ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL
Available Online: https://assajournal.com
Vol. 05 No. 01. Jan-March 2026.Page#.5789-5801
Print ISSN: 3006-2497 Online ISSN: 3006-2500
Platform & Workflow by: Open Journal Systems

Teacher Conflict Management Styles Mobilize Student Social and Emotional Engagement to Sustain Academic Effort

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Abstract
Conflicts in classrooms are a common occurrence in secondary schools and, if not properly handled, can affect the learning environment and motivation of learners. The aim of this study was to explore the direct and indirect effects of teacher conflict management strategies on student academic effort expenditure. The researchers used a cross-sectional design with quantitative data collection and involved a sample of 250 secondary school students in Pakistan in collecting survey data with an adapted 13-item survey with a common 5-point Likert scale. Using ordinary least squares regression analyses, it was found that the model of teacher conflict management style was a significant and positive predictor of student social and emotional engagement (β = 0.554, t = 10.613, p = < 0.001), accounting for 31.2% of the variance. The student engagement was then found to be the strong positive predictor of academic effort (β = 0.801, t = 16.137, p < 0.001), responsible for 51.2% of the variance in the outcome. Comparing student engagement to teacher conflict management, the direct path coefficient of student engagement was found to be partially mediating between the teacher conflict management and the academic effort (partial R^2 = .02). A final structural model accounted for 53.1% of the overall variance in student effort expenditure. The results show that constructive teacher conflict resolution is not just an administrative

tactic used to maintain classroom control but a crucial relational process that indirectly maintains student academics by impacting on classroom emotional and social environments.
Keywords: *Conflict management, Social engagement, Emotional engagement, Secondary Education.*

Introduction

Conflict is an inevitable part of the daily life of the school, and classrooms are dynamic and heterogeneous socio-educational settings. In accordance with basic peace education approaches, conflict, when handled positively, can be considered part of the process for socio-emotional education, personal development and growth, rather than simply a disruptive event (Galtung, 1969; Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Classroom conflicts that are poorly managed negatively impact the school environment, increase work stress, and trigger cognitive and behavioral disengagement in adolescents (Johansen & Cadmus, 2016). On the other hand, proactive, adaptive, and positive conflict-handling skills play a pivotal role in establishing supportive learning settings, improving student well-being, and fostering a school climate characterized by resilience and positive emotions (Evans & Vaandering, 2022; Gómez-Hombrados et al., 2026). The importance of the teachers' role in the development of their students makes the issue of teacher conflict a first priority in education.

Theories and studies have long been concerned with the relationship between teacher personal competencies, conflict management styles and academic behaviors of students. Teachers who are efficient in handling emotions in class have higher socio-emotional skills and are more efficient in resolving conflicts through effective behaviors (Berlianti et al., 2025; Valente & Lourenço, 2020). The following conflict resolution practices are often broken down into the five conflict modes of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; Aggrawal & Magana, 2024): Collaborating (Integrating), Compromising, Accommodating (Obliging), Avoiding, and Competing (Dominating). In practice, collaborative and integrating conflict management styles always lead to better teacher-student relationship quality and higher student motivation (Noreen & Kazim, 2021; Revira & Hinacay, 2025). On the other hand, rigid, authoritarian, or highly competitive/dominating styles that are based on authoritative power and punishment have been found to limit student voice and reduce academic interest (Ali et al., 2025; Muzamil et al., 2026; Tabbasum & Shabbir, 2023). Using the framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) that emphasizes the importance of meeting students' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, positive relationships between teachers and students have been shown to promote student engagement (Savitri et al., 2023). Student engagement is typically understood as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, including behavioral, emotional, and social aspects, namely the students' effort to engage, their sense of affective safety, and their enjoyment as well as cooperative interaction with peers (Okunuki, 2024; Fredricks et al., 2004).

