

The Effects of Conflict Type and Disputants'
Hierarchy on Lay Third Parties' Emotion and Side-
Taking Preference

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Abstract

Side-taking is the most frequent reaction taken by lay third parties to handle a conflict. However, it has not been extensively studied in research yet. This research tried to investigate how task and relational conflict and hierarchy (equal or unequal) of the disputants have an influence on lay third parties' felt emotion towards a conflict and side-taking preferences. The study employed a 2x2 factorial between-subjects design (with conflict types and disputants' hierarchy as factors). Ninety-two Germans, mainly students, read one of four Vignettes and filled in an online questionnaire. The results showed that negative emotions were positively affected by relational conflicts and positive emotions were negatively affected by relational conflicts. Disputants' unequal hierarchy had also an effect on negative emotions. Besides, the interaction effects of conflict types and hierarchy were found to have an effect on both, emotional arousal and legitimacy based side-taking. Implications of these findings are further elaborated in the discussion section.

1. Introduction

Imagine the following scenario: you are a student and your class is electing a new class representative. You have not made up your decision between the two candidates A and B yet. Candidate A is very charismatic and you have a good relationship with him. In contrast, candidate B has reasonable arguments for his standpoints and a better plan to fulfill his ambitions. Each side has made some dirty 'election campaigns' to hurt the other party's reputation. This puts a lot of emotions between the two party's camps. Both camps try to persuade you to support their candidate. Whose side are you on? What would be your reasoning for your side-taking? What emotions do you feel in this situation?

This research aims at assessing effects of conflict types and status of the conflicting parties (also called disputant's status hereinafter) on third parties' emotions (towards an interpersonal conflict) and third parties' motives for side-taking.

At first, conflict and side-taking will be defined and the concepts of emotions towards conflicts and side-taking motives are introduced. Hypotheses about how conflict type and disputants' status influence on third parties' emotion and side-taking motives are proposed (see introduction). Secondly, information about the respondents, measures, procedure of how the data were collected and analyzed, is given (see 'Methods' section). Thirdly, I empirically tested whether the proposed hypotheses were supported or not and listed a general conclusion that can be drawn from the data (see 'Results' section). Finally, I addressed the implications of the findings, pointed out limitations of this study and gave a view into the future of side-taking research (see 'Discussion' section).

Definition of Conflict, Third Party and Side-Taking

Although almost everybody has experienced being part of a conflict, when it comes to define what a conflict is, a definition seems to be more difficult than one would expect (Thomas, 1972). In this study I define conflict on the basis of Van de Vliert's viewpoint —“Conflict refers to a person's experience of discord due to a socially induced subject matter. It elicits complex, goal directed reactions and produces benefits and cost for all people involved.” (Van de Vliert, 1997, p.4).

Not all conflicts can be managed by the disputants themselves. They often need some help from “outsiders” to win over their opponents or resolve their problems. Those “outsiders” in the conflict literature are labeled as third parties. Past studies on third party intervention has identified several types of third party roles, such as mediator and arbitrator (Sheppard, 1984), hybrid third party (Ross and Conlon, 2000) or lay third party (Yang, Van de Vliert & Shi, 2007). Mediation, arbitration and hybrid intervention have received much attention in the field of conflict management, but how lay third parties react to conflict situations is still a rarely addressed topic (Yang & Van de Vliert, 2011). Therefore, this paper aims at extending the knowledge about lay third party's behavior in conflicts.

Lay third parties are identified by three aspects: Firstly, they are confronted with an interpersonal conflict. Secondly, they have no intended approach for conflict handling. Finally, even they are not directly involved in the conflict, they have to take measures to react to the situation when the conflict escalates (Yang, Van de Vliert, Shi & Huang, 2008). Regarding the reaction of lay third parties, theoretical and empirical studies have shown that their primary reaction to an interpersonal conflict is side-taking (Van de Vliert, 1981; Yang & Van de Vliert, 2011). Such a reaction is highlighted in this research project.

Conflict Emotions and Side-Taking Motives

Emotions have been neglected in conflict theories for decades (Greenhalgh & Okun, 1997; Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003). In the past, conflict theories and models relied heavily on mathematical assumptions of decision making, proposing that people are to some extent rational and objective individuals (see Luce, & Raifa, 1957; Fishburn, 1969; 1970). As a consequence of cognitive theories and models dominating the field, the function of affect and emotion for conflict strategies and behaviors have received little attention.

However, the dominance of cognitive approaches towards conflict research has been challenged in recent years. Research showed that even unrelated experiences of emotion have an influence on the outcomes of 'rational' economic decisions (Loewenstein & Lerner, 2003). Especially in negotiation and conflict settings, rationality is only one of the ingredients of the decision-making process; emotions can have a major influence on the process and on the outcomes of negotiations and conflicts. (see Carnevale & Isen, 1986; Li & Roloff, 2004; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). Taking this updated view about the function of emotion in conflicts, in this study I explored the emotions that lay third parties experience in an interpersonal conflict.

In this research, I drew on Kitayama, Mesquita and Karasawa's (2006) distinction of pleasantness¹ of emotions. On this dimension, emotions can be either positive (such as sympathy and superior feelings) or negative (such as guilt and frustration). Furthermore, I addressed emotions on the basis of general experience of negative and positive emotion and arousal, stated by Bradley & Lang (1994).

Besides emotions, another concept that was addressed in this study was the lay third party's side-taking motive. Yang, Li, Wang and Hendriks (2011) distinguished three

¹ Kitayama et al's (2006) classification originally entailed a distinction between pleasantness and social orientation of emotions. In this research I solely addressed the pleasantness of emotions.

fundamental motives underlying the side-taking reaction of lay third parties in their study. Two of them were relevant in this study², namely Legitimacy based and self-interest based motives. Firstly, the legitimacy based motive relies on moral orientations, concerning whether the arguments raised by disputants are reasonable and justified. Secondly, with a self-interest based motive, lay third parties tend to balance benefits against tradeoffs and try to find the best solution that assures the highest profit.

Effects of Conflict Types and Disputants' Status on Conflict Emotions and Side-Taking Motives

Now I will discuss influential factors used in this study; the first factor, conflict type, entails a distinction into task and relational conflict. This distinction has been widely accepted in literature (Choi, 2010; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Yang & Mossholder, 2004). Jehn (1995, 1997) stated that task conflicts are primarily cognitive, concerned with the task per se and interpretation of task related information. In contrast, relational conflicts involve emotional tension between the conflicting parties; they are more concerned with interpersonal issues than with task issues.

Task and relational conflicts are expected to have different effects on the experience of emotions of the parties involved, especially on experiencing negative emotions (Amason, 1996; Jehn 1995, 1997). A relational conflict is considered to be more interpersonal and emotional, thus easily eliciting negative affective responses (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). In addition, a relational conflict is shaped by feelings of frustration and tension that is centered on interpersonal differences, differing personalities, attitudes and preferences (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). I assumed that these experiences of emotions towards task and relationship

² The Relationship based motive for side-taking appeared not applicable in this research.

conflicts are in the same way applicable to lay third parties. Thus, with regard to the felt conflict I hypothesized that:

‘Hypothesis 1: Stronger negative emotions are evoked when lay third parties are confronted with a relational conflict than with a task conflict.’

