

MEDIATING ROLE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management. The specific objectives are to examine the effect of organizational core values on conflict management; assess the relationship between organizational norms and conflict management; and determine the mediating effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship between culture and crisis management. To achieve these aims and objectives, the study adopts quantitative research technique with the aid of a questionnaire. The population consists of 45,600 direct and contract staff of Chevron Nigeria Limited. Using convenience sampling method, 376 respondents correctly filled the questionnaire. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (frequency distribution and regression analysis). From the analysis, the following findings were made: Organizational core values impact significantly on conflict management; Emotional intelligence impacts significantly on conflict management; and Emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management. The following recommendations are made: Chevron Nigeria Limited should strengthen its core values and educate its employees on the core values they must always adhere to. Core values of respect for every employee should be tightly adhered to, as this can help to minimize conflict and enhance collaboration amongst the employees.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, organizational culture, organizational norms, conflict management, organizational core values

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture is widely recognized as a strategic asset for driving growth, effective resource allocation, and employee engagement. A positive and strong culture promotes collaboration, innovation, and alignment between organizational goals and employee behavior, contributing to internal harmony and improved adaptability to external changes (Cole, 2016). Within Nigeria's oil and gas industry, a sector marked by complexity and dynamic stakeholder interests, organizational culture plays an especially critical role in shaping employee attitudes, enhancing engagement, and reducing conflict. Despite its importance, the sector continues to face significant intra-organizational conflicts, often related to community relations, resource allocation, and departmental coordination, which hinder productivity, innovation, and performance.

A growing body of research suggests that emotional intelligence (EI), which is the ability to understand, regulate, and effectively express emotions, may be key to addressing these cultural and leadership challenges. Emotional intelligence enhances interpersonal relationships, fosters a supportive work environment, and empowers leaders to guide employees with empathy, self-awareness, and emotional regulation (Kruchina, Skorobogatova & Smirnova, 2020; Ugoani, 2020). Scholars such as Prati, Douglas, and Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley (2003), and Yukl & Mahsud (2019) argued that leaders with high emotional intelligence are more capable of motivating their teams, managing crises, and promoting affective commitment, which collectively reduce conflict and drive organizational effectiveness.

However, despite its potential, many workers and leaders in Nigeria's oil and gas industry lack sufficient training and awareness in EI, leading to persistent conflict and underperformance (Ugoani, 2020; Ofobruku, 2022). Given the limited recent empirical evidence on this relationship, particularly in the post-pandemic context (Kalu & Queen, 2024), there is a pressing need to investigate whether emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management. This study therefore aims to fill that gap by empirically examining the mediating role of emotional intelligence within the organizational dynamics of Nigeria's oil and gas industry. The objectives of the study are to: (i) examine the effect of organisational core values on conflict management, (ii) assess the relationship between organisational norms and conflict management, and (iii) determine the mediating effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship between culture and crisis management.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Organisational Culture

Organizational culture is intertwined with how employees perceive and interpret the cultural traits of an organization, which are enacted based on the prevailing culture. According to Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly, and Konopaske (2012), organizational culture is shaped by the collective emotions of employees, which in turn form the basis for shared beliefs, values, and anticipations. This cultural framework influences how employees understand their organization and guides their behaviour within it (Munir & Arifin, 2021).

2.1.2 Organisational Core Values

Core values constitute a fundamental set of ethical principles that guide an organization and its employees (Brage et al., 2016). They also embody the profound convictions that individuals acquire through their upbringing within the family, educational experiences at school, and interactions within society at large. According to Idowu and Adedipe (2019), core values are the essential beliefs that define the character and direction of both individuals and organizations. Woodward and Shaffakat (2016) highlighted several universal aspects of values across various frameworks. These include the recognition of values as benchmarks and guiding principles, their abstract nature and interconnection with numerous other concepts, their acquisition through learning and their relative stability over time, their hierarchical organization, and their impact on individual choices. Synthesizing various perspectives, values are often conceptualized as beliefs, standards, principles, and preferences.

2.1.3 Organisational Norms

Organizational culture is characterized by the shared norms and experiences that members perceive within their work environment (Munir & Arifin, 2021). These norms influence the behaviour and adaptation of the organization's employees, guiding them in achieving the desired outcomes. It's the collective understanding of how things are done in the organisation that moulds the actions and strategies employed to reach organizational goals.