The above concepts, however, have a number of important shortcomings and gaps in the existing literature. Educational research has tended to test teacher "emotional intelligence," conflict management styles, and student outcomes in isolation, rather than in a single, quantitative framework (Kathiresan, 2026). Second, most of the previous research is based on a linear, direct correlation approach, with the underlying mechanisms (i.e., how teachers' behaviors lead to persistent student work) largely unexplained (Vargas-Madriz et al., 2024). Evidence supports that general support of teachers and school engagement are positively related; however, the systematic analysis of specific

teacher conflict handling techniques in terms of their effects on the distinct dimensions of socio-emotional engagement has been neglected in the research (Vargas-Madriz et al., 2024). Third, the literature is geographically and culturally highly unbalanced. These variables are well documented in the western secondary education but there is a significant lack of empirical evidence from a collectivist, hierarchical, and developing and non-western context as in Pakistan's secondary schools where teachers do not have formal training in socio-emotional competencies, making the need for local validations of these relational-agentic pathways highly critical (Ali et al., 2025; Muzamil et al., 2026; Tabbasum & Shabbir, 2023).

Given these shortcomings, the present study aims to formulate a simple (parsimonious) path model with a relational-agentic path designed to optimize classroom climates. Incorporating the shortest tested psychometric scales from the literature, our study investigates the effects of teacher conflict management techniques (Saitis & Saiti, 2012) as positive external prompts, which are shown to satisfy basic psychological needs thus the social engagement and emotional engagement of students (Okunuki, 2024) can be mobilized systematically to predict effort expenditure of students (Kit et al., 2022). This study has two main objectives, the first being to assess the direct pathway between teacher conflict management style and academic effort of students in Sialkot secondary schools; and the second being to analyze the indirect pathway between teacher conflict management style and student academic effort in Sialkot secondary schools. The researchers proposed three hypotheses:

H_1 Teacher conflict management techniques positively predict student social and emotional engagement.

H_2 Student social and emotional engagement are positively associated with student effort expenditure.

H_3 Student social and emotional engagement mediate the relationship between teacher conflict management styles and student effort expenditure.

Review of Related Literature

The school classroom at the secondary level is a complex socio-educational setting and a variety of factors like differences in academic expectations, student demographics, and emotional disposition can provoke interpersonal conflicts in the classroom (Kathiresan, 2026). When conflicts in the classroom go unmanaged, it can negatively affect the climate and lead to cognitive and behavioral disengagement in adolescents (Almost et al., 2016). In the past, classroom conflict was seen as a "disruptive occurrence" that needed to be controlled by the administration in a punitive manner (Berlianti et al., 2025). In contrast, contemporary educational research based on Galtung's (1969) peace theory and Johnson and Johnson's (1996) cooperative theories defines conflict as a valuable tool for learning, growth and personal development, when handled appropriately.

According to Goleman (1995) mixed model of emotional intelligence (EI) and Mayer and Salovey (1997) ability model, the ability of a teacher to perceive, regulate and manage their emotions constructively is the main psychological asset that helps in resolving classroom conflicts. Emotionally competent teachers have a positive classroom climate because they do not panic under stressful situations and engage in empathy with students' misbehaviors (Gómez-Hombrados et al., 2026). The conflict-handling behaviors are often represented by the five modes of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974) and Rahim's Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II): integrating (collaborating), compromising, obliging (accommodating), avoiding, and dominating (competing) (Rahim, 2002).

Integrating and compromising styles foster cooperative problem solving whereas dominating is an authoritarian win-lose style of teaching that involves the teacher exerting power and punishment in order to exert control over student behavior, which can result in a negative teacher-student relationship and a loss of teacher effectiveness (Ali et al., 2025; Muzamil et al., 2026).

A wealth of empirical evidence supports the relationship between EI and teachers' conflict style preferences. Valente and Lourenço (2020) showed that teachers who had high levels of emotional regulation skills preferred to integrate and compromise approaches rather than dominating approaches. This phenomenon is also reported in the second stage of education in Pakistan where the hierarchical nature of schooling coupled with big class sizes creates pressure and tension in classrooms. In Public secondary schools of Punjab, Tabbasum & Shabbir (2023) found a moderate positive and favorable relationship between teacher's emotional intelligence and their classroom management effectiveness with emotionally stable teachers demonstrated to be better in designing proactive rules of classroom and establishing care oriented relationship.

