

Review

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Review

Review of Influence of Emotional Intelligence (EI) on Collaboration Among Employees from Diverse Cultural Backgrounds in the Construction Industry

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of self-awareness, empathy, and relationship management on teamwork and communication among construction workers with diverse cultural backgrounds. A review of existing research on EI across various industries formed the basis of this study. The research results demonstrate that workers with strong emotional intelligence (EI) skills excel at handling cultural differences and conflict resolution and building positive workplace relationships, which is especially valuable for professionals in the construction industry. The research data indicates that professionals who demonstrate strong emotional intelligence (EI) perform better when dealing with cultural differences and resolving interpersonal conflicts. Their emotional intelligence skills enable them to understand their own emotions and those of others, which leads to better communication and teamwork between diverse groups. The increased emotional awareness helps organizations develop more inclusive collaborative spaces that benefit the construction industry because its professionals work in multicultural teams under high-pressure situations that require strong interpersonal and conflict-resolution abilities.

Keywords: emotional intelligence (EI); self-awareness; empathy; relationship management; teamwork; and communication

1. Introduction

The construction industry requires productive team collaboration to deliver successful results. The project includes team members who come from various cultural backgrounds. Although the construction industry does not seem multicultural at first glance, the worldwide workforce expansion reveals that it includes employees from many different nationalities (Stahl & Maznevski, 2021). EI model requires workers to detect and assess emotions and feelings before learning to manage them properly (Kambur, 2021). The model contains five fundamental elements: self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills, empathy, and motivation for using emotions to boost performance and advancement (Antonopoulou, 2024).

EI requires both the ability to carefully appraise and convey emotions efficiently and to use emotions wisely to mediate reasoning. Moreover, it requires strong skills to manage emotions effectively, all of which depend on a person's level of self-awareness. In turn, the various constituents of EI need to highlight the importance of empathy for nurturing relationships, as this invaluable trait allows an individual to create and maintain good networks and rapport among colleagues and workers. Those with high EI levels who show strong empathy will develop effective teams that solve unstructured work problems efficiently. The construction industry requires teamwork because many employees must work together to achieve successful projects (Singh, 2021).

Recognizing and understanding emotions enables people to develop better work attitudes. Also, employers retain their staff and acquire essential skills for handling demanding workplace environments and dynamic organizational frameworks. Through EI, such organizational changes become more manageable for employees, which leads to better teamwork success. Leadership practices of supervisors determine employee job satisfaction, while managers' EI influences this

factor. The practice of EI creates an environment where people from various countries can exchange ideas and resolve problems efficiently - the construction industry benefits from EI-based problem-solving during collaborative efforts. Understanding and controlling emotions creates better team unity, which helps workers handle cultural differences better and improve productivity. The assessment reveals how people handle their emotions and reactions to the feelings of others. The construction industry requires this approach because successful project results depend on teamwork and collaboration between team members.

The study of EI across various cultural settings demonstrates how cultural backgrounds affect emotional display and interpretation, directly impacting teamwork dynamics, which are crucial for creating an inclusive workplace. Organizations can optimize their collaboration strategies by understanding cultural variations in EI to leverage diverse workforce strengths. The approach enables improved team communication and synergy, which produce better project results and create an environment that includes all members. The study of construction projects typically focuses on larger-scale practices and does not address the issues of employee behavior and competition among diverse international construction teams.

Workers from diverse cultural backgrounds must develop effective collaboration because they can leverage their accumulated tacit understanding from multiple work environments and personal experiences. Productive collaborative efforts combine various knowledge, skills, and resources and enable successful project implementation while driving the development of relevant goods and services for projects. The presence of cultural diversity in teams generates important barriers to building and maintaining effective collaboration because team members from different backgrounds experience communication challenges. Understanding these effects is important in order to improve collaborative work practices among these individuals.

The construction industry embraces employees from diverse cultural backgrounds in its operations. Workers from various cultural backgrounds are more often involved in complex construction projects. The construction industry needs to establish effective employee relationships for successful collaboration. Hence, EI could be adopted as a problem-solving method to address workplace crises that stem from cultural diversity in the workforce. The research investigates economic and cultural relationships while studying the advantages and difficulties of using EI to improve workplace communication and teamwork.

The study aims to investigate the influence of EI on collaboration among employees from diverse cultural backgrounds in the construction industry. Identify factors that enhance or affect teamwork and strategies for improving EI to foster a more productive workplace.

The research Objectives are:

- a. To identify key EI competencies that impact teamwork and communications in multicultural construction teams.
- b. To analyze the challenges related to EI that hinder collaboration among employees from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- c. To explore strategies for improving EI development in the construction industry to enhance cross-cultural collaboration and overall team performance.

