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# **SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS INFLUENCING CONFLICT ORIGINS AND SHAPING NEGOTIATION DYNAMICS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Conflict, an inherent part of human interaction, can lead to both positive and negative outcomes depending on how it's managed. This paper explores the social and psychological factors influencing the origins and dynamics of conflict and negotiation. A review of relevant literature reveals that conflicts often arise from differences in needs, perspectives, values, and scarce resources. At the individual level, personality differences in conflict styles can contribute to disputes. At the group level, poorly defined roles, divergent attitudes, and unequal power dynamics can trigger conflict. Additionally, environmental factors like resource changes and misunderstandings due to poor communication can act as triggers. Social psychology permeates all aspects of intractable conflicts. Attitudes, history, and identity play key roles in both conflict emergence and resolution. Overcoming barriers like negative perceptions of the other side is crucial for successful negotiations. Understanding the perspectives of all parties fosters empathy during talks. Relative power balances influence whether conditions are "ripe" for negotiation, and third-party mediators can facilitate by acknowledging concerns from all sides. The study concludes that awareness of the social and psychological drivers of conflict empowers individuals and groups to better manage disputes and engage in constructive negotiations for mutually acceptable solutions. Careful analysis of issues, coupled with efforts to build trust and empathy, are key to positive outcomes. This field offers valuable frameworks and insights for resolving conflicts at interpersonal, organizational, and international levels.

**Keywords:** *Social and Psychological, Conflict Origins, Shaping Negotiation Dynamics*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Conflict is neither good nor bad, but our response to a conflict decides whether the outcome will be productive or destructive (Raines, 2020). Conflict, according to Raines (2020) affords opportunities for constructive growth, interpersonal development, and issue solutions. Conflict is a social phenomenon that can take place between different species, over different time periods, and between different cultures (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008). When it comes to preventing security threats, managing political strife, making corporate agreements, or separating one's high school love, individuals, organizations, and even entire civilizations waste time, money, and energy (Bowles, 2006; De Dreu, 2010; Pruitt et al., 1994; as cited in De Dreu, 2014). According to De Dreu (2014), controlling conflict constructively can significantly reduce the waste of time, cost, and effort in numerous situations. There has been a long history of research in the social-psychological and decision sciences that shows ways to counteract this waste and how people and communities might instead build instead of destroying value in conflict and negotiations (De Dreu, 2014).

Conflict is the potentially destructive dispute or contradiction between or among people that could be detrimental to any institution (Ronquillo et al., 2022). According to Ronquillo et al. (2022), in the context of the workplace, conflict frequently involves individuals' own ambitions, ideas, or objectives as opposed to the priorities, ideas, or objectives of the team or organization. The Bible records in Genesis, chapter four, a narrative about two brothers named Cain and Abel. Cain becomes enraged when he sees that his brother is gaining favor with God as a result of his giving, and he decides to kill him (NKJV). When God appears to Cain and hands him what appears to be severe punishment, Cain immediately begins to negotiate with God, pleading that the severity of his punishment is beyond what he is able to withstand. Another conflict is recorded in Genesis chapter thirteen, and it occurs when Lot moves with Abraham. Lot goes with Abraham in Genesis chapter thirteen, and they both settle in the land of Canaan. However, as their flocks continue to increase, they become too many for the land to contain them. This causes a conflict between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock, which eventually leads to their separation, where Abram asks Lot to choose the land where he could move (NKJV).

Individuals differ greatly in their behavioral and emotional responses to conflict, according to Elgoibar et al. (2017), and they must learn how to respond effectively in various conflict

circumstances. This calls for taking a flexible approach, during which the issue at hand is first analyzed and then selecting a tactic that is tailored to the objectives of each side. Conflict, as Raines (2020) suggests, is neither positive nor negative; it is people's reactions to a conflict that determines if the outcome is constructive or destructive. Conflict offers the chance for good change, relationship growth, and issue solving.