‘Hypothesis 2: Stronger positive emotions are evoked when lay third parties are confronted with a task conflict than with a relational conflict.’

Relational and task conflicts may also affect side-taking motives of lay third parties. The focus of task conflicts is primarily on factual information, whereas the relational conflict is about the conflicting parties, their interpersonal differences and their attributions. (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). In this sense, task conflicts are considered to stimulate lay third parties' legitimacy-based motive for side-taking because the conflict is mainly about rational arguments (Yang & Van de Vliert, 2011). Following this reasoning, I supposed that lay third parties in a task conflict base their side-taking decision more on the reasonable arguments and thus:

‘Hypothesis 3: The task conflict evokes more legitimacy-based motive for side-taking than the relational conflict does.’

The second factor taken into account in this project is the hierarchy of the conflicting parties (disputants' status). Conflicts can occur either between two parties with the same level of status or between two parties with different levels of status. Research has shown that behavior in conflict situations is strongly influenced by the perception of power and relationships. Power can influence anticipated and actual behavior of the involved parties and its consequences (e.g., Bacharach & Lawler, 1980, 1981; Ford & Johnson, 1998; Johnson & Ford 1996). So the

hierarchical difference between conflicting parties may have an effect on lay third parties side-taking motives.

I expected that the unequal status condition fosters self-interest based side-taking motives. In support, Yang & Van de Vliert (2011) state that, if one or more disputants in a conflict have more legitimate power than the lay third party, the fact that they can provide rewards and execute punishment, may trigger lay third parties concern about what to gain or lose by taking a side, thus their self-interest side-taking motive. In relation to this, I assumed that this concern is much less apparent in the non-hierarchical conflict, in which the disputants possess the same amount of power. Therefore I argued:

‘Hypothesis 4: The self-interest based motive for side-taking will be stronger in an unequal status condition than in an equal status condition.’

Yang & Van de Vliert (2011) argued that a discrepancy in authority leads lay third parties to focus on self-interest based motives more than in equal authority. I further argue that a relational conflict may even amplify this effect. Siding with one party means that the lay third party supports that standpoint and dismisses the other. A relational conflict is highly emotional and interpersonal; a decision made by the lay third party can easily get interpreted as affront against the subordinate party. Ultimately, the lay third party becomes an ‘opponent’ for the subordinate party. In this aspect, the respondent would base the decision strongly on concerns about what he or she can get or lose from a coalition, thus on reward and punishment. In combination of the reasoning that the relational conflict fosters self-interest and the assumption made by Yang & Van de Vliert (2011) that a hierarchical conflict strengthens the same, I believed:

‘Hypothesis 5: Self-interest based side-taking motives will be strongest in a relationship conflict with an unequal status condition’

In the end, I also expected that an unequal status triggers more legitimacy based side-taking if it is combined with a task conflict. As stated, a task conflict fosters rational decision making. Within a relatively emotional ‘neutral’ task conflict, a decision against one side (especially the more powerful party) is not seen as affront as long as it is based on good reasoning. In task conflicts, all parties involved are sensitive to persuasive reasoning (Jehn, 1997). Lay third parties would apply the same principle for their side-taking reaction, thus they would apply legitimacy based side-taking reactions. I assumed that a good justification is even more important in the case of an unequal status than an equal status, because the more powerful party can still reward or punish the lay third party. Therefore I assumed that:

‘Hypothesis 6: Legitimacy based side-taking motive is the strongest in the task conflict with an unequal status condition.’

2. Methods

Respondents

The participants in this study were mainly German students. The sample was drawn from the middle-west region of Germany. About 320 people were invited to participate in the online study. One hundred and fifty confirmed the invitation and 101 actually filled in the questionnaire. After listwise deletion of cases with missing or wrong values, 92 responds remained for final data analysis. Table 1 lists the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

	N	%	Cumulative %
N	92	100	100
Gender			
Male	50	54.3	54.3
Female	42	45.7	100.0
Age			
17-20	13	14.1	14.1
21-25	66	71.8	85.9
26-44	13	14.1	100.0
Mean	23.23		
SD	3.69		
Level of education			
High school	25	27.2	27.2
Vocational school	25	27.1	54.3
Bachelor	34	37.0	91.3
Master	2	2.2	93.5
Doctor	1	1.1	94.6
Other	5	5.4	100.0
Origin			
German	89	96.7	96.7
other	3	3.3	100.0

	N	%	Cumulative %
<hr/> First Language			
Germany	91	98.9	98.9
other	1	1.1	100.0

Procedure

The conflict scenarios used in this study had already been made ready before I started my project. They were handed over to me by my first supervisor, Huadong Yang. I made several adjustments and conducted a peer review in order to assess whether the scenarios were usable in this research. I applied a 2x2 between-subject design and four scenarios were used. Each respondent read one of the four vignettes. The 2x2 research design aimed to trace the impact of the two factors, disputants' status (teammate-teammate or coach-teammate) and conflict type.

The English version of the vignettes and questionnaire were first translated by the researchers into German. Then a back translation was performed by a certificated translator. The original and the back-translation of the English version got compared in order to correct ambiguous and wrong translations. Minor parts of the German translation were revised and a final version was created. This final German version was administered to the respondents.

I created an online study and made it accessible for respondents through the webpage <http://www.thesistools.nl>. The respondents were approached using social networks, instant messengers and email addresses in order to contact them. Random assignment was used for assigning each individual to one of the four scenarios. The data collection took place from 17th July till 10th September 2010. Finally the data was accumulated and put into SPSS®16 for analyses.

Measures

Conflict types and disputants status were manipulated with a conflict vignette. Vignette technique can help to compensate lack of experience of the readers (Barter and Renold, 2000) and avoid impressions management bias (respectively social desirability bias) (Alexander & Becker, 1978; Torres, 2009). Felt Emotions and third parties side-taking preferences were measured by using Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

The Vignettes. The conflict case describes a selection dilemma faced by a basketball player (the lay third party), who is confronted with two different opinions, concerning which substitute should replace an injured starter. This conflict case was created through an interview process. Seven students were asked to report three disputes that occurred in their school life and in which their role was being a third party. From 21 cases collected, a dispute about player selection was chosen, because this problem had wide relevance to the students.

Before the participants read the conflict case, I had clarified their role in the conflict by introducing the following information: “You are a member of the school basketball team. Arka and Barka of your team have different opinions on the issue of player selection. You have to make a final decision to confront the two different selections. Some questions are followed to inquire your reactions on this case”. The names Arka and Barka were deliberately chosen due to their gender-free and neutral interpretation.

The conflict case was introduced to the respondent as follows: “You are a member of your school’s basketball team. On behalf of your school you are participating in an important basketball match. There are 10 members in your team, 5 starters and 5 substitutes. Because one of the starters is unable to join the next match due to injury, it is required to select a player from

the substitutes. The focus of the selection is on player A and player B who have an equivalent ability level.”

