predictor of transformational leadership (β = .41, p < .001) as well as team cohesion and satisfaction (β = .38, p < .001). Together, these results highlight the central role of EI in shaping effective leadership practices and fostering collaborative team environments.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	M	SD
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	4.20	0.80
Transformational Leadership	4.50	0.75
Team Cohesion	4.30	0.70

Table 2
Correlations

Variable	1	2	3
1. EI	___	.52**	.45**
2. Transformational Leadership	───	──	.50**
3. Team Cohesion	___	──	──

*Note: *p < .001*

Table 3
Regression Coefficients

Predictor	Outcome	β	p
E1	Transformational Leadership	.41	<.001
E2	Team Cohesion	.38	<.001

Qualitative Findings

The thematic analysis of interviews produced three overarching themes. First, it was discovered that empathy promoted inclusivity because emotionally intelligent leaders were better able to create unity and trust among disparate groups. Second, cultural sensitivity raised the Emotional intelligence's effectiveness. Respondents said managers' ability to adapt to group dynamics is reinforced by Islamic principles such as compassion and respect. Finally, using emotional regulation as a way to minimize conflict, managers were able to maintain team cohesion and resolve conflicts in a constructive way. Together, these results show the nuance that the quality of leadership that contributes to the cooperation, respect and stability of the student-led environment is influenced by emotional intelligence (EI).

Discussion

According to the research conclusions, the efficiency and behavior of leaders at the University of Pakistan in the workplace is heavily influenced by emotional intelligence (EI). Showing emotional intelligence is an important predictor Transformation leadership, support for Hypothesis 1, and demonstrate strong positive correlation (r = 0.52). This supports the previous conclusions of Al Issa and Mahmud (2017) that showed that EI encourages transformative behavior in collectivist societies. By applying these conclusions to academic disciplines, this study highlights how student leaders are recognized by emotional intelligence (EI) for peer interaction, motivation and support, improving organizational outcomes in academic conditions.

Additional research confirming the hypothesis shows that emotional intelligence (EI) improves workplace dynamics, particularly conflict resolution and command cohesion. This result corresponds to Merida Lopez et al. (2023) show how emotional intelligence can help groups work together to enjoy themselves. The results of this study show that emotionally intelligent leaders can effectively manage interpersonal conflicts and create cooperative command conditions. Empathy and cultural sensitivity as important processes in which emotional intelligence (EI) affects it, qualitative ideas confirm these quantitative results. These subjects highlight how Islamic and group principles determine that emotionally effective management is a direct result of skills. Although the effects of statistical moderation were not as apparent, it was demonstrated that cultural context increased the qualitative impact of EI, providing some support for hypothesis 3. All things considered, the study highlights the significance of incorporating EI training into student leadership development programs in Pakistani universities and advances a more contextualized knowledge of EI-leadership relations.

Conclusion

The importance of emotional intelligence (EI) in the development of effective leadership among students in the facilities of the University of Pakistan is highlighted by this study. The results show that predicting transformational leadership styles and promoting more positive behaviors are significantly influenced by emotional intelligence (EI). Workplace dynamics are characterized by improving team cohesion and constructive conflict resolution. The results show that promoting cooperation and inclusion in student organizations requires not only academic ability, but also the ability to identify, regulate and use emotions.

Emotional intelligence (EI) is even more important in Pakistan's collectivist cultural structure, given that compassion, compassion and community are associated with effective leadership practices. Students can obtain more organizations than simply providing funding for the development of EI. There are also qualities that support the country's broader cultural and educational goals, as well as referrals to business leadership. As future leaders and experts, people with emotional intelligence are more likely to deal with difficult situations of adaptability, stability and sensitivity. Emotional intelligence (EI) should be intentionally and indeed included in higher education programs to help teach future leaders in Pakistan.

Implications

The results of the research have lots of significant ramifications for both theory and practice. Evidence that emotional intelligence (EI) has a dominant influence on innovative leadership and team cohesion suggests that Pakistani universities should think about the inclusion of emotional intelligence. Debate societies, event committees and student clubs often function as home employment where leadership capabilities are developing. The supply of sympathy, emotional regulation, and the ability to resolve the conflicts they need can not only increase the efficiency of these organizations, but also prepare graduates for a professional environment that is interpersonal.

Relationships are important. The Pakistan Higher Education Board (HEC), which has provided seminars on emotional intelligence (EI) at facilities in Pakistan and highlighted student companies, can embrace this initiative. These programs can improve students' ability to resolve conflicts and create cooperative control conditions that correspond to inclusive, inclusive, inclusive, inclusive, and Pakistan's collectivist values. At the organizational level, universities may include components related to emotional intelligence (EI) in their current care and development programs. Role-playing games, experiential learning modules, and reflection-based training, for example, could help students in improving their capacity for emotional regulation and empathetic communication.

Furthermore, in student groups, emotional intelligence (EI) coaching may act as a stress and conflict-reduction tool, improving both team performance and individual member wellbeing. In context with Pakistan's growing student activism, leaders with greater EI may be able to mediate conflicts while maintaining group cohesion.

This research article theoretically expands on current EI-leadership frameworks to include the little-known South Asian higher education context. While most of the previous study has been on corporate or Western educational settings, the current findings highlight how cultural the EI–leadership relationship is moderated by collectivism. The concepts of leadership must take contextual elements into consideration, especially in collectivist and religiously informed civilizations like Pakistan, as evidenced by the findings that empathy and cultural sensitivity increase the influence of emotional intelligence. By situating EI within this cultural lens, the study challenges universalist assumptions in EI literature and highlights the value of localized, context-specific research. Furthermore, the findings suggest that leadership models in educational settings must move beyond structural or transactional dimensions and acknowledge the affective, cultural, and interpersonal processes that underlie effective group management.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, the study is not without limitations. First, the reliance on self-report measures introduces the potential for social desirability and response biases. While validated instruments were used, participants may have overestimated their EI or leadership effectiveness, which could affect the accuracy of the findings. Incorporating peer assessments or behavioral observations in future research would strengthen the reliability of results.

Second, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to draw causal inferences. Although correlations and regression analyses revealed significant associations, longitudinal studies are needed to establish the temporal direction of relationships between EI, leadership styles, and workplace-like dynamics. Tracking student leaders over time would provide richer insights into how emotional competencies develop and influence group outcomes across different phases of leadership.

Third, the sample was restricted to three metropolitan universities: LUMS, Quaid-i-Azam University QAU, and the University of Lahore, despite being diverse in terms of gender and academic fields. These limitations the findings' applicability to the wider society of Pakistani students, especially students attending universities with fewer resources or in rural areas. In order to compensate for regional and cultural variances, future studies should incorporate samples from a larger variety of universities, including both public and private establishments in different provinces.

In the end, the empirical moderation study could not yield definitive evidence, despite the qualitative findings highlighting cultural collectivism as a significant moderator. This calls for more intricate methodological approaches, such as multi-level modeling or structural equation modeling. Frameworks for a detailed study of the role of cultural

elements. Future research could also consider other factors, such as gender roles and socioeconomic status, which will help us to better understand leadership and emotional intelligence in the Pakistan situation. Given all circumstances, solving these problems in future research improves the validity of the outcomes and contributes to a more complete and contextual understanding of the ways in which emotional intelligence influences leadership and group dynamics in educational contexts.

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