Organisational norms represent the collective consensus on acceptable conduct within certain situations. In the context of a workplace, these norms are often interpreted through the lens of the organizational climate, which reflects employees' understanding of the company's established policies and practices (Norton, Zacher, & Ashkanasy, 2014). This climate is not only shaped by the official processes and procedures that employees are cognizant of but also by the habitual behaviours they observe in their colleagues (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013).

2.1.4 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) can be defined as the capacity to be aware of and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others (Louhenapessy and Lindawati, 2022). This involves recognizing and understanding emotions, distinguishing between them, and

leveraging this emotional awareness to steer one's cognitive processes and behaviours (Febrina, Astuti, and Triatmanto, 2021). The three key elements of EI are the skill to evaluate and control personal emotions, the skill to recognize and comprehend the emotions of others, and the skill to apply emotional insight to problem-solving strategies (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016). Varghese et al. (2015) highlighted that EI is crucial for workers as it allows them to identify and understand their own emotions as well as those of their peers. This understanding is essential for effectively motivating themselves and others, and for managing emotions in a way that enhances workplace dynamics. Emotional intelligence thus plays a key role in fostering a harmonious and productive work environment.

2.1.5 Conflict Management

Conflict within organizations is a natural occurrence, and all types of entities, from government-run enterprises to private sector nonprofits, encounter it regularly due to a myriad of internal and external factors. As noted by Madalina (2016), these conflicts are a part of organizational life. Chaudhary and Arora (2023) defined conflict management as an organization's capacity to pinpoint conflict origins and implement strategic actions to mitigate or regulate such conflicts.

The essence of conflict management lies in the acknowledgment that while conflicts may not always be completely eliminable, they can be effectively managed through various strategies, including accommodation, avoidance, collaboration, compromise, and confrontation, as suggested by Igbino (2023).

2.1.6 Organizational Culture, Emotional Intelligence, and Conflict Management

Organizational values are foundational in shaping behaviour and culture (Ruibyte & Adamoniene, 2013; Hasanah, Alviliani, Anwar & Maryam, 2024). When employees align with these values, their decisions reinforce a cohesive, sustainable culture and a shared sense of purpose (Metz, Ilie & Nistor, 2020). Effective conflict management involves strategies like negotiation, mediation, and communication (Valente et al. 2022), but these are most successful when underpinned by emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence, which is the process of understanding and managing emotions, enables empathetic engagement and harmonious relationships, which are essential for resolving organizational conflicts (Varghese et al., 2015). Thus, emotional intelligence strengthens the link between organizational values and conflict management, supporting a unified and resilient culture.

A number of scholars have conducted research on the concepts of organizational culture, emotional intelligence, and conflict management. Gunkel, Schlägel, and Engle (2014), examined the effect of emotional intelligence on management outcomes in different cultural contexts but lacks a systematic analysis of the effect of cultural values in the development of emotional intelligence. The results show that especially collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation have a positive influence on the different dimensions of emotional intelligence.

Gunkel, Schlaegel, and Taras (2016) explored how cultural values determine individual preferences for certain conflict resolution strategies. Their research aimed to merge these distinct areas of study by assessing how cultural values affect conflict resolution approaches via emotional intelligence. Findings from the research revealed that uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation are significant predictors of a preference for conflict resolution styles such as compromising, obliging, and integrating, mediated by emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, Hasanah, Alviliani, Anwar and Maryam (2024) delved into the influence of organizational culture and emotional intelligence upon employee performance. The study revealed a significant and positive impact of organizational culture, emotional intelligence, and job satisfaction upon employee performance. The research also uncovered significant direct and indirect effects among organizational culture, emotional intelligence, job satisfaction, and employee performance.

In a study conducted by Michinov (2022) on the moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the connection between conflict management styles and burnout among firefighters, the researcher found that emotional intelligence (the management and awareness of one's emotion) moderated the relationship between conflict resolution style and burnout.