Manipulation of conflict types. As illustrated by several researchers (e.g. Hjertø, Kuvaas, 2009; Simons and Peterson, 2000), the types of conflict are sometimes difficult to separate. In my case, the task conflict was manipulated by presenting that Arka and Barka emphasize different strong points of the substitute players A and B: “Arka favors A because A is able to stand out and help the whole team in the critical time with his outstanding individual skill and scoring ability. While Barka is in favors of B, who is good at creating opportunities and team building”.

The relational conflict was solely concerned with an interpersonal, affective problem between Arka and Barka. The relational conflict was presented to the respondent as follows: “Last year, Arka and Barka had some conflicts. This caused distrust between them and now they have conflicting opinions on many topics. They even don’t greet each other anymore. Arka frowns upon the superior attitude of Barka while Barka feels Arka acts rigid and unreasonable”.

After the scenario, four questions, using a five point Likert scale (‘1’ related to ‘*strongly disagree*’, whereas ‘5’ related to ‘*strongly agree*’), were used to assess whether the participants understood the conflict type in the scenarios. Two questions refer to the “task” (‘The different opinions between Arka and Barka are due to their difference of analyzing the problem’; ‘The disagreement between Arka and Barka is task related’. $r = .25$ $\alpha = .40$). Another two questions refer to the “relationship” (‘Arka and Barka have a problem with their personal relationships’ and ‘Arka and Barka don't like each other’. $r = .87$ $\alpha = .93$)

Manipulation of disputants' status. In the equal status condition, Arka and Barka were both described as teammates. In the unequal status condition, Arka was described as coach and Barka was presented as a teammate to the respondent.

Two questions ('In this situation, Arka and Barka have an equal status in the team' and 'In this situation, the relationship between Arka and Barka is a superior-subordinate relationship' $r = .75$ $\alpha = 0.86$) were used to check participants' perception of disputants' status.

Perception of conflict. One question ('On the issue of selecting player A or B, Arka has a different opinion from Barka') was used to assess participants' understanding about the conflict per se.

Emotions.

Emotions were assessed by using scientific validated measurements. In this study I administered two different emotion measurements. Firstly, the Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM) (Lang, 1985) appeared to be a well validated visual option of emotions measurement. It entails the measurement of three different emotions³, two of them relevant for this study. The main advantage of SAM is that it is a culture-free visual instrument to measure emotions (Morris, 1995).

The concept underlying SAM implies that all emotions can get reduced to two opponent motivational systems: aversive (negative) and attractive (positive) (Dickinson & Dearing, 1979). Arousal in this context is accountable for variations of both systems (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994). SAM is able to capture these two concepts, through measurement of valence and arousal in a short visual arrangement that makes measurement of these concepts possible. The nine-point valence scale of the SAM Negative-Positive (SAM NP) ranges from a smiling, pleased figure to

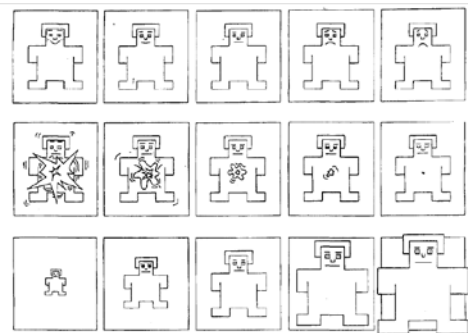
³ Additionally to the dimensions valence and arousal SAM usually entails a measurement of dominance. This factor is left out because it has shown to have inconsistent and weak independent effects. (Bradley & Lang, 1994)

a frowning, unhappy figure, measuring the degree of positive and negative emotions. Whereas the nine-point arousal scale of SAM Relaxed-Aroused (SAM RA) ranges from a very calm figure to a strongly aroused figure, measuring the degree to which the lay third party feels relaxed or aroused.

The respondents were able to choose from one of the nine options each, which are shown in Figure 1. SAM was used twice before and after reading the vignette to detect changes evoked by the questionnaire. The differences of the SAM RA and SAM NP scores before and after vignette were used as dependent variables in this research to indicate felt emotions.

Figure 1

*The Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM)*⁴



The second measurement of emotions was based on the work of Kitayama, Mesquita & Karasawa (2006). This measure makes a distinction between the affect into pleasantness and social orientation of emotions. I only focused on the pleasantness of emotions. '1' related to '*not experienced it at all*', whereas '5' related to '*experienced it very strongly*'. The original set of emotions by Kitayama et al. (2006) contained in total 15 items, 6 items were removed because

⁴ The Self-Assessment Manikin (SAM); used to rate the affective dimensions of valence (top panel) and arousal (middle panel), excluding dominance (the bottom panel). (Bradley & Lang, 1994, p. 51)

they were not to be applicable to this study. Two additional negative emotions were added to the set of emotion (sorrow and anxiety) because they appeared relevant to peer-reviewers. The ultimate set consisted of the eight items for All Negative emotions (AN) (guilt, shame, afraid of causing trouble to another, sulky feelings, frustration, anger, sorrow and anxiety; $\alpha = .85$) and three items for All Positive emotions (AP) (close feelings to one side, sympathy and superior feelings; $\alpha = .59$). These variables were also used as dependent variables in this research to indicate felt emotions.

Side-Taking Motives.

The measure was based on the work of Yang et al. (2011). The legitimacy- and self-interest-based motives were measured using a five point Likert scale, ranging from 'Very unimportant' to 'very important'. A Legitimacy-based motive was measured using the statements: "I will support the party whose arguments sound right to me", "Right or wrong is the most important consideration for my side-taking decision" and "I will agree with the party who recommends a better fitting player" ($\alpha = 0.22$). The latter item was left out from further analyses to achieve a higher reliability ($\alpha = 0.49$).

The self-interest based motive was measured by the six questions: "I will consider what benefit I can get from taking sides with Arka or Barka", "I will choose the party who can reward me in the future", "What I can gain is one of the important considerations for me to choose sides", "I will have to agree with Arka (or Barka) if I know Arka (or Barka) will punish me for the consequences", "I choose Arka's (or Barka's) side because I'm afraid to offend Arka (or Barka)" and "If Arka or (Barka) puts pressure on me, I will have to agree with him/her". ($\alpha = 0.79$). Both motives were used as dependent variables in my study, besides the measurements of

felt emotions. (See Appendix for a full-length version of the questionnaire, including the vignette)

Analyses

The analyses were done using SPSS® 16 for Windows. Non-respondents, missing and wrong values were listwise deleted. Various analyses were conducted in order to test the hypotheses. ANOVA was used for the manipulation check. I analyzed the influence of conflict types and disputants' hierarchy on emotions and side-taking motives using 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA. Main and interaction effects were assessed in this way. I handled a significance level of .05 for the analyses. All analyses entailed a one-sided approach to significance testing.

3. Results

In this section, firstly I checked whether the manipulations met their intended purposes. Then I tried to test the main effects of conflict types and disputants' status on the felt emotions and side-taking motives. Finally I explored the interaction effects of the two situational factors and finished the section with an overview of the overall results.