Goleman, 1995 states that EI is crucial in developing good relations, solving conflicts, and improving teamwork. The study would be highly relevant to the construction industry, which is characterized by employees from different cultural backgrounds and the need for collaboration to guarantee project success. With a highly dynamic industry and various professionals such as engineers, architects, project managers, and laborers working under high-pressure conditions, poor collaborations can result in project delays, cost overruns, and safety risks (Loosemore & Muslmani, 1999).

EI competencies such as self-awareness and team emotional regulations can enhance problem-solving, leadership effectiveness, and team cohesion. Therefore, this research would positively impact project success and efficiency, improve management strategies, and proffer recommendations to managers.

Table 1.1. Previous Studies on EI.

Authors and Years	Research Focus	Findings
Haider, Tehseen, Koay, Poulouva, & Afsar (2024)	Impact of project managers' EI on mega project success through the mediating role of human-related agile challenges: Project management as a moderator	The study on the impact of project managers' emotional intelligence (PMEI) on the success of a mega project, specifically the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), found that PMEI plays a crucial role in fostering trust, effective communication, and collaboration in high-stress environments.
Khosravi, Rezvani, & Ashkanasy (2020)	Emotional Intelligence: A preventive strategy to manage the destructive influence of conflict in large-scale projects.	The finding indicated that EI positively influences project performance by reducing task, relationship, and process conflict.
O'Connor, Hill, Kaya, & Martin (2019).	The Measurement of Emotional Intelligence: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommendations for Researchers and Practitioners	This paper guides researchers and practitioners in navigating EI by providing an overview and clarifying the different conceptualizations of EI.
Emmerling, & Boyatzis (2012)	Emotional and social intelligence competencies: cross-cultural implications. Cross Cultural Management: <i>An International Journal</i> , 19(1), 4-18.	It highlights how EI skills enable individuals to navigate cultural differences and build stronger collaborative relationships.

2. Main Body

The chapter reviews previous studies about EI to understand how employees perceive EI as a tool for improving inter-employee relations. It presents the concept of EI, its dimensions, and its impact of EI on teamwork and cultural diversity in the construction industry. Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined EI as the recognition, understanding, direction, and control of emotions in oneself and others. Empathy is the ability to understand other people's feelings, and Goleman (1995) added motivation, self-regulation, and social skills as the other five dimensions of EI. These theoretical perspectives can be built on to explain how EI affects interpersonal relationships and collaboration in diverse work settings.

2.1. EI Models

The *ability model*, or the Mayor Salovey-Caruso Model, was developed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990. The model views EI as an interrelated cognitive ability that decodes emotional information. It uses an assessment tool known as the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence test (MSCEIT). This model is divided into four branches, which are *perceiving emotions* involving the ability to detect emotions in faces, voices, and environments; *Understanding emotions*, which is the ability to decode and assimilate emotional language; *managing emotions*, the ability to regulate emotions to enhance growth; and *using emotions* ability to use emotions to solve problems.

The *mixed or Goleman's model* is mainly adopted in leadership settings and involves emotional competencies, personal traits, and behavior. It includes five components:

1. Self-regulation is managing and controlling one's emotional reactions to ensure a positive work environment. In diverse construction teams, highly regulated employees are less likely to get into conflict and more likely to contribute to good dialogue (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).
2. Self-awareness is the ability to identify and understand one's emotions (Carmel, Davina, Reni, Maria, Natasha, Louise, Vera, Fiorino, & Petre, (2022). Self-aware employees can identify their emotional responses and change their actions, leading to improved communication and collaboration in the workplace (Goleman, 1995).
3. Empathy, the capacity to comprehend and include the feelings of others, is important in multicultural construction teams. Employees who respect diverse perspectives and can effectively navigate cross-cultural interactions are likelier to show empathy than those who do not (Mayer, Caruso, Salovey 2002).
4. Motivation is the inner process determining an individual's commitment to performance and stability. Those with high EI are intrinsically motivated, which improves teamwork and creates a positive collaborative culture (Goleman, 1995).

5. Social skills include effective communication, conflict resolution, and teamwork. Construction projects are more likely to succeed at collaboration if employees have good social skills and can build relationships and bridge cultural differences (Bar-On, 2006).

The *Trait model*, introduced by Konstantinos V. Petrides, deals with an array of emotional self-perceptions at the lower personality level. The assessment tool for the trait model is the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue). EI is regarded as a personality trait rather than a cognitive ability, and it is self-reported behavior and perceived abilities.