## **UNDERSTANDING OF CONFLICT AND NEGOTIATION**

Similar to other terminologies, conflict causes great ambiguity and leaves many scholars and administrators unclear regarding, its meaning and relevance; and the most effective means of coping with it. Personal, organizational, and even international conflict situations are unavoidable (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014). A simple definition of conflict is the presence of positions that are incompatible with one another, describing a situation that remains unchanged when opposing points of view are present (Zartman, 2009). According to Majer et al. (2021), conflict is frequently the outcome of displeasure with the status quo, and this displeasure frequently leads to negotiations about doing things in a new or different approach. An interpersonal dispute or discord between two or more individuals that can be attributed to differences in viewpoint, competition, bad views, poorly defined performance expectations, or ineffective communication has been used to define conflict (Ellis and Abbott, 2011; Marquis and Huston, 2014; as cited in McKibben, 2017). According to Raines (2020), conflict is neither positive nor negative; our response to conflict influences whether the outcome will be effective or ineffective, as conflict offers the possibility for meaningful change, relationship development, and problem-solving.

Within the organization setting, conflict is inevitable. According to De Dreu and Gelfand (2007), every school of organizational philosophy, from Weber's bureaucratic and scientific management to interpersonal relationships and cooperation systems, to the open systems approach, has as its basic tenet how employees manage their mutual interdependence and resulting conflicts. Organizations, work, and conflict is all so closely related that some have come to the conclusion that there cannot be organizations without conflict, and that conflict cannot occur without individuals depending on one another to do tasks (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2007; p.4). Injustices are rarely corrected without significant conflict, and as Fisher et al. (2011) opine, conflict promotes prosperity in the form of corporate competition. It also sits at the core of the democratic process,

where the best choices come not from a hasty consensus but rather from examining all viewpoints and looking for innovative answers (Fisher et al., 2011).

The use of negotiation is widely regarded as being among the most effective strategies for preventing and resolving conflicts. According to Lewicki and Hiam (2006), the act of negotiating is analogous to the process of breathing. As a result, negotiation is the give-and-take that occurs in everyday social encounters, and everyone negotiates frequently during the course of the day (Lewicki & Hiam, 2006). Negotiation is the process of bringing together contrasting points of view in order to reach a compromise (Zartman, 2009). The social process of negotiation involves two or more interdependent people making choices, allocating resources, or resolving disputes in order to reach an agreement (Brett, 2014; as cited by Ramirez-Marin et al., 2019). According to Zartman (2009), negotiation has a role to play in three stages of conflict; When the dispute is just a concern or a challenge, to keep it from escalating; during the conflict, if the first has unsuccessful, propose solutions and alternatives; and, if the first two fail, to stop the escalation and aggression in the conflict. Negotiation is a duty that should be pursued throughout the year since it is the mechanism by which people can devise collaborative solutions to problems and constructive alternatives to violent conflict.

## **TYPES OF CONFLICTS**

According to Hussein and Al-Mamary (2019), conflicts may occur within an individual, that is in the situation of a dilemma of choice, between two individuals, conflicts can also happen, for example in the cases of superiors versus subordinates, and they can happen between heads of departments, etc. Within groups, conflicts may occur based on performance, importance to particular groups, and, in general, union-management rivalries (Amason & Schweiger, 1994; as cited by Hussein & Al-Mamary, 2019). Contemporary approaches categorize distinct conflict types based on their outcomes, according to Robbins and Judge (2017). According to Robbins and Judge (2017), a disagreement among team members over how to increase production most effectively can be viewed as functional if different points of view are openly aired and contrasted. Functional conflict advances the goals of the group and enhances its performance, while destructive or dysfunctional conflict is a conflict that impairs group performance, and teams that engage in intensely personal power struggles that divert attention from the current work are dysfunctional (Robbins & Judge, 2017).