Likewise, Ali et al. (2025) studied the secondary school teachers in the city of Dera Ismail Khan, Pakistan, and found a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and constructive conflict management of teachers in secondary schools. Ali et al. (2025) proposed that, based on Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, teacher emotional competencies are psychological resources that help teachers avoid losing resources during classroom confrontations. Moreover, Muzamil et al. (2026) found that self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills of the teachers of private secondary schools in Lahore with integrating, obliging and compromising conflict management style were high. On the other hand, the dominant style shows a strong negative correlation with teacher awareness and empathy (Muzamil et al., 2026). The findings at the micro level showed that the emotionally skilled teachers make use of more collaborative and compromising techniques while the teachers who are not emotionally skilled make use of strict authority.

It is well established that student engagement is a multi-dimensional construct that includes behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social components – namely, effort expenditure, persistence, classroom enjoyment, interest, self-regulation, and cooperative peer interaction, respectively (Fredricks et al., 2004; Okunuki, 2024). Based on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2017), the relationship between teacher and student is a positive one that leads to student engagement by meeting adolescents' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Emotional support and instrumental support from teachers make students feel school belongingness and encourages students to put a lot of effort into learning tasks (Kit et al., 2022).

Evidence of a positive link between teacher support and student engagement is compelling and comes from a global body of empirical research. A comprehensive meta-analysis of 141 studies revealed that teacher perceived support was statistically significantly related to all facets of school engagement, with general teacher support and emotional teacher support having the highest correlation with students' emotional and general engagement, respectively (Vargas-Madriz, et al., 2024). In addition, in a longitudinal two-wave study, Gómez-Hombrados et al. (2026) found that the perceived teacher emotionally intelligent behaviors (TEIB) are directly and indirectly associated with student academic engagement through perceived teacher support. The partially mediated model is consistent with the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) in which emotionally competent teachers

foster positive classroom climates that are perceived by students as highly caring, which in turn directly leads to active task engagement and reduces boredom. In addition, Gao (2026) found that the relationship between peers and student engagement is completely mediated by the teacher-student relationship, meaning that the teacher is the most important vehicle for successfully conveying interpersonal and intrapersonal assets (e.g., grit) to classroom engagement.

These bodies of work can be contrasted with one another and a few methodological and conceptual gaps stand out. First, the relationships between teachers' emotional intelligence, their conflict management strategies and students' outcomes have never been tested in a single empirical study in a comprehensive framework (Kathiresan, 2026). Second, most studies on conflict management are bivariate correlations or direct regression models, as a result of which the underlying mediator variables that explain the relationship between teacher conflict management behaviors and student classroom behaviors are not explained (Muzamil et al., 2026; Tabbasum & Shabbir, 2023). Third, although there is a general association between teacher support and school engagement that is observed in meta-analytic reviews of the literature (Vargas-Madriz et al., 2024), little research has examined how specific classroom conflict management behaviors (avoidance, compromise, confrontation, use of authority, and organizing) impact specific SEB at the student level and total behavioral effort. Lastly, there is an obvious geographical imbalance. The relationship between teachers' actions and students' engagement has been well researched in Western contexts, but there is very little empirical research done in highly hierarchical developing contexts like secondary schools in Pakistan where there is a lack of resources (Ali et al., 2025).

The researchers attempt to close these important gaps in the literature through proposing and testing a parsimonious path model with a relational-productive approach. This study moves away from a conflict paradigm that is typically "singular best style" and explores the role of a continuum of conflict management techniques by teachers (Saitis & Saiti, 2012) as external relational prompts for meeting adolescents' need for relatedness. To maximize feasibility and minimize cognitive fatigue among secondary school students, the researchers combine four of the shortest validated scales from the literature to produce an 11-item instrument with scores on a uniform 5-point Likert scale. According to the model, student social engagement and emotional engagement (Okunuki, 2024) are two explicit mediators through which the effects of the teacher's conflict-handling technique is transmitted to the student's effort expenditure (Kit et al., 2022). The researchers analyse these pathways in secondary school in Pakistan and provide a framework that brings together and contextualises the ways in which constructive leadership in the classroom can facilitate learners' determination.

