

# Emotional Intelligence as a Mediator of Dominant Behavior and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction among UTM Students

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**Article history:** Received: 31 January 2022 Received in revised form: 30 June 2022 Accepted: 31 August 2022 Published online: 25 December 2022

## Abstract

Dominant behaviours are displayed when individuals intend to hold power in romantic relationship. Dominant behaviours were proven to affect the level of romantic relationship satisfaction. However, ability-based emotional intelligence which practically can be improved by education or training, play a role in the adjustment of dominant behaviour nature of an individual. The main objective of this study was to determine whether emotional intelligence mediates the relationship between dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction among UTM married students. This study was cross-sectional in nature and questionnaires were responded 297 married postgraduate UTM students. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and regression with the use of SPSS version 26. The mediating effect was determined using Bootstrapping through PROCESS Macro version 3.5.3. The main findings of this study revealed that the emotional intelligence significantly mediates the relationship of dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction. However, the direct effect of dominant behaviour on romantic relationship satisfaction is greater than the indirect effect of dominant behaviour on romantic relationship satisfaction via emotional intelligence. The implications and recommendations related to this study are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Dominant Behaviour, Romantic Relationship Satisfaction, Emotional Intelligence, Ability-Based Emotional Intelligence

## Abstrak

Tingkah laku dominan dipaparkan apabila individu berhasrat untuk memegang kuasa dalam hubungan romantis. Tingkah laku dominan terbukti mempengaruhi tahap kepuasan hubungan romantis. Walau bagaimanapun, kecerdasan emosi berasaskan keupayaan yang boleh diperbaiki melalui pendidikan atau latihan secara praktikal memainkan peranan dalam pelarasan sifat tingkah laku dominan individu. Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan sama ada kecerdasan emosi menjadi perantara hubungan antara tingkah laku dominan dan kepuasan hubungan romantis dalam kalangan pelajar UTM yang sudah berkahwin. Kajian ini bersifat *cross-sectional* dan soal selidik telah digunakan untuk mengumpul data. Seramai 297 orang pelajar pascasiswazah UTM telah terlibat. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan statistik deskriptif, korelasi dan regresi dengan penggunaan SPSS versi 26. Kesan pengantaraan telah ditentukan menggunakan Bootstrapping melalui PROSES Makro versi 3.5.3. Penemuan utama kajian ini mendedahkan bahawa kecerdasan emosi menjadi perantara hubungan tingkah laku dominan dan kepuasan hubungan romantis secara ketara. Walau bagaimanapun, kesan langsung tingkah laku dominan terhadap kepuasan hubungan romantis adalah lebih besar daripada kesan tidak langsung tingkah laku dominan terhadap kepuasan hubungan romantis melalui kecerdasan emosi. Implikasi dan cadangan yang berkaitan dengan kajian ini juga dibincangkan.

**Kata kunci:** Tingkah Laku Dominan, Kepuasan Hubungan Romantik, Kecerdasan Emosi, Kecerdasan Emosi Berasaskan Keupayaan

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Individuals with high degree of dominance tendency are inclined to hold power in romantic relationship, which causes them to exert manipulative behaviour toward their partners and demanding strict obedience from them. Thus, dominance behaviour is viewed as a destructive behaviour in romantic relationships (Lasley & Durtschi, 2017; Sadikaj, Moskowitz, & Zuroff, 2017). However, based on the Interpersonal Circumplex Model, there are various expressions of dominance (Bakan, 1966; Gurtman, 1992; Gurtman & Pincus, 2003; Wiggins, 1996). Among others, dominant behaviour may be exhibited in aggressive ways such as emotional manipulation, threaten, verbal attack, self-harm, while there are the mild expressions such as assertive, leadership and self-confidence (Hawley, 2002, 2003; Kiefer, 2019).

Many of dominance studies have been done. For instance, dominance was found in relation to criminal behaviours, antisocial and paranoid traits (Costello & Dunaway, 2003; Edens, 2009). In so far, dominant trait has been identified as one of the personality traits that correlates to various violent expressions and behaviours in romantic relationships (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2009; Winstok, 2009). Dominant behaviour has even been empirically proven to correlate with intimate partner violence (Esquivel-Santoveña et al., 2019; Schnurr, Mahatmya, & Basche III, 2013).