Febrina, Astuti, and Triatmanto (2021) studied the impact of organizational, emotional intelligence, and job involvement on employee performance. The study found that organizational culture, job involvement, and emotional intelligence significantly impact employee performance if organizational commitment serve as the moderator. However, the study found that job involvement, emotional intelligence, and organizational intelligence do not significantly impact employee performance with job satisfaction as a moderator. Louhenapessy and Lindawati (2022) investigated the effect of emotional intelligence and organizational culture on performance with organizational commitment acting as the mediator. It was discovered that emotional intelligence had no significant impact on organizational commitment while organizational culture had a significant influence on organizational commitment.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Contemporary Conflict Theory

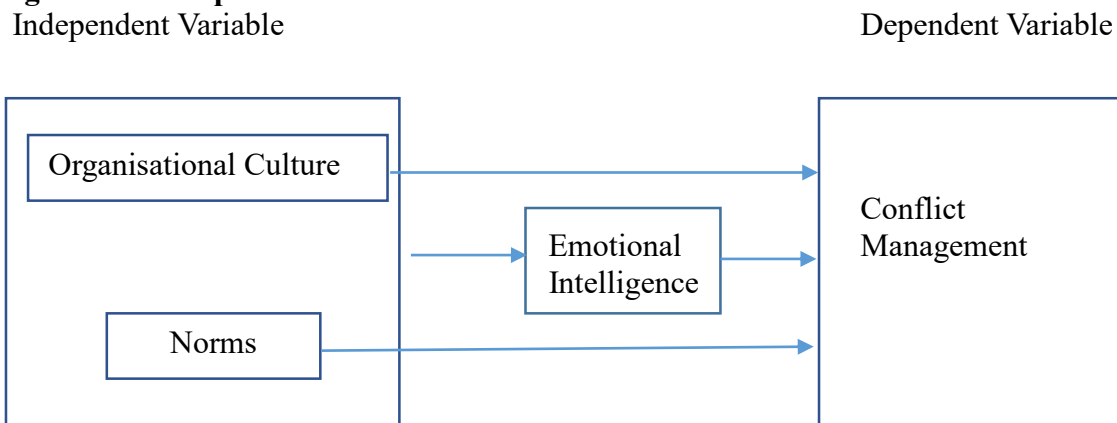
Contemporary Conflict Theory, as proposed by Kirchoff and Adams (1982), views conflict as an inevitable and potentially beneficial aspect of organizational life. It acknowledges that differing interests and power structures within organizations naturally give rise to disputes. However, when managed effectively, such conflicts can foster innovation by encouraging the integration of diverse perspectives. Conflict is normal in any organization that aims to constantly grow and evolve. As individuals come up with novel ideas to challenge the norm, some of which may contradict the other, disagreements are bound to surface (Aremu, Adeyemi, and Abogunrin, 2021).

The theory emphasizes that conflict often stems from divergent goals and authority dynamics, underscoring the need for structures and strategies to regulate these tensions. This perspective aligns with the role of organizational culture, which provides the shared values and norms needed to guide behavior and resolve conflicts constructively. Moreover, the theory supports the view that emotional intelligence is critical in managing organizational disputes. By enabling individuals to understand and regulate their own emotions, as well as empathize with others, emotional intelligence fosters healthier interpersonal dynamics and more effective conflict resolution (Aremu, Adeyemi, and Abogunrin, 2021).

Thus, Contemporary Conflict Theory reinforces the idea that a strong organizational culture, combined with emotionally intelligent leadership, can transform conflict into a catalyst for creativity, collaboration, and organizational growth.

2.4 Conceptual Model

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Author (2025)

3. METHODOLOGY

For this study, a survey research design was adopted as it helps the researcher understand respondents' behaviours and their answers to the questions, thereby addressing the research question. A structured electronic questionnaire was created to gather data from the employees of Chevron Nigeria Limited, which serves as the case study for this research. The online and electronic questionnaire was distributed using Google form and a quantitative value of 1 to 5 was assigned to each option in the questionnaire. The study's population encompasses all direct employees and contract staff of Chevron Nigeria Limited, including those in offshore, onshore, and terminal operations. According to the Chevron Corporation Annual Report (2023), the total number of employees, including service employees, is 45,600. This study utilized the Yamane (1967) Formula to determine the appropriate sample size. The formula below was developed by Taro Yamane to select the sample:

$$n = \frac{N}{(1+N(e)^2)}$$

n = sample size

N = is the whole population

e is the precision or sampling error which is usually 0.10, 0.05 or 0.01

$$n = \frac{45,600}{(1+45,600(0.05)^2)} = 400 \text{ staff}$$

The study employed the convenience sampling method to gather information from both direct and contract staff of Chevron Nigeria Limited.

Data analysis was divided into descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics utilized tables to describe respondents' behaviour. Basic demographic data were collected to understand the nature of the participants. Inferential statistics were conducted to test the hypotheses using regression analysis.