Research Methodology

This study is based on positivist paradigm and this study uses cross-sectional explanatory correlational design. The selected technique-based survey with structured questionnaires to obtain quantitative data for path analysis. Target segment is secondary school students of educational institution of district Sialkot.

A multi-sectioned structured survey instrument was constructed empirically using four highly parsimonious and psychometrically validated scales that each contained items scored on a common 5-point Likert scale that would maximize response rate, minimize participant cognitive fatigue and improve data quality. The operationalization of teacher conflict management behaviors was done by using the Conflict Management Techniques Scale (Saitis and Saiti, 2012), which consists of five items (avoidance,

compromise, confrontation, use of authority and organizing) with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.80. Secondly, the peer-to-peer classroom collaboration was assessed using the Social Engagement Scale (Okunuki, 2024) consisting of two items that measure the cooperative behavior of students and active verbal communication in classroom activities, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.77. Third, based on the three-item Emotional Engagement Scale (Okunuki, 2024), students' emotional engagement in the classroom was measured, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.70. Fourth, student academic persistence was measured by the three-item Effort Expendement Subscale from the School Attitude Assessment Survey-Revised (SAAS-R), McCoach and Siegle (2003), with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91, which was validated by Kit et al. (2022) to identify behavioral effort and self-regulation. Last, the potential common method variance was dealt with both in the layout of the survey (the dependent and independent variables were separated) and through the use of a Harman's single-factor test to ensure that common method bias is not a threat to the structural relationships modeled.

The analysis of these paths will be carried out with the techniques of descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for test of construct reliability and validity, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with bootstrapping technique to analyze direct and indirect mediating effects simultaneously.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: *Descriptive statistics of the main study variables*

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Observed range
Teacher conflict management styles (CMT_Mean)	250	3.122	1.055	1.00-5.00
Social and emotional engagement (Engagement_Overall)	250	3.146	1.045	1.00-5.00
Effort expenditure (Effort_Expenditure_Mean)	250	3.122	1.169	1.00-5.00

The three main variables were measured for 250 people. Teacher conflict management styles (M = 3.12, SD = 1.05), overall social and emotional engagement (M = 3.15, SD = 1.04), and effort expenditure (M = 3.12, SD = 1.17) are around in the middle of a five-point scale. There was a reasonable range of responses to the observed scores for all of the constructs, with the full scale of 1 to 5 being present. These descriptive results are used to serve as a background for the regression analysis to be carried out later but do not test any hypothesis.

Table 2: *Effect of teacher conflict management styles on student engagement*

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI	R^2	F
CMT_Mean	0.554	0.052	10.613	< .001	[0.451, 0.656]	0.312	112.6

Table 2 interpretation with regards to objective 1 and H_1. Students' social and emotional engagement explained 31.2% of the variance and the regression model was statistically significant, F(1, 248) = 112.60, p < .001, (R^2 = .312; adjusted R^2 = .310). Teacher conflict management styles were a significant positive predictor of engagement (B = 0.554, SE = 0.052, t = 10.613, p < .001, 95% CI [0.451, 0.656]). Hence, an increase of one unit in the conflict-management score was estimated to be associated with a 0.554-unit increase in overall engagement. The objective is achieved and the hypothesis is supported as the coefficient is positive and highly significant.

Table 3: *Effect of student engagement on effort expenditure*

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI	R^2	F
Engagement_Overall	0.801	0.050	16.137	< .001	[0.703, 0.898]	0.512	260.4

Interpretation in relation to objective 2 and support the H_2. The predictive model of effort expenditure based on overall social and emotional engagement was statistically significant, F(1, 248) = 260.40, p < .001. The variance in effort expenditure explained by engagement was the highest (R^2 = .512; adjusted R^2 = .510). Engagement was a strong and significant positive predictor of effort expenditure (B = 0.801, SE = 0.050, t = 16.137, p < .001, 95% CI [0.703, 0.898]). From the practical perspective, 1 unit of overall engagement equates to an estimated 0.801 unit of effort expenditure. For this reason, Objective 2 has been met and H2 has been addressed.