Within intimate relationships, scholars seemed to favour highlighting the gender difference (Bentley, Galliher, & Ferguson, 2007; Felmlee, 1994; Ponzi, Klimczuk, Traficonte, & Maestripieri, 2015; Sprecher & Felmlee, 1997), whereby, most findings show that men are

more likely to be dominant than women in intimate relationships. Besides the gender difference as one of the main emphases in intimate relationship studies, scholars are making further exploration in the underlying mechanism that links dominant trait and romantic relationship quality (Le, Côté, Stellar, & Impett, 2020; Sadikaj et al., 2017).

However, there are only a few studies investigating the underlying mechanism that links dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction (for example, Cundiff et al., 2015; Sadikaj et al., 2017; Le et al., 2020). In various researches, dominance has been repetitively proven to correlate with lower quality romantic relationships (Sadikaj et al., 2017; Sanford, 2010). However, these few studies are insufficient in providing adequate data about the underlying mechanism that links dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction. Hence, a study of the mediator in the relationship between the two variables in intimate relationship is needed for further understanding of the context.

Emotional intelligence is defined as an integrated ability that includes sensitive toward own and others' emotions, accurate evaluation of own and others' emotions, accommodation of emotions to beneficial activities, and regulation of negative feelings within acceptable period (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 2016; Salovey, Mayer, & Caruso, 2004; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). One's emotional intelligence level has strong correlation to one's behaviours or how the one interacts with others (Kircaburun, Griffiths, & Billieux, 2019; Miao, Humphrey, Qian, & Pollack, 2019). Thus, so it is reasonable to assume that dominant behaviour shows predictability to emotional intelligence level or vice versa. Moreover, emotional intelligence was proven to be negatively correlated to aggressive behaviour (García-Sancho, Salguero, & Fernández-Berocal, 2014; García-Sancho, Salguero, & Fernández-Berocal, 2017) which is an expression of dominant trait in accordance to prior studies (Lasley & Durtschi, 2017; Rollero, Bergagna, & Tartaglia, 2019; Schnurr et al., 2013). All these indicated that there is a link between emotional intelligence and dominant behaviour.

Studies showed that emotional intelligence is a significant element for better romantic relationship quality (Schröder-Abé & Schütz, 2011; Wollny, Jacobs, & Pabel, 2020; Zeidner & Kloda, 2013). This is because the high level of emotional intelligence is the key that allows a person to perform rational reactions when unpredictable conflicts and situations occur in the romantic relationship. Hence, emotional intelligence could be the potential variable for making adjustment during the quest for better romantic relationships. Thus, this study aims to investigate the mediating effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship between dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction. The hypothesis is as the following:

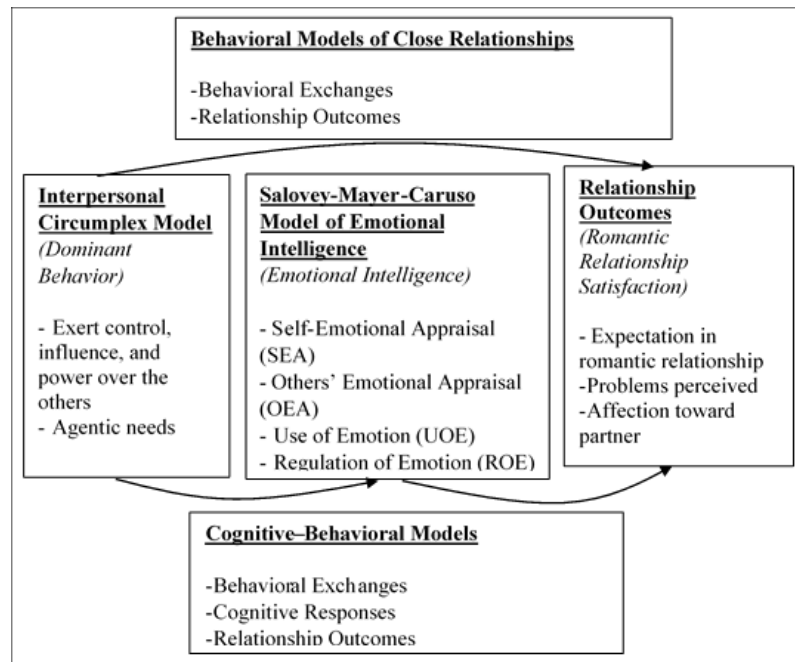
H<sub>0</sub>: The emotional intelligence does not mediate the relationship of dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction among UTM married students.