4. RESULTS

4.0 Preamble

This section focuses on the result of the data analysed using quantitative research techniques. The quantitative data analysis techniques employed include descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. 76 respondents responded to the questionnaire administered due to slow response and time constraints. Evidence of the data collection is shown in the appendix below.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics for Organisational Core Values (n = 376)

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
My organization promotes shared values that guide employee behavior and decisions.	1	5	4.07	0.88
The organization's core values are clearly communicated to all employees.	1	5	4.12	0.82
Employees' actions are consistent with the organization's stated values.	1	5	4.03	0.90
Management encourages employees to uphold integrity and accountability in all operations.	1	5	4.10	0.86
Overall Mean (Organisational Core Values)	—	—	4.08	0.87

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Source: Field survey (2025)

As shown in Table 4.1, respondents demonstrated a high level of agreement across all items measuring organisational core values, with mean scores ranging from 4.03 to 4.12 and an overall mean of 4.08 (SD = 0.87). This indicates that most employees perceive their organization as one that clearly communicates and upholds shared values, integrity, and accountability. The relatively low standard deviations suggest consensus among respondents, implying that the organization's ethical and cultural foundations are well established and consistently practiced among staff members.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics for Emotional Intelligence (n = 376)

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
I am aware of my emotions and how they affect my work relationships.	1	5	4.05	0.91
I can manage my emotions effectively even under pressure.	1	5	4.00	0.94
I am sensitive to the emotional needs of others in my workplace.	1	5	4.09	0.83
I can resolve conflicts by understanding and managing others' emotions.	1	5	4.11	0.89
Overall Mean (Emotional Intelligence)	—	—	4.06	0.89

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Source: Field survey (2025)

Table 4.2 reveals that emotional intelligence was rated highly by respondents, with mean values between 4.00 and 4.11 and an overall mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.89). These results indicate that employees generally exhibit strong emotional awareness, self-management, empathy, and interpersonal sensitivity. The small variability across items suggests a consistent ability among staff to recognize and regulate emotions both their own and others' which can foster effective teamwork and minimize interpersonal friction within the organization.

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics for Conflict Management (n = 376)

Statement	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Conflicts in my organization are resolved through open and constructive dialogue.	1	5	4.02	0.87
The organization has effective mechanisms for managing interpersonal conflicts.	1	5	4.08	0.84
Employees are encouraged to resolve disputes in a fair and respectful manner.	1	5	4.10	0.85
Managers handle workplace conflicts objectively and without bias.	1	5	4.04	0.88
Overall Mean (Conflict Management)	—	—	4.06	0.86

Note. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.

Source: Field survey (2025)

The findings in Table 4.3 show that conflict management practices are perceived positively, with mean scores ranging from 4.02 to 4.10 and an overall mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.86). This suggests that the organization promotes open dialogue, fairness, and impartiality when addressing disagreements. The close clustering of mean values implies that respondents broadly agree on the effectiveness and transparency of the mechanisms used to manage workplace conflicts, reflecting a collaborative and trust-based organizational environment.

4.2.1 Correlation Analysis

Table 4.4: Correlation Analysis Result for Hypotheses One and Two

Variables	Conflict Management	Organisational Core Values	Emotional Intelligence
Conflict Management	1		
Organisational Core Values	0.636	1	
Emotional Intelligence	0.610		1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

As shown in Table 4.4, organisational core values and emotional intelligence both show a moderate positive correlation with conflict management ($r = 0.636$ and $r = 0.610$, respectively). This implies that as organisational core values and emotional intelligence increase, the level of effective conflict management also tends to rise. The strength of these associations suggests that cultural and emotional competencies play a significant role in shaping how conflicts are handled within the organization.

4.2 Test of Hypotheses

This section tests the hypotheses using regression analysis. There are three hypotheses to be tested. Each hypothesis is tested using regression analysis.

Test of Hypotheses One

H₀₁: Organisational core values do not affect conflict management.

Table 4.5: Regression Result for Hypothesis One

Dependent Variable: Conflict Management

Predictor Variable	Coeff. (β)	Std. Error	t	Sig. (p)	R ²	F-Stat.	Sig. (F)
(Constant)	7.477	1.859	4.02	0.000			
Organisational Core Values	0.596	0.084	7.10	0.000	0.404	18.884	0.000

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 4.5 shows that organisational core values have a significant positive effect on conflict management ($\beta = 0.596$, $p < 0.05$). The R^2 value of 0.404 indicates that organisational core values explain approximately 40.4% of the variance in conflict management. The F-statistic (18.884, $p < 0.001$) confirms the model's overall significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) stating that organisational core values do not affect conflict management is rejected, suggesting that strong organisational values significantly enhance conflict management practices..