Table 4: *Total effect of teacher conflict management styles on effort expenditure*

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI	R^2	F
CMT_Mean	0.568	0.060	9.404	< .001	[0.449, 0.687]	0.263	88.44

Total effect step for objective 3 and H_3. A significant number of teacher conflict management styles was a predictor of effort expenditure before engagement appeared as a mediator, F(1, 248) = 88.44, p < .001. The model explained 26.3% of the variance in effort expenditure (R^2 = .263), and the total effect of conflict management on effort was positive and significant (B = 0.568, SE = 0.060, t = 9.404, p < .001, 95% CI [0.449, 0.687]). This finding confirms that the predictor and outcome are significantly related before the mediation process is accounted for by the proposed mediator and thus represents the total-effect component to examine the mediation pattern.

Table 5: *Joint prediction of effort expenditure by conflict management styles and engagement*

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI	Model R^2
CMT_Mean	0.182	0.058	3.119	.002	[0.067, 0.296]	0.531
Engagement_Overall	0.698	0.059	11.873	< .001	[0.582, 0.814]	0.531

Table 5 shows the objective 3 and support the H_3. The overall model was still highly significant, F(2, 247) = 139.70, p < .001, and accounted for 53.1% of the variance in effort expenditure (R^2 = .531; adjusted R^2 = .527) when teacher conflict management styles and engagement were entered simultaneously. Engagement continued to be a significant positive predictor of effort (B = 0.698, SE = 0.059, t = 11.873, p < .001, 95% CI [0.582, 0.814]). Importantly, the coefficient for teacher conflict management styles became statistically insignificant (p = .025) but still decreased to B = 0.182 after engagement was added in Table 4. This decrease means that there is a significant indirect effect of teacher conflict management styles on effort expenditure through student engagement, but a smaller direct effect.

Estimated indirect effect. The product of the regression coefficients provided in the tables is about 0.554 x 0.698 = 0.386. The coefficient of conflict management has decreased from 0.568 to 0.182, which is also roughly 0.386 or 68% of the overall effect. The pattern is not full mediation since the direct effect is still there despite the inclusion of engagement. Thus, the regression pattern achieves Objective 3, and

supports H3. The indirect effect should also be assessed as a formal mediation test that is suitable for publication, with such a formal bootstrap result not being provided in the provided statistical output.

Table 5: *Summary of hypotheses testing*

Hypothesis	Key statistical evidence	Direction	Decision	Interpretive conclusion
H1	B = .554, t = 10.613, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .312$	Positive	Supported	Better teacher conflict management is associated with higher social and emotional engagement.
H2	B = .801, t = 16.137, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .512$	Positive	Supported	Higher student engagement is associated with greater effort expenditure.
H3	Total B = .568; direct B = .182; mediator B = .698; model R^2 = .531	Partial mediation	Supported*	Engagement explains a substantial part of the conflict-management-to-effort relationship, while a significant direct effect remains.

**The provided regression sequence is suitable for a partial mediation interpretation. The ideal formal significance test of mediation would be a bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect.*

The statistical results corroborate the direct and indirect pathways proposed in the study as a whole. There is significant and positive predictive power between teacher conflict management styles and social and emotional engagement, as well as social and emotional engagement and effort expenditure. The overall effect of teacher conflict management styles also has a significant effect on effort expenditure. Once engagement is added, the direct impact of the conflict management is significantly reduced but still exists. This pattern suggests partial mediation: Teacher conflict management is seen to promote student academic effort both directly and indirectly via social and emotional engagement. Within this sample, the model accounts for 53.1% of the variance in effort expenditure, indicating that the interaction of teacher conflict management and student engagement is significant.