## **Theoretical Framework**

In terms of the operational model for the three variables (i.e. dominant behaviour, emotional intelligence, and romantic relationship satisfaction), the Cognitive-Behavioural Model well explains the interrelationship of the dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction through the cognitive and affective processes which related to one's level of emotional intelligence. This model was selected because it is more applicable to be practiced in term of counselling intervention. The interrelation of the foresaid three variables through Cognitive-Behavioural Model was summarized in the theoretical framework as shown in Figure 1. The Interpersonal Circumplex Model proposes that people portray dominant traits at different levels to meet their agentic needs (Leary, 1957; Wiggins, 1996). The dominant behaviour in a romantic relationship can be perceived as behavioural exchanges in Behavioural Models of Close Relationships and Cognitive-Behavioural Model that influences the relationship outcomes (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Sadikaj et al., 2017; Wilde & Dozois, 2019).

In accordance to Cognitive-Behavioural Model, behavioural exchanges such as a dominant behaviour presented by a person in a romantic relationship will be interpreted by the cognitive and affective system or relational schemas of the person and his or her partner. Studies show that relational schemas and cognitive response are relevant or show predictability to the level of emotional intelligence of an individual (Alizadeh Bahmani & Hosseinkhanzadeh, 2019; O'Connor, Izadikhah, Abedini, & Jackson, 2018). Generally, an individual with maladaptive relational schemas tends to show negative behavioural exchanges, lower level of emotional intelligence and poorer coping strategies in romantic relationship that affect the common experiences and relationship quality of the couple (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; O'Connor et al., 2018; Sanford, 2010; Wilde & Dozois, 2019). The continuous inconsistent perceptions between a person and his or her partner towards a behavioural exchange due to their relational schemas will form accumulated experience on their relationship quality.

An example based on Cognitive-Behavioural Model in relation to this study is given as follows. A husband exhibits dominant behaviours towards his wife such as controlling her wardrobe. This situation is being interpreted by the wife's cognitive system as excessive and not respecting her, thus she responded with expressions of negative emotions. However, the controlling behaviour was perceived by the husband cognitive system as reasonable interference. This conflict can attribute to the husband poor competence of emotional intelligence as he was not sensitive to his wife's emotions. Then, both of them will have negative feelings towards each other. If similar conflicts happen frequently, then the accumulated experiences will lead to low romantic relationship satisfaction.



**Figure 1** Theoretical Framework for the Study of Emotional Intelligence as a mediator of Dominant Behaviour and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction among UTM students

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### Participants

A total of 297 respondents participated in the study via simple random sampling. The inclusion criteria for the respondents were married postgraduate students in Johore Bharu, and were of heterosexual orientation. Married relationship alludes to stable intimate relationships and recognitions of partners towards each other. In addition, heterosexual orientation was stated as one of the inclusion criteria of respondents in accordance to the common norms in Malaysian society.

### Procedures

Initially, the researchers applied for access to the students' data base from the Academic Management Division of university, which included name list and contacts of all married postgraduate students. After a few months of efforts in communicating with the staff in Academic Management Division, the responsible staff rejected to provide contact numbers of the students. Anyway, the responsible staff agreed to provide researcher a name list of married postgraduate Malaysian students with their emails and faculties. After identifying the population size, the researchers determined the sample size by referring to the Krejcie and Morgan Table (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). Since the population was around 1300, the sample size was thus 297. Then, the researchers ran the random number generator to obtain the sample from the population. Henceforth, researchers prepared the questionnaires in a google form because the data collection stage was during the Covid-19 pandemic. Lastly, researchers distributed the link of the questionnaires through online media (email) to the respondents. For practical reasons, data was collected from 312 respondents After the inspection of the collected data, cases of unqualified (not heterosexual or other reason) and incomplete data were removed.

### Instruments

Data were collected by google form which contained three sets of questionnaires. In addition, there was also a part that asked for demographic details of the respondents.

The first questionnaire was on Dominant Behaviour, the second was on Emotional Intelligence and the third was on Romantic Relationship Satisfaction.

*Dominant Behaviour*: 12 items on 6-point Likert scale, from a subscale in Social Behaviour Inventory (SBI) (Moskowitz, 1994) was adopted to measure dominant behaviour in this study. SBI was developed by Moskowitz (1994) by conceptualization the Interpersonal Circumplex Model. This inventory consists of four polar sub-scales with 12 items each which correspond to the endpoints of the two interpersonal dimensions of dominance and affiliation (i.e. dominant, submissive, quarrelsome and agreeable). However, the researchers adopted only the subscale for dominant behaviour and modified it to suit the conditions in intimate relationships. For example, the researchers changed the word "others" to "partner", to make it relatable to the respondents.