## SOURCES OF CONFLICT

Conflict consists of a variety of human psychological states, including anxiety, hostility, resistance, and outright aggressiveness, as well as oppositional and hostile interaction types, such as competitiveness (Talmaciu & Mărcine, 2010). Poor communication, rivalry over limited but shared resources, conflicting goals, and other factors are potential origins of conflict, according to Ghaffar (2019). According to Gray and Stark (1984; as cited in Ghaffar, 2019), there are six potential causes of conflict. The following are some of them: i) Scarce resources; ii) Mutually dependent work activities; iii) Differentiated activities; iv) Misunderstanding; v) Differing perceptions; and vi) The organizational environment. Conflict can also originate from a variety of other sources, including i) individual variations (*some people prefer confrontation while others do not*); ii) group dynamics; iii) environmental factors; iv) Undefined authority arrangements (*people do not know the extent of their authority*); v) Divergent attitudes; vi) Task proportions (*one group is more strong than another and the weaker group attempts to alter the situation*; vii) Conflicting time frames (*Some units think in the long term, while others focus on the immediate future*) (Gray & Stark, 1984; as cited in Ghaffar, 2019).

There are two basic sources of conflict in work teams, according to Raines (2020): task conflict and relational conflict. When two or more persons suffer non-structural conflict as a result of a lack of trust or interpersonal conflicts among team members, this is referred to as relationship conflict (Raines, 2020). Relationship conflict has a detrimental impact on a team's capacity to complete its tasks (Farh, Lee, & Farh, 2010; as cited in Raines, 2020). When members of a group dispute over the most efficient approach to do a task, a task conflict arises. Raines (2020) suggests that moderate degrees of task conflict are connected with increased creativity and improved outcomes, but relationship conflicts are related with decreased output and enthusiasm.

By understanding the nature and origins of disputes, Talmaciu and Mărcine (2010) posit that managers can avoid them or, if required, facilitate their resolution within manageable parameters. Regardless of the specific approach for resolving a conflict, three preparatory steps can increase the likelihood of success: properly defining the issue of the conflict, minimizing the scope of the conflict, and expanding the range of potential solutions (Talmaciu & Mărcine, 2010).

## **SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

The psychological repercussions of battle on individuals and societies are both significant and ignored while being much less tangible than the physical wreckage of war (Seymour, 2033). Seymour (2003) opines that if the attitudes that result in conflict are to be reduced, and if it is assumed that psychology influences the attitudes and behaviors of individuals and groups, then a fresh focus must be placed on comprehending the social psychology of conflict outcomes.

In the context of international conflict and foreign diplomacy in general, including in the creation of novel methods to conflict resolution, the application of psychological concepts and results has increased, according to Kelman (2010). The psychological approach attempts to explain such occurrences in terms of "what goes on in men's thoughts" (Klineberg, 1964) or "tensions that lead to war" (Cantril, 1950), according to Coleman et al. (2014). They are explained in terms of the perceptions, beliefs, values, ideologies, motivations, and other psychological processes and aspects that people have accumulated as a result of their experiences and as these features are initiated by the specific situation and role where in, they are located (Coleman et al., 2014). In contrast, the social-political-economic approach seeks explanations in relation to social, economic, and political issues, such as levels of weaponry, as well as unbiased conflicts between political and economic objectives.

According to Seymour (2003), efforts for peace must recognize and emphasize the suffering and trauma that emerge from conflict. If lasting and genuine peace is to be achieved, Seymour (2003) opines that it is necessary to devise methods for addressing these less-obvious repercussions of violent conflict and that social psychology as an analytical framework should be utilized in addition to the conventional political and economic analyses. When examining the backdrop of international negotiations, human psychology is a crucial component to consider. Cognitive psychologists stress the study of beliefs and opinions associated with people's emotions, moods, experiences, behaviors, and life events (Aleksieieva & Thi Kieu Trinh, 2021).

## **CONSTITUENTS OF THE SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT**

All facets of intractable conflict are infused with social psychology, according to Seymour (2003). While history, attitudes, and identity are intrinsic to the development of conflict, Seymour (2003) suggests that they are also fundamental to managing conflict and contributing to lasting peace.