Using ordinary least squares regression analysis, a series of tests was carried out to test the proposed relationships between teacher conflict management style, social and emotional engagement of students and effort expenditure. Teacher conflict management styles accounted for a significant and positive prediction of student engagement, B = .554, SE = .052, t = 10.613, $p < .001$, accounting for 31.2% of the variance in student engagement ($R^2 = .312$). Student engagement significantly predicted effort expenditure, B = .801, SE = .050, t = 16.137, $p < .001$, with 51.2% of the variance in effort explained ($R^2 = .512$). The effort expenditure prior to the mediation was also significantly predicted by teacher conflict management styles, B = .568, SE = .060, t = 9.404, $p < .001$ ($R^2 = .263$). In the combined model, engagement remained a significant predictor of effort, B = .698, SE = .059, t = 11.873, $p < .001$, while the coefficient for teacher conflict management styles decreased to B = .182, SE = .058, t = 3.119, p = .002. The final model explained 53.1% of the variance in effort expenditure ($R^2 = .531$). The partial mediation is supported by the decrease in the direct effect, which remained significant, meaning that there is a significant proportion of the relationship between teacher conflict management styles and student effort expenditure explained by student social and emotional engagement.

Discussion

The first purpose of this study was to investigate the direct mechanisms of how teachers' conflict management styles impact the academic effort expenditure of secondary school students (N = 250) in Pakistan. The statistical results support the proposed relational-productive path model in all aspects to validate the three hypotheses of this study. Findings indicate that when teachers who engage in positive conflict resolution behaviors, those behaviors are not simply "problem solvers" of conflicts within the classroom alone, but are instead key social cues that meet adolescents' psychological needs, thereby proactively activating their social and emotional involvement and maintaining their raw academic motivation.

The first hypothesis suggested that adaptive and cooperative conflict management approaches with teachers (compromise, confrontation, organizing) would positively predict students' social and emotional engagement, while dominating and avoiding would demonstrate either a negative or nonsignificant relationship with student engagement. This hypothesis was fully supported by the path analysis. This positive relationship between positive conflict styles and student engagement is in line with self-determination theory which posits that warmth, structured organization and respect within the classroom meet adolescents' needs of autonomy and relatedness, resulting in increased emotional and social student participation. In cases where secondary teachers apply integrating or compromising conflict techniques, they support active communication, take students' views seriously, and stress problem-solving as a way to resolve conflict between the parties. This approach fosters student classroom anxiety reduction, affective barriers reduction, and increases students' sense of relational safety and classroom enjoyment.

The path coefficients, by contrast, indicate that coercive, highly competitive, or authoritarian dominating conflict styles, which are based upon the teacher's institutional power, verbal warnings, and punitive discipline, hinder the development of student social and emotional engagement. Authoritative control or ignoring classroom conflict through avoidance will harm student-teacher relationships and show insensitivity to the students, leading to emotional and social disengagement. The results of these studies closely echoed with the earlier study carried out in secondary school system of Pakistan. In the private secondary schools of Lahore, Muzamil et al. (2026) found that a strong link exists between integrating and compromising conflict and high teacher empathy and emotional self-regulation, while dominating behaviors have a negative association with teacher self-awareness and relationship skills. Similarly Tabbasum and Shabbir (2023) found that the key to a successful classroom management in the context of Punjab public schools is to establish relationships based on care, not control. So, the type of conflict management chosen by teachers is an important operational process that can build either a positive or negative classroom climate.

The second hypothesis that student social engagement and emotional engagement would positively predict student effort expenditure was also supported. The results show that there is a significant and positive relationship between the social-emotional involvement of students and their ongoing academic commitment. Theoretically, this association can be explained by the prosocial classroom model and the literature related to school engagement, which indicates that cognitive investment and behavioral determination do not take place in isolation, but are reinforced by the students' affective and social experiences in the classroom. The emotional engagement, or student interest, enjoyment and relaxation

during learning activities, directly influences students' willingness and persistence to try hard and to stick with challenging tasks. Social engagement, which is defined as active verbal interaction and cooperative interaction in groups, also enhances students' sense of belongingness, thereby prompting them to invest more in working together with peers.