2.2. Barriers and EI

EI is a key component of any organization's culture regarding workplace relationships and performance. Every employee must be able to handle their co-workers, manage stress, and contribute to the positive atmosphere of the company. However, several challenges exist for employees from different cultures that can limit their EI and use of it in the workplace. These barriers can affect the workplace and hinder teamwork in the performance of their duties. The following are some of the major cultural issues that affect EI in organizations. Language and communication are important in the expression of emotions and disposition. Employees who use a language other than their mother tongue may have difficulty expressing emotions, leading to confusion and, consequently, misunderstandings. Also, culture impacts tone, gestures, and facial expressions, which may be pretty strange to people from other cultures (Goleman, 1995).

Culture defines the extent to which people are allowed to show their feelings. According to Matsumoto (2006), some cultures allow for the expression of emotions, while others do not allow for the expression of emotions and instead prefer to remain calm. It will be a real challenge for employees to work with colleagues who do not show emotions during work since this is seen as professional. In addition, the perception of different feelings like anger, frustration, and enthusiasm differs, affecting conflict management and workplace feedback.

Implicit biases and stereotypes affect the perception of emotions and behavior in a diverse workforce. For example, cultural stereotypes of emotional characteristics may affect the perception of an employee's motivation or ability (Dovidio et al., 2010). Such biases may lead to discrimination or exclusion of an employee in the workplace, which in turn will affect the employee's emotional state and participation in the work. Cultural patterns affect the way that people manage and deal with their feelings. Some cultures practice emotional regulation to avoid causing social discomfort, while others practice emotional regulation to release tension (Gross, 2002). These differences in emotional regulation may pose a problem in the workplace, given that the employees applying these different strategies cannot help each other during stressful times.

The culture in the workplace determines the perceived acceptability of emotional display. Therefore, it is possible that the given employees have different perceptions of the emotions that are allowed or encouraged at the workplace, which makes the level of acceptable EI challenging (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Understanding social norms and expectations is important in order to create a workplace where people can easily show their emotions.

The presence of bias, prejudice, or exclusion can demote the confidence of an employee and his/her willingness to display emotions in the workplace. Employees who feel like outcasts may decide to hide their emotions to avoid being taken casually by their colleagues (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). This suppression can hinder relationship-building efforts and decrease job satisfaction, ultimately affecting workplace morale and productivity.

Lack of information on cultural perceptions of emotions hinders employees' EI. Companies that have not adopted policies and programs that promote inclusion may not be well-positioned to support the development of EI among their employees from different cultural backgrounds (Thomas & Inkson, 2009). Organizations should offer their employees cross-cultural training to assist them with managing cultural differences in EI and help them have better working relationships in diverse groups.

3. Methodology

The study's research design is qualitative, and the data collected are secondary, based on analysis of previous research used to identify what previous research has to say about EI and its role in encouraging effective collaboration in multicultural construction teams. The research uses peer-reviewed journal articles, books, industry reports, and case studies to gather information on the relationship between EI and teamwork in the construction industry.

Secondary data sources were used to gather information related to the study. The data was collected through a systematic review of the literature, theoretical analyses, industry reports and peer reviewed journal examining EI role in cross-cultural collaboration in construction projects. The study used systematic literature review to identify gaps and consensus in existing academic research. Findings were cross-verified and evaluated across various sources to maintain consistency and avoid bias.

Prior discussions on EI have shown that it is critical in enhancing the relationship between employees with cultural differences in the workplace. Nevertheless, there are arguments against the use of EI outlined. Yoest, (2017) pointed out that strong leadership and suitable organizational structures characterized by clear lines of authority, accountability, and discipline will likely result in better teamwork. Although EI enhances employee collaboration, it should not erase managerial practices. Leadership is not only about control and delegation; it is about understanding and motivating people. Leaders with high EI can manage workplace conflict and develop team trust, preventing conflicts from escalating and ensuring that the projects succeed (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013).

The construction industry is more groomed towards task focus than EI due to the need for technical competence, productivity, and a safe working environment. Effective collaboration in construction projects is based on precise communication, following the rules, and management skills (Loosemore & Alkilani, 2021). Although EI is important in interpersonal relationships, leadership, and technical competence are critical in achieving project success. EI is understanding employees' feelings, which is cross-cultural and may not be the best approach as culture influences the manifestation of feelings. This variation can cause misunderstanding, which makes EI a poor tool for cultural mediation (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013). However, Goleman (1998) said that EI is not based on the assumption of a shared emotional standard. However, it helps people to understand, appreciate, and work with the emotional and social demands of life at work and in relationships with others.