*Emotional Intelligence:* 16 items were adopted from Wong Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) to measure the mediator of this study, namely emotional intelligence. This scale is commonly used as self-report measure of emotional intelligence. WLEIS has four dimensions of emotional intelligence based on Mayer and Salovey's model (1997), with each subscale consisting of 4 items. The four dimensions are Self-Emotional Appraisal (SEA), Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA), Use of Emotion (UOE), and Regulation of Emotion (ROE). WLEIS is well-supported for four-factor structure, reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity of the WLEIS (Law, Wong, & Song, 2004; Wong & Law, 2002).

*Romantic Relationship Satisfaction:* The dependent variable in this study was measured by seven items, in which items 4 and 7 are reversed items. All seven items were adopted from Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS; Hendrick, 1988). RAS is suitable to measure the romantic relationship satisfaction in this study as it was developed to measure a single construct, that is a person's subjective evaluation of an intimate relationship. Revisions of RAS from a preceding version for married partners make it a valid and robust instrument to anyone in an intimate relationship, including dating, cohabiting, and engaged couples, while maintaining high internal consistency (Vaughn & Matyastik Baier, 1999).

## Data Analyses

As this study was a quantitative study and employed Cross-Sectional Study Design, all data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (IBM SPSS Statistics) version 26. In order to answer the main research question, mediating analysis was carried out to investigate the mediating effects of emotional intelligence in the relationship between dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction. There were several steps for the mediating analysis. Initially, the researchers examined the relationship between the dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction. Then, the researchers examined the relationship between the dominant behaviour and emotional intelligence. These two correlations should be significant (Baron & Kenny, 1986); indeed, it was. Finally, the researcher observed the correlation between dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction after adding and controlling the mediator, that was emotional intelligence, in the regression test (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In the case of full mediation, the correlation between dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction will reduce to zero or become insignificant. In the case of partial mediation, the correlation between dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction becomes smaller. As suggested by Hayes and Little (2018), to prove whether the mediating effect was significant or otherwise, Bootstrapping was carried out by using PROCESS Macro version 3.5.3 in SPSS.

## 3.0 RESULTS

The demographic information obtained from the 297 respondents which comprised of gender, age, ethnicity, faculty, degree of study, number of partner and length of romantic relationship was tabulated in Table 1. The proportion of male and female respondents were rather balanced; 43.4% for male and 56.6% for female. This balanced ratio also occurs in the degree of study of respondents; 51.2% for master degree students and 48.8% for PhD students. However, most of the respondents took part in romantic relationship for more than 2 years (84.2%) and interacted with only one partner in their romantic relationship (94.6%).

In terms of age, majority of respondents were within Age Range 26 to 45 (86.9%). In detail, Age Range 26-30 (16.8%), Age Range 31-35 (28.6%), Age Range 36-40 (22.2%) and Age Range 41-45 (19.2%). Regarding ethnicity, Malay constitutes the majority of the respondents which marks 72.1% from the total. Lastly, postgraduate married students from Faculty of Engineering (42.4%) accounted the highest ratio of the total respondents and followed by the Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences (24.2%).

**Table 1** Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographic Factor		Frequency (N=297)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	129	43.4
	Female	168	56.6
<b>Age</b>	21-25	13	4.4
	26-30	50	16.8
	31-35	85	28.6
	36-40	66	22.2
	41-45	57	19.2
	46-50	20	6.7
	More Than 50	6	2.0
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Malay	214	72.1
	Chinese	49	16.5
	Indian	27	9.1
	Others	7	2.4
<b>Faculty</b>	Faculty of Engineering	126	42.4
	Faculty of Science	21	7.1
	Faculty of Built Environment & Surveying	31	10.4
	Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences	72	24.2
	AHIBS	47	15.8
<b>Degree of Study</b>	Master Degree	152	51.2
	PhD	145	48.8
<b>Length of romantic</b>	Less Than Half Year	11	3.7

relationship	Half -1 Year	12	4.0
	1 - 2 Years	24	8.1
	More Than 2 Years	250	84.2
Number of Partner	Only 1	281	94.6
	2	10	3.4
	More Than 2	6	2.0

**Table 2** Means of Dominant Behaviour, Emotional Intelligence, and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction

Variables	Mean (N=297)	Std. Deviation
Dominant Behaviour	4.3328	.69896
Emotional Intelligence	5.4571	.74295
Romantic Relationship Satisfaction	3.9933	.75690

Referring to Table 2, the means of the three variables in this study, i.e. dominant behaviour (4.3328), emotional intelligence (5.4571) and romantic relationship satisfaction (3.9933) are moderately high.