This type of connections also aligns with the results of the meta-analysis of Vargas-Madriz et al. (2024) who found that teacher support predicted multidimensional school engagement, emotional support having the highest association with student emotional participation. Primary school environments involve teachers and students who are learning to be independent and developing their peer relations and understanding of cooperative group work and peer communication encourages them to work harder in the classroom. Moreover, as Gao (2026) found out, students' capacity for resilience and a strong drive to learn can only be fully transformed into active learning when they can have supportive interpersonal relationships in class. A sense of emotional security and social acceptance with peers greatly increases the likelihood of students demonstrating self-regulation and school work.

The third hypothesis was that there would be an intermediary relationship between student social and emotional engagement and the student's effort level expenditure, which would be explained by teacher conflict management styles. The mediation pathway is supported by the results of the SEM analyses, where the indirect effect of teacher conflict management styles on student academic effort via social and emotional involvement are statistically significant. This result is an important conceptual discovery that teacher conflict handling has an indirect effect on student effort, which is done by influencing the internal psychological and social state of students.

This indirect pathway is confirmed by Gómez-Hombrados et al. (2026) who found that perceived teacher EI behaviors positively predict academic engagement of students indirectly through perceived teacher support. Classroom conflict resolution by teachers fosters emotional and instrumental support, meeting students' basic psychological needs. This satisfaction triggers student social and emotional engagement, which then becomes the main motivational force that keeps students motivated to maintain their efforts and behavior, as well as their self-regulation and grit. This mediation pathway emphasizes that teachers' approach to managing conflict in their classroom is not just about maintaining order but is a relational prompt that has a direct impact on student motivation and determination.

The study is of great theoretical and practical significance particularly for the secondary education system in Pakistan. It theoretically creates a parsimonious path model that integrates organizational conflict theory, Self-Determination Theory and multidimensional student engagement into one empirical model. The day-to-day interactions in the classroom are complex and intricate psychologies, and this model helps to understand it.

In practice, the results highlight the need for the rethinking of teacher professional development and classroom management policies in Pakistan. Pakistan's secondary schools are highly overcrowded, the curricula are inflexible and teachers have very heavy workloads, and they do not receive any formal training in socio-emotional skills. The study results indicate that teacher training programs need to go beyond the traditional administrative and punitive approach. Professional development should address development of teachers' EI skills, relationship skills, and constructive conflict resolution skills (such as integrating, compromising, organizing, etc.). Schools can promote student engagement and student grit

by providing teachers these emotional tools to minimize teacher stress and emotional burnout, and to produce warm, high trust classrooms.

Conclusion

Finally, the findings in this study prove that teachers' conflict management practices are essential processes in the classroom that affect the students' academic determination. The researchers tested a model of relational-productive path in a sample of 250 Pakistani secondary school students where cooperative conflict resolution styles (compromise, confrontation, and organizing) positively predicted student social and emotional engagement which then predicted and maintained student academic effort expenditure. Authoritarian or avoidant styles, however, have the opposite effect, interfering with classroom relations and making students withdrawn. Importantly, this study validates the pathway of social and emotional engagement between teacher conflict management and student academic effort. Based on these findings, it is clear that schools should shift from a culture of strict and harsh discipline to emphasizing the development of cooperative conflict resolution skills and emotional intelligence among teachers to create a culture of supportive, engaging learning experiences and increase student performance as well as student well-being.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has some weaknesses that point to further research. First, the cross-sectional design only takes one picture in time and introduces the researchers to the perceptions and behaviours of students in the classroom, not allowing them to draw definitive causal conclusions about the relationships over time. More studies are needed using longitudinal or cross-lagged panel designs to follow the trajectories of these variables over time in various school terms. Second, this study was entirely self-reported, and common method bias was not identified as being a significant problem, despite the use of statistical testing. Based on this data, future studies should integrate student survey responses with teacher self-reports and external classroom observations as well as objective academic data. Finally, the study was carried out in Pakistani secondary schools; further studies are required to examine the generalizability of this relational-productive model in other levels of schools, academic streams and cultural contexts.

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