The construction industry is characterized by tight deadlines and high pressure that may detract from the importance of EI. Task accomplishment and effectiveness are usually more important than emotional self-awareness and interpersonal relations (Love, Teo, & Morrison, 2016). Therefore, although the integration of EI into leadership structure can improve the work environment, communication, leadership, stress management, and cultural awareness, the pressure of meeting deadlines remains high. Although the critics observed that EI has little to do with the ability of employees to work together in teams in an organization with a multicultural workforce, EI is still valuable in improving teamwork, encouraging people to speak and listen to each other, and resolving conflicts.

Zou, Zhao, and Nguyen (2018) pointed out that disregarding EI while implementing rigid processes and task-focused leadership means disregarding the people's component, which is vital for the success of any project. While technical skills, leadership, and structure are critical in construction projects, people are involved in the performance of every stage of the projects. It fosters teaming, mutual respect, and considering all perspectives through EI. The construction industry employs people from different cultural backgrounds, which makes for a possible difficulty in communication and teamwork. EI helps manage cross-cultural collaboration by helping people manage cultural differences effectively. Research has revealed that organizations with high EI employees are more efficient in handling intercultural conflicts, are more inclusive, and can improve team cohesion (Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, Ng, Templer, Tay, & Chandrasekar, 2007).

Effective communication remains a key component for successful collaboration within construction teams. It enhances communication by helping people recognize emotional cues, change their communication styles, and practice active listening. (Gudykunst, 2003). Understanding cultural differences can cause misunderstandings and lead to conflict in construction projects. Those with high EI tend to resolve conflicts better, see the other side's point, and promote healthy and constructive dialogue between the two parties, thus creating a harmonious work environment (Jordan & Troth, 2021).

EI enhances teamwork by promoting trust, cooperation, and respect for diverse employees. Research indicates that teams with high EI perform better in problem-solving and are more likely to be engaged in construction projects. (Cote & Miners, 2006). It is established that EI positively affects significant aspects of teamwork, such as communication, conflict-solving, and cohesion. As emphasized, successful communication is impossible without EI, which helps team members identify people's emotions, improve their communication behaviors, and practice listening skills, despite criticisms of the concept of EI, which include the argument that focusing on emotional skills minimizes the importance of managerial skills, organizational habits, and task-related activities that are vital in the construction business.

Nevertheless, there are no grounds to exclude the effectiveness of EI in improving cooperation at the work place, focusing only on processes and task-oriented leadership while ignoring the role of EI to downplay the human factor crucial for any project's success. Combining EI and leadership theory enhances communication, teamwork, and conflict resolutions enhancing project outcomes. Therefore, EI is a supporting element that improves team performance and promotes harmony and understanding in the construction industry workplace.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Summary of Key Findings

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the effect of EI on teamwork among culturally diverse groups in the construction industry. EI increased the level of teamwork and interpersonal relations among employees. Managers with high EI were more successful in implementing conflict management and trust formation in culturally diverse teams (Goleman et al., 2013). EI helped to increase communication and cultural tolerance, which helped the workers work effectively in an environment of cultural differences, a typical phenomenon in the construction industry (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2013).

Strong leadership with high EI positively impacted the collaboration of diverse teams. Utilizing EI inspires team members, solves disputes, and ensures everyone is involved in achieving project objectives (Loosemore & Alkilani, 2021). Integration of EI in the leadership processes can assist in reducing the stress related to such environments and promote a more cooperative and supportive team collaboration.

Managers demonstrate correctly that EI plays a crucial role in enhancing job performance while showing how effective EI management leads to project success (El Khatib et al, 2021). This study has found that EI is important in inducing cooperation in construction projects, especially with different cultural groups. EI is critical in improving interpersonal relations, leading to better teamwork, especially the case in construction sites where a single team will have members from different cultural backgrounds and thus need EI to help the members appreciate the differences. EI assists teammates in these differences to have better respect and trust in the group. This study shows that EI can be used alongside other leadership skills to create a caring and understanding work environment. Leaders with high EI effectively communicate and prevent conflicts from escalating, increasing the project's overall efficiency. Incorporating EI has important implications for designing leadership development programs for construction management, as they should include EI training. EI improves cultural competence by assisting workers in determining and responding to the emotional cues and modes of communication of their counterparts from other cultures.

4.2. Recommendation

Managers should develop leadership strategies to incorporate EI through training programs to improve emotional awareness, conflict resolution, and communication skills within diverse teams. Industry associations should promote the inclusion of EI-related competencies in the hiring and training processes to make EI a core skill for project managers and team leaders.

Further research can explore the impact of EI training on team performance and project results in the construction industry. Also, comparing the role of EI in culturally diverse teams in different countries or regions, especially those that differ in the level of EI importance in their organizational culture. Research could also examine the design and efficacy of EI training programs for construction professionals to enhance cross-cultural communication and leadership.

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