Test of Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management.

Table 4.6: Regression Result for Hypothesis Two

Dependent Variable: Conflict Management

Predictor Variable	Coeff. (β)	Std. Error	t	Sig. (p)	R ²	F-Stat.	Sig. (F)
(Constant)	4.750	2.395	1.98	0.051			
Emotional Intelligence	0.787	0.119	6.61	0.000	0.372	17.582	0.000

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 4.6 reveals that emotional intelligence significantly predicts conflict management ($\beta = 0.787$, $p < 0.05$). The R^2 value of 0.372 suggests that 37.2% of the variation in conflict management is explained by emotional intelligence. The F-statistic (17.582, $p < 0.001$) further supports the model's significance. Hence, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) stating that there is no relationship between emotional intelligence and conflict management is **rejected**, implying that higher emotional intelligence among employees leads to better conflict management outcomes.

4.2.3 Test of Hypothesis Three

- i. **H03:** Emotional intelligence does not mediate the relationship between organisational culture and conflict management.

Table 6: Regression Analysis Result of Hypothesis Three

Path	Regression Coefficient	Standard Error	z-value	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Path A: Org. Culture → Conflict Mgt.	0.712	0.08	8.90	0.00000	0.872
Path B: Org. Culture → Emotional Int.	0.436	0.07	5.93	0.00000	0.582
Path C: Emotional Int → Conflict Mgt.	0.78	0.118	6.62	0.0000	1.02

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

Table 6 shows the result of the analysis to test the third hypothesis. As shown in the table, there are three paths to test whether emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management. Path A shows the effect of organizational culture on conflict management. Path B shows the effect of organizational culture on emotional intelligence, while Path C shows the effect of emotional intelligence on conflict management. Since all the paths as shown above with all paths having p-values of 0.00000 are significant, it therefore means that emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management. So, null hypothesis three is rejected.

5. DISCUSSION

This study investigates the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management. The specific objectives are to examine the effect of organizational core values on conflict management; assess the relationship between organizational norms and conflict management; and determine the mediating effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship between culture and crisis management.

After adopting a quantitative research technique and with the aid of questionnaires, which measured key variables in the study, the data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. From the analysis, it was found that: (i) Organizational core values impact significantly on conflict management, (ii) Emotional intelligence impacts significantly on conflict management, and (iii) Emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management.

Several previous studies are in line with the findings of this study. For example, Gunkel, Schlägel, and Engle (2014) found organisational culture to impact significantly on emotional intelligence. Also, Gunkel, Schlaegel, and Taras (2016) found organisational culture to impact significantly on conflict management.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the finding that organizational core values impact significantly on conflict management, Chevron Nigeria Limited should strengthen its core values and educate its

employees on the core values they must always adhere to. Core values of respect for every employee should be tightly adhered to, as this can help to minimize conflict and enhance collaboration amongst the employees. Also, based on the finding that emotional intelligence impacts significantly on conflict management, employees of Chevron Nigeria Limited should periodically organize training sessions for their employees to educate them on how to manage their emotions to improve their effectiveness and performance in the organization.

Based on the finding that emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between organizational culture and conflict management, the management of Chevron Nigeria Limited should periodically review its organizational culture and educate employees on the importance of emotion regulation so as to improve both its culture and the EI of its employees.

The first limitation of this study is the fact that our data relied on self-report measures, which can lead to concerns about common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003) and may not accurately represent a person's actual thoughts. Another limitation is the sampling technique chosen, which is convenience and is not representative, and thus the findings cannot be generalised. Findings from this research work are also limited to the oil and gas industry and therefore, cannot be used to draw accurate conclusions on other sectors such as the health and education sector.

Key Findings and Implications

- i. Organisational core values significantly improve conflict management effectiveness.
- ii. Emotional intelligence enhances conflict resolution through empathy, communication, and self-regulation.
- iii. EI mediates the culture–conflict link, suggesting emotionally intelligent workplaces experience fewer and more manageable conflicts.
- iv. Policy implication: Chevron and similar firms should institutionalize emotional intelligence training and embed cultural alignment in staff development programs.

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