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# Emotional Intelligence and Constructive Conflict Management among Upper Secondary Students in Samut Songkhram Province

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## Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the influence of emotional intelligence on conflict management styles among upper secondary school students in Samut Songkhram Province. The objectives were to examine: (1) the level of emotional intelligence, (2) the styles of conflict management, and (3) the influence of emotional intelligence on students' conflict management styles. The research was descriptive in nature. A total of 386 students were selected through proportional stratified sampling. Data were collected using a questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics—mean and standard deviation—as well as multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that most students demonstrated a high level of emotional intelligence, particularly in the “skillful” dimension, followed by the “goodness” and “happiness” dimensions. The most commonly used conflict management style was competing, followed by avoiding, collaborating, compromising, and accommodating, respectively. Emotional intelligence was found to explain 0.70% of the variance in conflict management styles. The study suggests that emotional intelligence alone may not significantly predict students' conflict management preferences. Future research should examine other potential factors, such as personality traits, parenting styles, and mental well-being, to better understand the determinants of conflict management behavior among adolescents.

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence, Conflict Management, High School Students, Samut Songkhram, Adolescents

## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional developmental stage marked by rapid changes in emotion, cognition, and social behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). During this period, emotional instability and interpersonal challenges are common, particularly among students adapting to academic and social expectations (Weber, 1968; Coser, 1956). Emotional intelligence (EI) – the capacity to recognize, understand, and manage one's own and others' emotions – plays a crucial role in

reducing stress and improving communication (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1998). Numerous studies have confirmed that individuals with high EI demonstrate stronger problem-solving skills and more constructive approaches to conflict (Bar-On, 1997; Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016). In Thailand, increasing reports of youth mental health issues, such as anxiety, stress, and low emotional regulation, have raised concerns about students' well-being (Department of Mental Health, 2022). A recent cross-sectional study of first-year university students in Thailand found that although most students had high mental-health knowledge, factors such as gender, field of study and family support significantly influenced their mental health outcomes (Benjanirat et al., 2025). Such findings underscore the importance of promoting emotional intelligence among adolescents to prevent maladaptive conflict responses. Understanding the influence of EI on conflict management among high school students can therefore inform educational interventions to enhance empathy, self-regulation, and social harmony. The findings indicate that emotional intelligence positively influences the academic engagement of undergraduate students in Thailand, a relationship that is significantly mediated by the students' self-efficacy (Villegas-Puyod, Phungsoonthorn, Sitthipo, & Aunyawong, 2022)

## **2. Objective**

2.1 To determine the level of emotional intelligence among upper secondary school students in Samut Songkhram Province.

2.2 To identify the common conflict management styles used by these students.

2.3 To examine the influence of emotional intelligence on conflict management styles.

## **3. Body of paper**

### **Literature Review**

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions effectively (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 2011). Bar-On (1997) conceptualized EI as comprising intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, and stress management dimensions. Studies indicate that EI significantly predicts interpersonal communication, teamwork, and leadership behavior (Mayer et al., 2016; Petrides, Mikolajczak, & Mavroveli, 2017). Conflict management, according to Thomas and Kilmann (1976), involves five styles: competing, accommodating, avoiding, compromising, and collaborating. Individuals with high EI tend to use integrative or collaborative strategies rather than competitive or avoidance-based approaches (Rahim, 2002; Oore, Leiter, & LeBlanc, 2015). Recent research continues to emphasize the role of emotional competence in promoting healthy peer relationships and constructive problem resolution among adolescents (Yeo, Tan, & Neihart, 2022; Salavera et al., 2020).

### **Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive quantitative design.

Population: 2,633 upper secondary school students in Samut Songkhram Province.

Sample: 386 students were selected through proportional stratified random sampling to ensure demographic representation.

Research Instrument: A questionnaire consisting of three sections: (1) demographic information, (2) emotional intelligence scale adapted from the *Department of Mental Health (2001)* focusing on *goodness, skillfulness, and happiness*, and (3) conflict management scale adapted from *Thomas and Kilmann's (1976)* model.

Data Analysis: Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and multiple regression analysis were used to identify the influence of emotional intelligence on conflict management styles (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2019). Ethical approval was obtained from Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University before data collection.

#### 4. Results

Results indicated that most students demonstrated a high level of emotional intelligence, particularly in the “skillfulness” dimension. The most frequently adopted conflict management style was competing, followed by avoiding, collaborating, compromising, and accommodating. Multiple regression analysis revealed that emotional intelligence accounted for only 0.70% of the variance in conflict management styles, indicating a weak relationship. These findings are consistent with Rahim (2002) and Lopes et al. (2004), who observed that while EI enhances interpersonal awareness, other factors such as personality, cultural context, and social learning may exert stronger effects on conflict management see in table I

Table I The coefficients and test statistics of emotional intelligence affecting the conflict management styles of upper secondary school students in Samut Songkhram Province using multiple regression analysis (n = 386)

Emotional intelligence	Unstandardized Coefficients		Unstandardized Coefficients	t	p-value
	B	Std.Error	Beta		
Constant	89.68	2.361		37.99	0.00
1. Goodness Dimension	-0.03	0.05	-0.05	-0.65	0.52
2. Skillful Dimension	0.07	0.06	0.09	1.19	0.24
3. Happiness Dimension	-0.07	0.06	-0.08	-1.11	0.27

p-value <0.05,  $R^2 = 0.007$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = -0.001$ ,  $F = 0.832$

## 5. Conclusion

The study concluded that upper secondary students in Samut Songkhram possess relatively high levels of emotional intelligence but predominantly rely on competitive conflict management styles. The weak correlation suggests that emotional intelligence alone may not strongly predict conflict-handling behaviors. This finding aligns with recent evidence indicating that conflict management is multifactorial, influenced by emotional regulation, communication competence, and contextual variables (Schlaerth, Ensari, & Christian, 2013; García-Sancho, Salguero, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2017). Schools should integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) programs and mindfulness-based emotional training to foster empathy, stress tolerance, and collaborative problem-solving (Durlak et al., 2011; Kim, 2020). Moreover, future research should explore longitudinal impacts of emotional intelligence development on behavioral outcomes, incorporating digital and peer-based learning environments (Allen et al., 2022; Ng et al., 2023). Strengthening emotional competence in adolescents not only improves interpersonal relationships but also contributes to mental health and academic success (Fernández-Berrocal & Extremera, 2022; Yeo et al., 2022).

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