Manipulation Check

The 92 participants were evenly spread across the four scenarios: 21 in task conflict-equal status; 27 in task conflict-unequal status; 20 in relationship conflict-equal status; and 24 in relationship conflict-unequal status. As shown in Table 2, participants' perception of each conflict scenario was in line with the manipulations. Regarding disputants' status, the results indicated a significant difference across the four scenarios ($F_{(3,88)} = 38.77, p < .00$). A further contrast test showed that the participants in the "coach-teammate" situation reported a significant

higher score than those in the “teammate-teammate” situation ($\text{Mean}_{\text{CT}} = 3.89$, $\text{SD}_{\text{CT}} = .74$; $\text{Mean}_{\text{TT}} = 1.92$, $\text{SD}_{\text{TT}} = 1.00$; $F_{(1,90)} = 116.63$, $p < 0.00$).

With Regard to the conflict types, the results indicated a significant difference across the four scenarios for task conflict ($F_{(3,88)} = 3.59$, $p < .05$) and relationship conflict ($F_{(3,88)} = 37.40$, $p < .01$). Note that in computing the scores for task conflict, the item “The disagreement between Arka and Barka is task related” was removed due to its ambiguousness to interpret for the respondents. Thus, only one task conflict item remained for manipulation check. A further contrast test showed that the participants in the task conflict situation reported a significant higher score in the task conflict rating ($\text{Mean}_{\text{T}} = 4.10$, $\text{SD}_{\text{T}} = .88$; $\text{Mean}_{\text{R}} = 3.45$, $\text{SD}_{\text{R}} = 1.28$; $F_{(1,90)} = 8.12$, $p < 0.01$) and participants in the relational conflict condition reported a significant higher score in the relational conflict rating ($\text{Mean}_{\text{T}} = 2.03$, $\text{SD}_{\text{T}} = 1.02$; $\text{Mean}_{\text{R}} = 4.16$, $\text{SD}_{\text{R}} = 0.91$; $F_{(1,90)} = 109.94$, $p < 0.01$).

Because the perception of conflict is a main concern of this study, I employed a strict criterion for inclusion of participants. All participants that gave a score below three concerning the question “On the issue of selecting player A or B, Arka has a different opinion from Barka” were excluded from this research (in total, the data of three participants was deleted). In terms of participants' perception of the conflict, the results showed that the overall score of this question was very high ($M = 4.57$, $SD = 0.58$).

Based on the results above, I concluded that the manipulations in this study achieved their purposes.

Main Effects of Conflict Types and Disputants' Status on Emotions and Side-Taking Motives

Hypothesis 1 stated that ‘Stronger negative emotions are evoked when lay third parties are confronted with a relational conflict than with a task conflict’. The results from F-tests

revealed that the SAM Negative-Positive emotions were significantly lower ($M_T = -0.58$, $SD_T = 1.33$; $M_R = -1.02$, $SD_R = 1.53$; $F_{(1,90)} = 2.82$, $p < .5$) and All Negative ($M_T = 1.75$, $SD_T = 0.73$; $M_R = 2.21$, $SD_R = 0.8$; $F_{(1,90)} = 9.39$, $p < .01$) higher in the relational conflict than in task conflict. So H1 was confirmed.

Hypothesis 2 assumed that 'Stronger positive emotions are evoked when lay third parties are confronted with a task conflict than with a relational conflict'. The results showed that All Positive emotions ($M_T = 2.43$, $SD_T = 0.94$; $M_R = 2.0$, $SD_R = 0.78$; $F_{(1,90)} = 5.52$, $p < .05$) appeared to be more significantly experienced in the task conflict condition. The SAM Positive-Negative emotions were significantly higher ($M_T = -0.58$, $SD_T = 1.33$; $M_R = -1.02$, $SD_R = 1.53$; $F_{(1,90)} = 2.82$, $p < .5$) in the task conflict and in the emotional conflict. So Hypothesis 2 was supported.

For side-taking motives, *Hypothesis 3* stated that 'The task conflict evokes more legitimacy-based motive for side-taking than the relational conflict does'. Analyses showed no significant results for *hypothesis 3* ($F_{(1,90)} = 2.39$, n.s.).

Hypothesis 4 proposed that 'The self-interest based motive for side-taking will be stronger in an unequal status condition than in an equal status condition'. The F-test yielded no significant support for *hypothesis 4* ($F_{(1,90)} = 0.16$, n.s.).

Interaction Effects of Conflict Types and Disputants' Status on Side-Taking Motives.

For interaction analyses, the independent variables were status type (teammate versus teammate and coach versus teammate) and conflict type (task and relationship conflict).

Hypothesis 5 stated that 'The self-interest based side-taking motives will be strongest in the relationship conflict with an unequal status condition'. The results did not indicate a

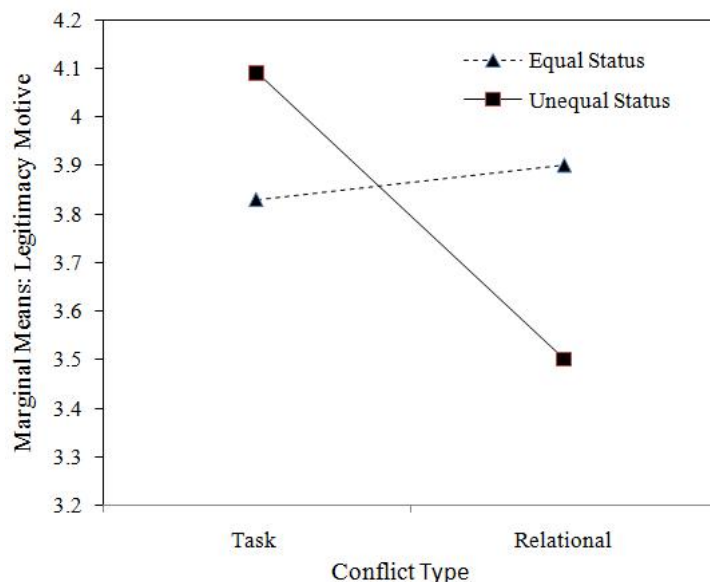
significant interaction effect between conflict types and disputants' status ($F_{(1,90)} = 0.53$, n.s.).

Thus *hypothesis 5* was not supported.

Hypothesis 6 proposed that 'Legitimacy based side-taking motive is the strongest in the task conflict with an unequal status condition'. The results showed a significant interaction effect between conflict types and disputants' status on legitimacy-based side-taking motive ($F_{(1,90)} = 3.65$, $p < .05$). Figure 2 indicates that the effects of task and relational conflict depend on the level of the disputants' status. In a teammate-teammate dispute, no effect of conflict types on legitimacy based side-taking was found. But, within a coach-teammate dispute, the task conflict evoked a much stronger moral side-taking orientation than the relational conflict. Thus, *Hypothesis 6* was confirmed.