**Table 3** Correlations between Dominant Behavior and Romantic Relationship Satisfaction

		Romantic Relationship Satisfaction
Dominant Behavior	Pearson Correlation	<b>.193**</b>
	Significance(2-tailed)	<b>.001</b>
	N	297

\*\* . Correlation at 0.01(2-tailed)

**Table 4** Correlations between Dominant Behavior and Emotional Intelligence

		Emotional Intelligence
Dominant Behavior	Pearson Correlation	<b>.344***</b>
	Significance(2-tailed)	<b>.000</b>
	N	297

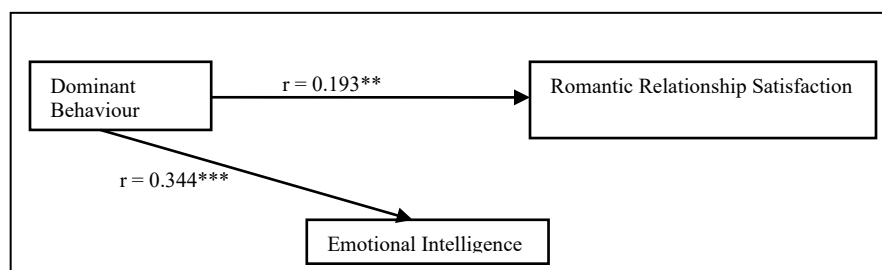
\*\* . Correlation at 0.01(2-tailed)

**Table 5** Correlations between Dominant Behavior and Four Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence

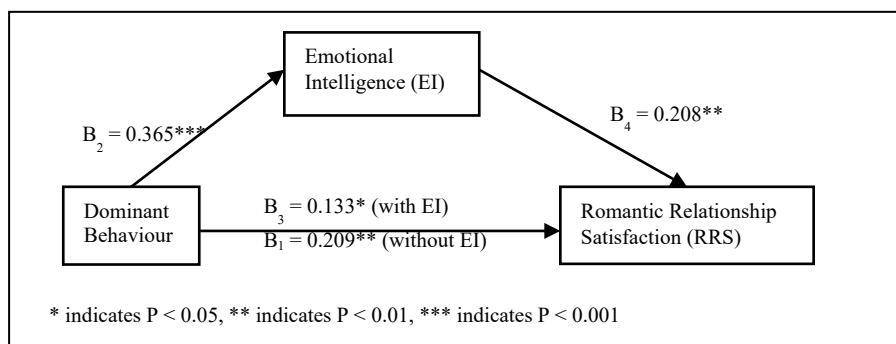
		Self-Emotional Appraisal (SEA)	Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA)	Use of Emotion (UOE)	Regulation of Emotion (ROE)
Dominant Behavior	Pearson Correlation	.262***	.250***	.361***	.164**
	Significance(2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.005
	N	297	297	297	297

\*\* . Correlation at 0.01(2-tailed)

As shown in Table 3 and Table 4, the dominant behaviour was positively correlated to romantic relationship satisfaction, ( $r = 0.193$ ) and emotional intelligence ( $r = 0.344$ ). The correlations were summarized in Figure 2. Both correlations were significant although the correlation between dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction was weak. However, the correlation between dominant behaviour and emotional intelligence was moderate. Based on Table 5, Use of Emotion (UOE) is the dimension which showed significant and highest correlation coefficient with dominant behavior when compare to other dimensions of emotional intelligence,  $r = 0.361$ \*\*\*. Regression Analyses were carried out for the three variables and the summary is displayed in Figure 3.



