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THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ON BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS DURING YOUTH

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The paper examines the impact of emotional intelligence on the choice of behavioral strategies in conflict situations during youth. The relevance of the topic is determined by the increasing frequency of interpersonal conflicts in the modern social environment and the need to identify psychological resources that contribute to constructive interaction under conditions of emotional tension. Emotional intelligence is considered as an integrative psychological construct that includes awareness and understanding of emotions, self-regulation, empathy, and the ability to interpret emotional information in communication. [3; 9; 14] Conflict-handling strategies are analyzed in accordance with the Thomas–Kilmann model (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, accommodating). [15] The study was conducted among young adults aged 19–20 using psychodiagnostic methods and Pearson correlation analysis. The obtained results reveal statistically significant relationships between emotional intelligence indicators and preferred conflict strategies, confirming the importance of emotional intelligence as a factor of constructive behavior during youth.

Conflicts are a natural and unavoidable component of interpersonal interaction, which occurs in educational, professional, and family contexts. [8; 12] In the youth period, interpersonal conflicts may become more emotionally intense due to age-related psychological characteristics, increased social sensitivity, and the active

formation of identity and interpersonal roles. [8] In this regard, it is important to study the psychological factors that promote constructive behavior and effective communication in conflict situations. [12]

Emotional intelligence is increasingly viewed as a key psychological resource that supports adaptive interaction and reduces the destructive consequences of interpersonal tension. [9; 14] Researchers emphasize that emotional intelligence is associated with emotional stability, better stress coping, and the ability to regulate psychoemotional states. [3; 11] At the same time, emotional intelligence can be developed through psychological and educational interventions, which makes it a promising area for prevention of maladaptive behavior in conflict situations. [1]

Emotional intelligence is defined as a multidimensional construct that includes emotional awareness, the ability to recognize and interpret emotions, empathy, and regulation of emotional responses. [14] It is also considered an important factor of mental health and well-being in educational settings, particularly among students and young people who experience intensive academic and social stress. [3; 11]

Many modern approaches describe emotional intelligence as a determinant of effective interpersonal interaction. [9] Individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to demonstrate better communication skills, increased emotional sensitivity, and a greater ability to maintain constructive dialogue in emotionally challenging situations. [6; 9]

Conflict situations, in turn, represent a specific form of interpersonal interaction that may arise due to differences in goals, values, needs, or communication styles. [8; 12] Within conflictology, strategies of behavior are often interpreted as relatively stable patterns of reaction to contradictions and tension. [4; 12] According to the Thomas–Kilmann model, five basic conflict-handling modes are competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. [15] Collaboration and compromise are generally considered more constructive strategies, whereas competing and avoiding may be associated with emotional dysregulation, impulsivity, or difficulties in interpersonal problem-solving. [4; 12]

Empirical research also supports the idea that emotional intelligence influences conflict-handling behavior by increasing constructive coping, reducing conflict proneness, and improving emotional self-regulation. [5; 7; 10] Thus, the relationship between emotional intelligence and behavioral strategies in conflict situations is a relevant topic for psychological research and applied practice.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence and behavioral strategies in conflict situations during youth.

The empirical research was conducted on a sample of young adults aged 19–20. The study included psychodiagnostic assessment of emotional intelligence indicators and preferred behavioral strategies in conflict situations. [2] The Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument was used to determine conflict-handling modes. [15] Statistical data processing was performed using Pearson correlation analysis in order to identify significant relationships between emotional intelligence indicators and conflict strategies. [2]

The results of Pearson correlation analysis demonstrate statistically significant relationships between emotional intelligence indicators and behavioral strategies in conflict situations (Table 1). A moderate positive correlation was found between empathy and collaboration ($r = 0.41$, $p \leq 0.01$), which indicates that young people with higher empathy tend to choose a cooperative and constructive strategy in conflict situations. (Table 1) [6; 7]

Recognition of others' emotions and understanding emotions were positively associated with compromise ($r = 0.29$, $p \leq 0.05$; $r = 0.31$, $p \leq 0.05$). (Table 1) These findings confirm that the ability to interpret emotional states contributes to the selection of balanced strategies that consider the interests of both sides. [3; 14]

Interpersonal emotional intelligence also revealed a positive relationship with collaboration ($r = 0.36$, $p \leq 0.05$). (Table 1) This result suggests that better emotional interaction skills support constructive communication and joint problem-solving. [9; 10]

At the same time, negative correlations were identified between emotion management and competing behavior ($r = -0.27$, $p \leq 0.05$), as well as between intrapersonal emotional intelligence and avoiding strategy ($r = -0.33$, $p \leq 0.05$). (Table 1) This may indicate that insufficient emotional regulation and reduced internal emotional awareness can increase the probability of choosing either confrontational or withdrawn behavioral patterns. [5; 11]

Additionally, emotional awareness showed a negative correlation with accommodating ($r = -0.28$, $p \leq 0.05$). (Table 1) This result can be interpreted as a tendency of emotionally aware individuals to maintain personal boundaries and avoid excessive compliance in conflict interaction. [12; 14]

Table 1. Results of Pearson correlation analysis between emotional intelligence indicators and conflict-handling strategies

Emotional intelligence indicators	Conflict-handling modes	Correlation coefficient (r)
Empathy	Collaboration	0.41**
Recognition of others' emotions	Compromise	0.29*
Interpersonal emotional intelligence	Collaboration	0.36*
Understanding emotions	Compromise	0.31*
Emotion management	Competing	-0.27*
Intrapersonal emotional intelligence	Avoiding	-0.33*
Emotional awareness	Accommodating	-0.28*

*Note. $p \leq 0.05$; $p \leq 0.01$.

The study confirms that emotional intelligence is a significant psychological factor influencing the choice of behavioral strategies in conflict situations during youth. Higher emotional intelligence is associated with more constructive conflict strategies, particularly collaboration and compromise. [7; 9; 10; 14]

At the same time, difficulties in emotional self-regulation may contribute to less constructive strategies such as competing or avoiding. [5; 11; 12] The results may be applied in the development of preventive and corrective psychological programs aimed at improving emotional competence, communication skills, and constructive conflict resolution among young adults. [1]

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