Figure 2

Interaction Effects of Conflict Types and Disputants' Status on Legitimacy Based Side-Taking



Additional Results

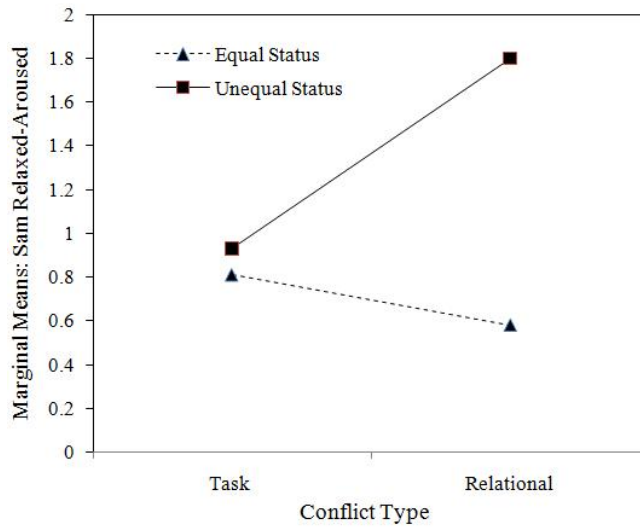
Analyses showed that All Negative emotions ($M_{TT} = 1.86$, $SD_{TT} = 0.70$; $M_{TC} = 2.07$, $SD_{TC} = 0.87$; $F_{(1,90)} = 3.00$, $p < .05$) and SAM Relaxed-Aroused ($M_{TT} = 0.69$, $SD_{TT} = 1.22$; $M_{TC} = 1.30$, $SD_{TC} = 1.85$; $F_{(1,90)} = 4.14$, $p < .05$) were more significantly experienced in the unequal status condition than in the equal status condition.

Furthermore, SAM Relaxed-Aroused was affected by an interaction effect between conflict types and disputants' status ($F_{(1,90)} = 2.82$, $p < .05$). Further analyses revealed that in the task conflict no strong difference in arousal between unequal and equal status condition was found; but in the relationship conflict, participants experiencing the 'teammate-coach' conflict were much more aroused than participants in all other scenarios (see Figure 3).

Additionally, the interaction analysis showed results that contradict the results found before (concerning effects of status on SAM Relaxed-Aroused). Figure 3 indicates no strong difference between status types on ratings of arousal in the task conflict, but there is a difference in the relational conflict, thus the main effect of status types on SAM Relaxed-Aroused (found before) appeared to be an artifact of the interaction (with conflict types), and thus not significant any more.

Figure 3

Interaction Effects of Conflict Types and Disputants' Status on SAM Relaxed-Aroused



Overview of the Results

First, the respondents appeared to have understood the conflict and perceived the manipulations as intended.

For hypothesis testing, the results yielded full support for three out of the six hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 was supported. The results showed that negative emotions (concerning SAM Negative-Positive and All Negative) were stronger felt in the relational conflict than in the task conflict.

Hypothesis 2 was supported. The Task conflict evoked more positive emotions (with regard to SAM Negative-Positive and All Positive) than the relational conflict.

Hypothesis 3 was not supported. I assumed that legitimacy based judgment would be higher in the task conflict than in the relational conflict. The results showed that this notion was not supported by the data.

Hypothesis 4 was not supported. The results did not indicate a stronger self-interest side-taking motive in the unequal status condition in comparison to the equal status condition.

Hypothesis 5 was not supported by the data. The results showed no interaction effect between conflict types and disputants' status on self-interest based side-taking.

Hypothesis 6 was supported by the data. Results showed that the legitimacy based side-taking motive is affected by an interaction effect of the conflict type and disputants' status. The respondents engaged more in legitimacy based side-taking when they were experiencing a 'coach-teammate' dispute *and* task conflict and less when experiencing a 'coach-teammate' dispute *and* relational conflict.

Additional analyses revealed that that unequal status of the parties evoked more negative emotions (All Negative) by the lay third parties than equal status, but the main effect of unequal status on arousal, which was initially found, was only an artifact of interaction and therefore not significant anymore. Furthermore, results showed that arousal (SAM Relaxed-Aroused) was affected by an interaction effect of the conflict type and disputants' status. The respondents were most aroused when they were in a relational conflict with an unequal status condition.

4. Discussion

Several researchers (Mannix 2003; Medina, Munduate, Dorado, Martinez & Guerra, 2005) have criticized the empirical-focused testing by using meta-analyses of the last decade and have called for further explorative research on the field of conflict-research. This research used an experiment method in order to improve the understanding of side-taking in conflicts. It attempted to decode the side-taking process by taking conflict type and disputants' status into account. In

this section, I will further discuss the results, show limitations of this research, and give recommendations for future research.

First, the findings show that emotions experienced by lay third parties in a side-taking dilemma are associated with conflict type and disputants' status. (see *hypotheses 1* and 2) These findings support the notion that experience of relationship conflicts is emotionally different from task conflicts. (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). In addition to De Dreu and Weingart's (2003) conclusion that the relational conflict appears to be more detrimental to emotional satisfaction than the task conflict, the findings show that lay third parties, just like disputants, feel the similar emotional experience. This suggests that all parties involved in a conflict share similar emotions towards task and relationship conflicts. These findings also give practical insights to managers. Being aware of the fact that lay third parties' emotions are affected by the conflict types between two parties, managers may need to be better prepared to weaken negative effects on third parties in organizational settings. In particular, negative effects of relational conflicts on their felt emotions.

Secondly, concerning the hierarchy of the parties, the findings show that negative feelings were stronger in the supervisor-peer dispute than in the peer-peer conflict. To my knowledge, none of the previous studies have revealed that disputants' status has an effect on lay third party's felt emotions. This interesting and meaningful finding may have many implications on third party intervention. However, before I apply this finding into practice, more empirical support and further research is needed to support this notion and to build a better theoretical foundation for this finding. In order to assess underlying mechanisms, it is necessary to examine

the effects of different hierarchical constellations and how lay third parties react to those changes.

Third, an interaction effect of conflict types and disputants' hierarchy on the legitimacy based side-taking motive was found. (see *hypothesis 6*). The findings showed that within a hierarchical conflict, between a supervisor and a peer, the extent to which legitimacy based side-taking is taken into account (by the lay third party) depends on the sort of conflict. Within a relational conflict, legitimacy based side-taking appeared to be lower than in the task conflict. Practically this means, in relation to the example in the beginning, that the extent to which the third party uses rational arguments for side-taking depends on how she or he interprets the conflict between A and B, and also his or her perception of the hierarchical relationship between A and B.

Additionally, the interaction analyses of conflict and status types on emotion showed an effect on the arousal of the lay third party. Arousal was the highest in the relationship conflict with an unequal status condition. Again, the mechanism behind this effect is unclear. It could be that I found the interaction effect on arousal only because of the research design used in this study. In order to diminish such doubts, further work in this direction is strongly encouraged.

Finally, the findings failed to support the notion that legitimacy based side-taking is strengthened by task conflicts and self-interest based side-taking fostered by hierarchical conflicts (see *hypotheses 3 and 4*). Also, the findings showed no interaction effect between conflict types and disputants' status on self-interest based side-taking. (see *hypothesis 5*). I suspect that the research design used in this study may set the limitation for testing these hypotheses. Although, influences of independent factors on dependent factors can be assessed in

a valid way through the use of vignettes, still, they are qua definition “Short stories about hypothetical characters in specified circumstances, to whose situation the interviewee is invited to respond” (Finch, 1987, p.105). In consensus, Torres (2009) stated that they are only a snapshot of reality and can lack important information. The respondents in this study had to simulate their behavior in a hypothetical situation. This raises the question of involvement of the respondents and whether they would have behaved in the same way in a real situation.