**Figure 2** Correlations between Dominant Behaviour with Romantic Relationship Satisfaction and Emotional Intelligence

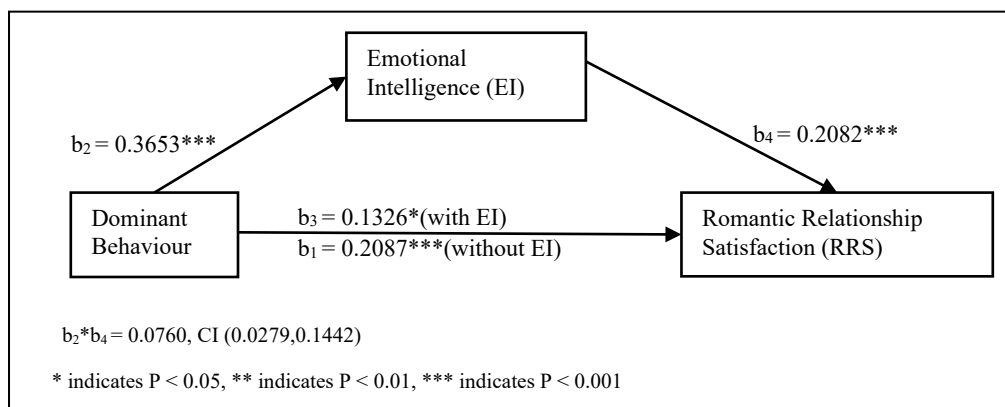


**Figure 3** Regression Analyses of Romantic Relationship Satisfaction on Dominant Behaviour and Emotional Intelligence level

As shown in the Figure 3, the direct effect of dominant behaviour on romantic relationship satisfaction ( $B_1$ ) is  $0.209^{**}$ . This implies that one unit of increase in the level of dominant behaviour, there will be a 0.209 increase in romantic relationship satisfaction. The effect of dominant behaviour on emotional intelligence ( $B_2$ ) is  $0.365^{***}$ , which implies a 0.365 increase in emotional intelligence for every unit of increase in dominant behaviour.  $B_3 = 0.133^*$  and  $B_4 = 0.208^{**}$  were obtained through multiple regression analysis of romantic relationship satisfaction on dominant behaviour and emotional intelligence. All of the effects are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$ .

Based on the Figure 3, the effect in direct path from dominant behaviour to romantic relationship satisfaction with emotional intelligence ( $B_3 = 0.133^*$ ) was less than the path without emotional intelligence ( $B_1 = 0.209^{**}$ ). This means that the existence of emotional intelligence reduced the effect of dominant behaviour on romantic relationship satisfaction. Although the effect of dominant behaviour on romantic relationship satisfaction became smaller, it is still considered significant with  $p = 0.041$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Hence, we concluded that partial mediation occurred between dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction via emotional intelligence.

To further investigate the significance of the mediating effect of emotional intelligence or whether the indirect path from dominant behaviour to romantic relationship satisfaction via emotional intelligence is significant, Bootstrapping was carried out by PROCESS Macro v3.5.3 in SPSS. The summary of the results is displayed in Figure 4.



**Figure 4** Summary of Bootstrapping Results

With reference to Figure 4, the indirect effect of dominant behaviour onto romantic relationship satisfaction was significant at 0.0760, with the lower limit of confidence interval at 0.0279 and the upper limit of confidence interval at 0.1442. Besides, through the percentage calculation, the indirect effect accounted 36.4% of the total effect of dominant behaviour on romantic relationship satisfaction. This means that the relationship of dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction operates directly for 63.6% and indirectly via emotional intelligence level for 36.4%.

#### 4.0 DISCUSSION

In previous studies, dominant behaviour is negatively associated with romantic relationship satisfaction (Bentley et al., 2007; Cundiff, Smith, Butner, Critchfield, & Nealey-Moore, 2015; Kelly, Dubbs, & Barlow, 2015; Le et al., 2020; Lindová, Průšová, & Klapilová, 2020; Ostrov & Collins, 2007; Ponzi et al., 2015; Sadikaj et al., 2017). This is because dominant behaviour of one partner usually leads to negative feelings or inappropriate behaviours towards the other partner. However, results of this study seems to present a contradictory result to the previous studies; there was a positive correlation between dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction.

Through observation of the items in the scale of dominant behaviour, a number of the items seem to express dominant behaviour in positive ways. In fact, based on the Interpersonal Circumplex Model (Bakan, 1966; Gurtman, 1992; Gurtman & Pincus, 2003; Wiggins, 1996), dominance can be displayed in different degree across the axis from antisocial to prosocial patterns with the purpose to achieve one's power goals. Expressing confidence about one's strengths, values, and opinions, cooperation, reciprocal resource exchange, and leadership are usually considered as prosocial dominance (Hawley, 2002, 2003; Kiefer, 2019; Shaver, Segev, & Mikulincer, 2011).