Among the most effective means of promoting peace include remembering the past, fostering knowledge, cultivating empathy, granting legitimacy, and addressing anxieties (Seymour, 2003). One of the most significant social-psychological barriers is cultural attitudes that perpetuate conflict. According to Kelman (1987; as cited in Bar-Tal & Halperin, 2011), perception of the relationship in minimal considerations, rejection of the other group's individuality, and an excessively negative and immovable image of the opponent impede progress towards effective negotiation.

Human wants are frequently expressed and met through key social units such as ethnic groups, national groups, and states (Kelman, 2010). According to Kelman (2010), conflict emerges when a group faces non-fulfillment or risk to the realization of basic wants, such as food, shelter, personal security, and bodily welfare, as well as psychological needs such as identity, safety, respect, independence, self-esteem, and a feeling of justice. Kelman (2010) notes that even when disputing parties have determined that it is in their best interests to bring a solution to the fighting, they still avoid sitting down to negotiate or making the compromises required to advance the negotiations. This is due to concern that they will be forced into making decisions that, in the end, will put their very existence at risk (Kelman, 2010).

Understanding the history of the conflict is important. According to Seymour (2003), in the social-psychological assessment of conflict, the significance of recognizing history is emphasized. Previous battles fought, acts of aggression perpetrated, and actions that eroded confidence are not quickly forgotten, and rejecting these facts does not erase them from history (Seymour, 2003). In contrast, Seymour (2003) notes that dismissing historical claims generates insecurity and fear, calls into question the legitimacy of other tribes and nations, exacerbates tensions, and escalates violence.

## **SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGY IN NEGOTIATIONS**

In negotiations, one's sense of power and relative position is crucial, and perception, specifically, is a social-psychological factor that is crucial in setting the tone for talks (Seymour, 2003). According to Zartman (1989, referenced in Seymour, 2003), negotiations are typically launched and effective only in "ripe" circumstances. The happening of a recent or impending major disaster, a transition in the military environment that creates the perception of a genuine and immediate



threat of new or intensified violent conflict, the perception of a deadlock that hurts both sides, the perception that escalating violence is more expensive than engaging in negotiations, and a shift in power toward a fairer allocation are some examples (Seymour, 2003). Parties are more likely to enter negotiations if they believe that power is dispersed more fairly.

Understanding that different perspectives may be held by opponents is crucial in all conversations, and embracing this idea can make both parties more empathetic and less judgmental, which can facilitate negotiations (Winter & Chevrier, 2008). According to Raines (2020), the parties to a negotiation may not have the same level of dependence on one another, however, some degree of interdependence does exist, or else negotiations would be unnecessary. The social-psychological method can help draw disputing parties into the peace and reconciliation process (Seymour, 2003). Negotiations can result in constructive change if both parties recognize each other's worries and views and accept mutual validity, according to Seymour (2003). Further, Seymour (2003) postulates that third-party negotiators can also contribute to the process by offering assurance in the form of acknowledgments and trust-building gestures.

## **CONCLUSION**

Conflict causes individuals to enter the confined mode, which is characterized by rigid thinking, limited judgment, decreased complexity, and a limited attention span (Coleman et al., 2014). Since the 1990s, researchers have paid a growing amount of attention to social-psychological outcomes in negotiation (Thompson, 1990; as cited by Lu et al., 2017). Thompson (1990) noted that the socio-psychological measures are comprised of three crucial factors based on social awareness: negotiators' perceptions of the negotiating position, the opposing party or negotiating competitor, and self (Lu et al., 2017). According to Madalina (2016), organizations, which are hierarchically separated into departments and sections, are defined by conflicts that arise inside this structure. Managers must identify their appropriate management strategies because disagreements may have both advantageous and harmful effects. For the organization to fulfill its objective, constructive conflict mediation is crucial (Madalina, 2016). Managers must be aware of the social-psychological elements that contribute to conflict within the organizational setting and be able to manage them while keeping in mind the big picture aims and objectives of the business. If conflict is not handled properly, it could lead to rivalry inside the company, which would have an impact on performance.



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