Limitations

This study solely highlighted the side-taking reaction of a lay third party. Thus, it set a limitation for participants to be able to choose other alternatives for conflict handling. It is possible that some respondents would have engaged in another kind of conflict handling (e.g. retreat). These respondents could have biased the results concerning side-taking motives, because they had to engage in another manner of conflict handling than they would have engaged in a real life situation.

The second limitation concerns reliability of some constructs used in this study, such as legitimacy based motive and All Positive emotions. George and Mallery (2003) suggested that an Cronbach's alpha below '0.6' shows poor reliability. The low reliability has two implications. First, the significant results related to the constructs with a low reliability should be interpreted with caution. Second, low reliability could have caused the failure in testing the hypotheses concerning the legitimacy motive, in measurement.

Third, this research cannot be generalizable to the German population. This is due to the fact that availability sampling was used and the respondents mainly consisted of students. It is

possible, that a richer and better weighted (generalizable) sample would have shown stronger support for some of the hypotheses.

Future research

Besides task and relational conflict, more conflict types have appeared in literature, such as process conflict which is mainly concerned with the process (over logistical issues) (Greer & Jehn, 2007; Greer, Jehn & Mannix, 2008) and power conflict which is concerned with power differences (Kellner, 2010). Future research should take all four, the task, relationship, process and power conflicts into account.

Future research should also foster the investigation of effects of different types of status integrated in different conflict situations. This research was able to determine an interaction effect of hierarchy and conflict types, but was not able to reason proper from literature why the effect appeared. In accordance with Yang & Van de Vliert (2011), I advice future research should also take effects of different types of hierarchy into account and assess the underlying psychological process evoked by interactions of hierarchy and different conflict types.

Third, concerning the measurement of emotions, this research failed to asses to which target emotions were directed. Following Weiner (1986), discrete and directed emotions are more important than undifferentiated mood. Thus, future research needs to specify the target of emotions, for example, towards the conflict itself, towards the disputants involved, or even self-directed emotions.

The final advice for future research concerns the way the information was gathered. Although the vignette method has some advances (see methods chapter), it lacks ecological validity. For the next study in the field of lay third parties reaction to conflicts, it would be

appreciable to let respondents experience a real conflict situation. Lay third parties might be able to engage in their natural behavior. An experimental design that involves real acting would extend knowledge about side-taking to real life situations and gives the opportunity to make ecologically valid assumptions.

I believe that this research is one step towards a better understanding of the reactions of lay third parties within different conflict situations. Even though, generalizations are difficult to make, I believe that future research can build on this paper. I hope that future side-taking research gets the same significance and relevance in conflict literature that the other types of third party studies have got in the past.

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Appendix

Vignette and Questionnaire used in the Study⁵

Instruction

Dear students :

Firstly, we appreciate your cooperation for our research. It may take you about 20 minutes to finish this questionnaire. In the questionnaire, we would like to ask your opinions and perceptions of yourselves, the activities that you engage in, and the relationship with fellow students. Following the questionnaire, you will read a case in which you are a member of the school basketball team. Arka and Barka of your team have different opinions on the issue of player selection. You have to give your opinion when faced with the two different selections. Please **put yourself in the place of a teammate and use your empathy!**

Before you fill in the questionnaire, we would like to remind you that the precision of our research results depends on the objective of the completion of the questionnaire. Therefore, we ask you to **express your true feelings and thoughts, please answer the questions in accordance in order to** assure the scientific quality of the research. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Please give the answers based on your own judgment. If you are not sure about some answers, please choose the closest answer.

The questionnaire is anonymous; please fill it out free and independent. Your answers on the questionnaire will be used for scientific research only and not for any other purposes. Moreover, we will *not* analyze individuals' results and only analyze the results based on aggregated data of all respondents. If you are interested in this research, you can contact us by email: f.vos@student.utwente.nl or d.sommer@student.utwente.nl

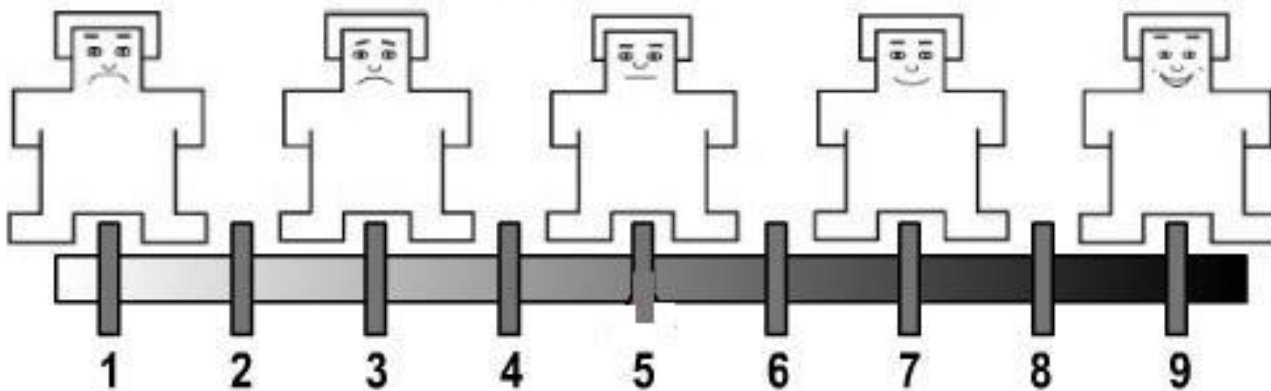
Thanks for your great support!

⁵ Note that this is the task conflict – equal status Vignette, the measurements are equal in each version. Not all measurements shown were used in this research; see ‘methods’ section for more information.

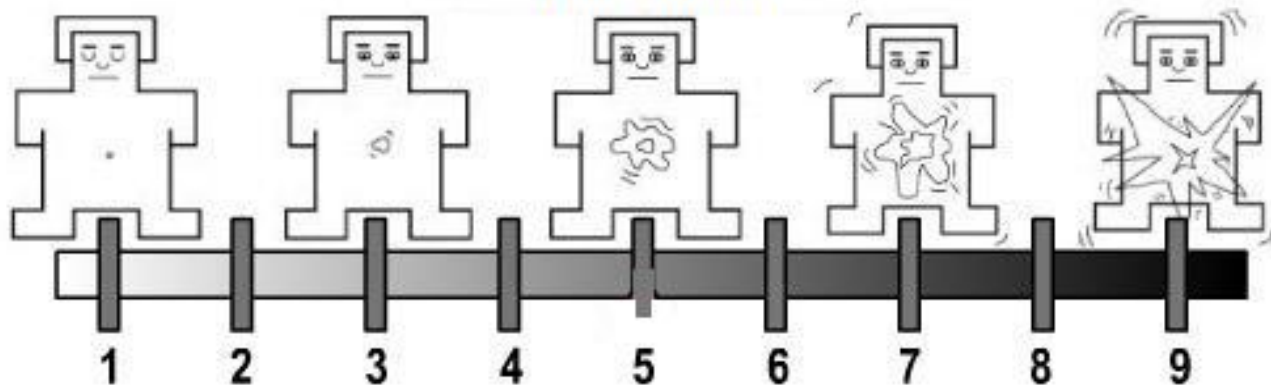
Before you start to answer the following questions, we first ask you to indicate your current state of emotion. You can indicate your current state of emotions by circling the according number (in each row only one time)!