For instance, Item 1 (I set goal(s) for my partner or for us), Item 2 (I gave information), Item 3 (I expressed an opinion), Item 5 (I took the lead in planning/ organizing a project or activity), and Item 11 (I made a suggestion) in dominant scale are more likely to portray confidence, leadership, active participation or value to the romantic relationship rather than purposeful manipulation of the romantic partner. Then, Item 6 (I asked my partner for a volunteer), Item 7 (I spoke in a clear firm voice), Item 8 (I asked my partner to do something), and Item 9 (I got immediately to the point) seems to express mild dominant behaviour but within acceptable range for normal people. Only Item 10 (I tried to get my partner to do something else), Item 12 (I assigned my partner to a task) and Item 4 (I criticized my partner) were clearly worded so as to be considered as potential behaviours in eliciting dissatisfaction from one's romantic partner. Therefore, from the explanation above, it is reasonable for the positive relationship between dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction. There were five (5) items probably perceived by the respondents as positive behaviours and four (4) items perceived as acceptable dominant behaviours by the respondents from a total 12 items.

The positive correlation between dominant behaviour and emotional intelligence, may seem queer because, according to Lasley and Durtschi (2017), Rollero et al. (2019) and Schnurr et al. (2013) dominant individuals with aggressive behaviour are not likely to possess high level of emotional intelligence (García-Sancho et al., 2014; García-Sancho et al., 2017). However, the findings of the positive correlation between the level of dominant behaviour and level of emotional intelligence can be explained by examining the items in the dominant scale.

From the result, the dominant behaviour showed the significant and positive correlation to all dimensions of emotional intelligence, especially the Dimension Use of Emotion, UOE indicated the highest correlation among all dimensions of emotional intelligence. The definition of Use of Emotion, UOE is ability of an individual to make good use of his or her emotions for constructive activities and improvement (Law et al., 2004; Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Wong & Law, 2002). Basically, an individual who tends to utilize his or her own emotions as impetus to make positive progress for life would be a confident individual rather than someone with self-abandonment trait (O'Connor et al., 2018; Subramanyam & Rao, 2021; Trigueros et al., 2020; Upadhyay, Talwar, Tiwari, & Gujral, 2020). In the scale of dominant behaviour for this study, there were more than half items of the total, including Item 1 (I set goal(s) for my partner or for us), Item 2 (I gave information), Item 3 (I expressed an opinion), Item 5 (I took the lead in planning/ organizing a project or activity), Item 7 (I spoke in a clear firm voice), Item 9 (I got immediately to the point) and Item 11 (I made a suggestion) that respondents perceived as items that denote confident behaviours.

Additionally, better self-emotional appraisal (SEA) and others' emotional appraisal (OEA) signifies better emotional awareness. This is because an individual must be aware of his or her emotions before proceeding to the emotional evaluating process. Emotional awareness was recognized as a factor in cultivating leadership (Ashkanasy & Dasborough, 2003) and leadership is one of the displays of dominant behavior (Hawley, 2002, 2003; Kiefer, 2019). Hence, the positive correlation between dominant behaviour and emotional intelligence is not queer after all.

In the mediating analysis, partial mediation occurred in the path of dominant behaviour to romantic relationship satisfaction via emotional intelligence. Further, by calculation, we found that the direct effect of dominant behaviour onto romantic relationship satisfaction accounted for 63.6% and the indirect effect via emotional intelligence was 36.4%. The direct effect of dominant behaviour on romantic relationship satisfaction was greater than the indirect effect via emotional intelligence in a multiple. However, still a smaller proportion of romantic relationship satisfaction was indirectly affected by dominant behaviour via emotional intelligence. This implies that emotional intelligence also plays an important role in maintaining good quality of romantic relationship (Marc A. Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005; Schröder-Abé & Schütz, 2011; Schutte et al., 2001; Smith, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2008; Wollny et al., 2020; Zeidner & Kaluda, 2008; Zeidner & Kloda, 2013).

In the Cognitive-Behavioural model (Bradbury & Fincham, 1991; Sadikaj et al., 2017; Sanford, 2010) the behavioural exchanges in romantic relationship are connected through cognitive and affective processes. For example, a person asks his or her romantic partner to volunteer for a task (behavioural exchanges). This behaviour may lead to two different outcomes depending on the level of emotional intelligence of the person. If the person possesses good emotional intelligence, he or she will convey the meaning in the best way and with great concern about his or her romantic partner's emotional changes (Batool & Kbalid, 2009). The emotional expressiveness of the person in making request will be interpreted by his or her romantic partner as an action of trust, respect and mutual help between each other (cognitive and affective processes), which then leads to comfortable experience between the romantic partners and results in high level of romantic relationship satisfaction (Batool & Kbalid, 2009; De Beer, 2016; du Plooy & de Beer, 2018; Yelsma & Marrow, 2003).