At this time, I feel myself...

Negative - Positive



Calm - Excited



Now the description of the scenario follows:

You are a member of the school basketball team. Arka and Barka are two players in your team. They have different opinions on the issue of player selection. Please try to **put yourself in the position of a team-member as much as possible**. Remember that you have to make a decision of which of the two parties you favor. After the description of the case, you are asked to answer some questions about your perceptions and how you resolved the problem.

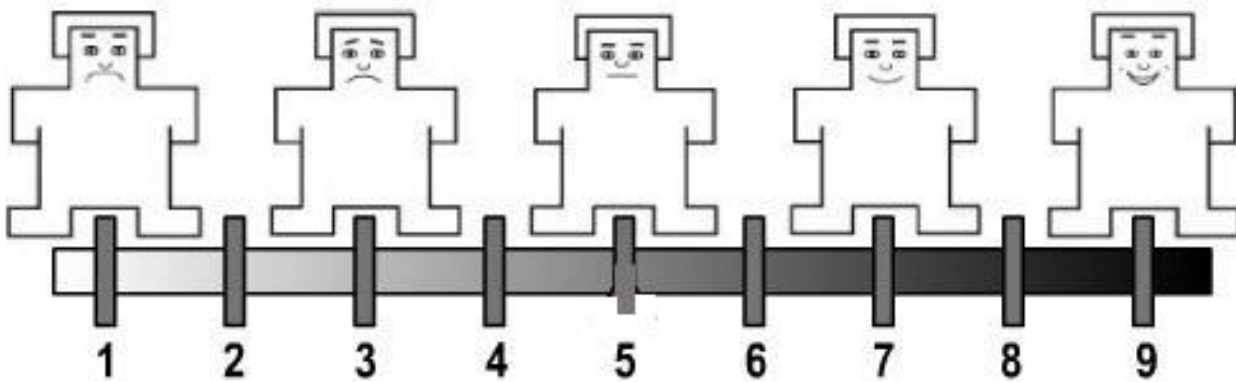
You are a member of your school's basketball team. On behalf of your school you participate in an important basketball match. There are 10 members in your team, 5 starters and 5 substitutes. Since one of the starters is unable to join the next match due to injury, it is required to select a player from the substitutes.

The focus of your selection is on player A and player B who have an equivalent ability level.

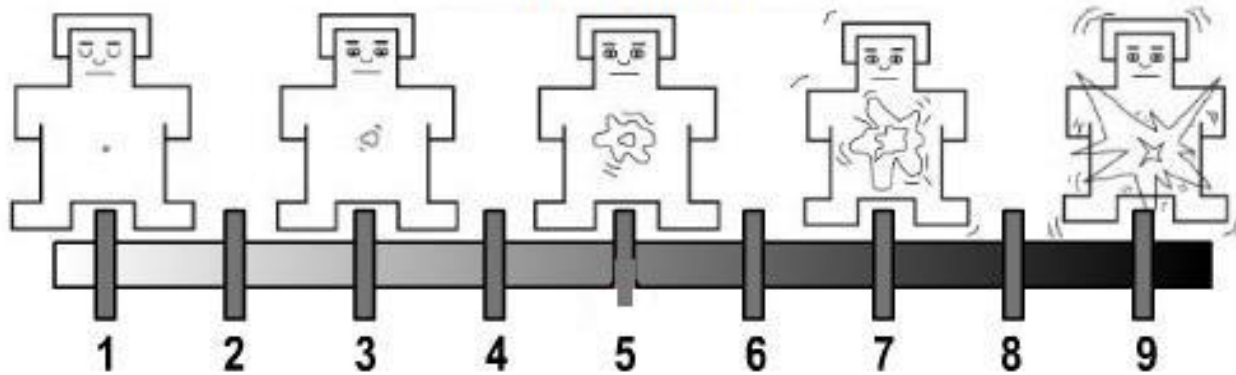
The starters Arka and Barka have different opinions about the issue of player selection. Arka favors A because A is able to stand out and help the whole team in the critical time with his outstanding individual skill and scoring ability. While Barka is in favors of B, who is good at creating opportunities and team building. Arka and Barka disagree with each other. The match is about to begin, you have to make the decision right now. Under this situation, would you support Arka or Barka?

Under this dilemma, how do you feel? Please Circle the according number to indicate your current state of emotions (in each row only one time)

Negative - Positive



Calm - Excited



Below are a series of words describing emotions. When faced with this dilemma, to what extent did you experience each of the following emotions? If you *not* experienced it at all, circle "1"; if you experienced it very strongly ,circle "5". All in all, your emotion is getting stronger from "1" to "5".

<i>not experienced it at all</i>	A little	Moderately	Strongly	<i>experienced it very strongly</i>
1	2	3	4	5

1	sadness	1	2	3	4	5
2	Fear	1	2	3	4	5
3	Sorrow	1	2	3	4	5
4	anxiety	1	2	3	4	5
5	Guilt	1	2	3	4	5
6	Shame	1	2	3	4	5
7	Afraid of causing trouble to another	1	2	3	4	5
8	sulky feelings	1	2	3	4	5
9	frustration	1	2	3	4	5
10	anger	1	2	3	4	5
11	close feelings to one side	1	2	3	4	5
12	sympathy	1	2	3	4	5
13	superior feelings	1	2	3	4	5
14	happiness	1	2	3	4	5
15	calmness	1	2	3	4	5

According to the situation described in the case, to what extent would you agree with the following descriptions? Please indicate your answer by circling a corresponding number. (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree).