On the contrary, if the person lacks emotional intelligence, especially low in Dimension Others' Emotional Appraisal (OEA) and Dimension Use of Emotion (UOE), then he or she might neglect his or her romantic partner's feeling in the request process. All these unpleasant experiences will trigger unpleasant feelings between the partners and thus lead to romantic relationship dissatisfaction.

## ■ 5.0 LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

There are a number of limitations for this study. Firstly, this study did not apply the dyadic design and focused on the self-perceive of the interpersonal aspects of dominant behavior, emotional intelligence and romantic relationship satisfaction (i.e. actor effects). In the early years of development of studies related to close relationships, these relationships have been described as causal interdependence within couples. Causal interdependence means the continuous impact of partners have on each other's decisions, emotions, cognitions, behaviours, and so on. This study embraced this belief in implementation and research design, therefore this study focused on only either one of a partners. In short, this study highlights the association of respondent's dominant behaviour and respondent own romantic relationship satisfaction in long term romantic relationship with mediator, emotional intelligence (EI) involved.

Secondly, the data collection for this study was carried out through self-report method also one of the restrictions. Despite the popular usage of self-report methods to collect information, biases such as social desirability bias is quite likely to exist (i.e. respondents' responses to questions were likely to be viewed favourably by others) (Krumpal, 2013). In addition, the answers from the respondents may vary according to the respondent's feelings at the time they filled out the questionnaire. Lastly, the respondents in this study were married postgraduate students, thus limiting the generalization of the findings.

As recommendations for future studies, researchers may use other variables as mediators in the studies of dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction. As mentioned before, currently there are limited studies which investigate the underlying mechanism of the association of dominance trait and close relationship quality (Cundiff et al., 2015; Le et al., 2020; Sadikaj et al., 2017). These studies are not sufficient to provide a clear understanding of the interactive nature of dominant behaviour and romantic relationship satisfaction. Therefore, future researchers may choose a more specific mediator such as affective regulation, coping behaviour, conflict management, relationship stress, accuracy of the partner's perception etc. In addition, recruiting married couples as respondents for dyadic studies is highly recommended so as to expose the interactive patterns in the romantic relationships.

For a study that can be generalised to the whole Malaysian and Asian society, future studies are suggested to conduct in larger scale, like using sample from different universities in Malaysia, or from other countries in Asia. Additionally, respondents that constituted by postgraduate students in this study represent high educated group in the society, so we still lack of information about close relationship pattern of dominant behaviour among couples from other group in society. Thus, recruiting sample from normal/low educational background or focus on sample from various social economic status can be tried in order to collect data for a wider interpretation about the context of this study.

The finding of this study was not align to majority of the previous similar studies which concluded that the dominant behaviours contributed to low romantic relationship satisfaction (Bentley et al., 2007; Cundiff et al., 2015; Le et al., 2020; Lindová et al., 2020; Sadikaj et al., 2017). Thus, future researchers also recommended to investigate the interpretation and perception of Asian and Malaysian society towards dominant behaviours in romantic relationship. This is because there might be a difference between eastern and western values about dominant behaviours in romantic relationship.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

In short, dominant behaviours that involve power competition within romantic partners was inevitably in romantic relationship. However, the influence of the dominant expressions either aggressive or mild, positive or negative was amendable and adjustable via emotional intelligence to ensure satisfying experience in romantic relationship. This is because in the present study, emotional intelligence is referred as a skill or ability that can be mastered or improved after well trained or went through related psychoeducation (Fiori & Vesely-Maillefer, 2018; Mayer et al., 2016). Hence, hopefully the findings and clarification of hidden mechanism for linkage of dominant trait – emotional intelligence – romantic relationship satisfaction will inspire those who are facing troubles in building stable intimate relationships with some applicable resolutions, particularly those grew up with high dominance trait or those in love with dominant partners.

Additionally, dominance trait has strong relation to aggressive and violent behaviors (Lasley & Durtschi, 2017; Rollero et al., 2019). Thus, there are high possibility of domestic violence and intimate partner violence when one party of the couple exhibit high degree of dominance trait and seems impossible to tolerance to anything. As the mediating effect of emotional intelligence in the relationship of dominant behaviour- romantic relationship satisfaction was proven significant, then the use of skills of emotional intelligence in reducing the harm of dominance trait on relationship quality could be an alternative. This can secure the welfare of the vulnerable party in romantic relationship and enhance the family happiness in society.

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thanks Dr. NORAZRENA BINTI ABU SAMAH and School of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, UTM for important feedback in order to improve manuscript.

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