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither disagree nor agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5
1. In this situation, Arka and Barka have an equal status in the team.			1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
2. In this situation, the relationship between Arka and Barka is a superior-subordinate relationship.			1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
3. On the issue of selecting player A or B, Arka has a different opinion from Barka.			1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
4. The different opinions between Arka and Barka are due to their difference of analyzing the problem.			1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
5. The disagreement between Arka and Barka is task related.			1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
6. Arka and Barka have a problem with their personal relationships.			1-----2-----3-----4-----5	
7. Arka and Barka don't like each other.			1-----2-----3-----4-----5	

When faced with this dilemma, how do you perceive the disagreement between Arka and Barka? In other words, how do you make sense of this dilemma? Do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly disagree		Disagree		Neither disagree Nor agree		Agree		Strongly Agree			
1		2		3		4		5			
1	The dilemma is about who is right and who is wrong.						1	2	3	4	5
2	Selecting a suitable player is the key issue in this dilemma.						1	2	3	4	5
3	I concern about the differences of the substitute players’ abilities.						1	2	3	4	5
4	I concern about whose opinion is more applicable.						1	2	3	4	5
5	I concern about the relationship between Arka and Barka in the dilemma.						1	2	3	4	5
6	The relationship between Arka and Barka will influence my decision						1	2	3	4	5
7	In this dilemma, the factual concerns (e.g., who is more in the right) is more important than the relational concern (e.g., who is close to me).						1	2	3	4	5
8	One of the parties (Arka or Barka) could lose face in this dilemma						1	2	3	4	5
9	I could imagine that one party will harm the other in the future						1	2	3	4	5
10	I have a feeling that one party is threatened by the other						1	2	3	4	5
11	In my opinion the two disputants (Arka and Barka) argue their points based on factual concerns.						1	2	3	4	5
12	In my opinion this disagreement in nature is about relationship (e.g. Arka likes A or Barka likes B, or Arka and Barka do not like each other).						1	2	3	4	5
13	I am concerned what I can gain or lose from this disagreement						1	2	3	4	5
14	I wonder whether my interests will be harmed in this dilemma						1	2	3	4	5
15	I concern whether our team’s interests will be harmed in this dilemma						1	2	3	4	5

Facing this disagreement between Arka and Barka, as a starter, you have to make a choice. The following descriptions concern people's opinions about and reasons for taking sides in a conflict. When faced with this dilemma, how do you consider each of the following statements? Note that there is no right or wrong answer to these statements. If you think a statement "very unimportant", circle "1"; if you think a statement "Neither unimportant nor important", circle "3". If you think a statement "very important", circle "5".

Very unimportant		Unimportant	Neither unimportant nor important	important	very important
1		2	3	4	5
1	I will support the party whose arguments sound right to me.				1 2 3 4 5
2	I will agree with the party who recommends a better fitting player				1 2 3 4 5
3.	Right or wrong is the most important consideration for my side-taking decision.				1 2 3 4 5
4	I will take side with the party who is closer to me .				1 2 3 4 5
5	I will support Arka (or Barka) based on who is my friend.				1 2 3 4 5
6	I will consider the relationship I have with Arka and Barka when taking sides.				1 2 3 4 5
7	I will consider what benefit I can get from taking sides with Arka or Barka.				1 2 3 4 5
8	I will choose the party who can reward me in the future.				1 2 3 4 5
9	What I can gain is one of the important considerations for me to choose sides.				1 2 3 4 5
10	I will have to agree with Arka (or Barka) if I know Arka (or Barka) will punish me for the consequences.				1 2 3 4 5
11	I choose Arka's (or Barka's) side because I'm afraid to offend Arak (or Barka).				1 2 3 4 5
12	If Arka or (Barka) puts pressure on me, I will have to agree with him/her.				1 2 3 4 5

When you make up your mind, could you please indicate to what extend would you like to take sides with Arka/Barka?				
Not at all	A little	Moderately	Strongly	Very strong
1	2	3	4	5

A I support Arka... 1 2 3 4 5

B	I support Barka...	1	2	3	4	5
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C	Finally, I will choose (please choose only A or B):	A	(A) Arka			
		B	(B) Barka			

Apart from taking sides, to what extend would you consider the following options to handle this dilemma?

Absolutely Impossible	Impossible	Neutral	Possible	Absolutely Possible
1	2	3	4	5

1. I would discuss the problem with Arka and Barka together.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5
2. I would try to avoid this conflict between Arka and Barka .	1-----2-----3-----4-----5

3. I would discuss the matter with the injured player.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5
4. I would discuss the matter with the whole team.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5
5. I would search for another substitute who would have the support of both Arka and Barka.	1-----2-----3-----4-----5
If you would do something else, please describe it on the lines below:	
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

In the last part of this survey, there are statements describing people's opinions of themselves, of their relationship with their friends or classmates, and of their group (that can be their class, sports club, or other Student Unions). We would like to know whether you strongly disagree or agree with each of the following statements. If you strongly disagree, circle "1"; if you neither disagree nor agree, circle "3"; if you strongly agree, circle "5". Overall, the extent to which you agree with a statement increases in the order from "1" to "5".

1. I enjoy being unique.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

2. I prefer to do my own things.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

3. I perceive myself as an independent individual rather than being a part of interpersonal relationships.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

4. I describe myself in terms of my own unique characteristics rather than in terms of group membership (e.g., which student union I join).

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

5. In the long run, the only person I can count on is myself.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

6. What happens to me is my own doing.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

7. Individual autonomy rather than interpersonal relationships determine one's success.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

8. I achieve my goal through myself rather than through the group to which I belong.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

9. The most important thing in my life is to make myself happy.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

10. One should live one's life independent of others as much as possible.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

11. I should be judged on my own merits, not on my family's reputation.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

12. Group members should give priority to their own interests over their group interests.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

13. The close relationships that I have with others are part of who I am.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

14. I cannot think of myself without relating myself to close friends and family.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

15. The happiness of those who are closely related to me is more important than my own happiness.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

16. I am more aware of the needs of individual group members than of the needs of my overall group.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

17. I never rely on my friends and group members to help me get out of difficulties.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

18. Having harmonious relationships with the other group members is my path to success.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

19. My success in the group depends more on networks and relationships than on my own abilities and efforts.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

20. I attribute my success to my social connections more than to my group reputation.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

21. Having a good relationship with friends and group members is the most important thing in my life.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

22. In the group, disagreement should be avoided because it damages harmonious relationships with group members.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

23. I am willing to maintain good relationships with group members at the cost of sacrificing my own interests.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

24. My assistance towards my group members is based on the sense of belonging to the same group instead of interpersonal relationships.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

25. Belonging to social groups is a key to what kind of a person I am.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

26. The reputation of my group has little to do with me.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

27. I tend to give up personal opinions in order to follow the decisions made by my group.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

28. To my sense of who I am, my group membership is more important than my interpersonal relationships.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
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disagree

agree

29. What is good for my group is also good for me.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

30. If I have done an excellent job, I attribute my success to collective effort.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

31. If the group is slowing me down, it is better to leave it and work alone.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

32. I care more about the efficiency of my group than my interpersonal relationships with members.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

33. As a member I have to respect decisions made by the group.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

34. It is my duty to defend the reputation of my group.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

35. I prefer having an "average" position in a successful group over having a significant position in an "average" group.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

36. One of the guiding principles in my life is to put group interests ahead of the interests of persons who are dear to me.

Totally	1	2	3	4	5	Totally
disagree						agree

Finally, we want to ask you to fill in some additional data!

1. Gender: ☐ Man ☐ Woman

2. Age: _____

3. What is the highest level of education you have participated?
☐ High school or equivalent
☐ Vocational/technical school (2 year)
☐ Bachelor
☐ Master
☐ Doctoral
☐ Other: _____

4. Where were you raised?
☐ in Germany
☐ other: _____

5. Your first language is:
☐ German
☐ other: _____

6. Have you ever experienced a situation like the one described in the scenario?
☐ Yes
☐ No

7. If you have any Comments or Remarks, please fill in below:

**This is the end of the survey, thank you for
your participation!**

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