

Emotions in Negotiations

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**Abstract**

Researchers have gained an interest on the impact of emotions in the context of negotiations and similar interactions. Negotiations pit opposing sides with the view enhancing cooperation and establish mutual relationship. Negotiations aim at reaching an agreement where the interests of both parties are well catered for (Olekalns & Druckman, 2014). Emotions paly a critical role in daily decision-making process and hence affect the outcome of negotiation since it is a decision-making process. Emotions largely influence the outcome of such agreements and can promote or hinder negotiations. Emotional expressions convey preferences, intentions and areas of concern. Emotions play a critical role in the outcome of negotiations.

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## Emotions in Negotiations

### Introduction

Emotions play an integral part in the negotiation process as they act as a hindrance or promote the results of the process. Different emotions and mood changes can have a positive or a negative effect on the process depending on the duration, intensity or specification. Emotions are basics in human interactions and therefore indispensable during the negotiation decision-making process. Human beings are in a constant state of changing emotions and negotiations tend to invoke different types of emotions such as anxiety or anger. The immediate environment stimulates such emotions and in this context, the behavior and the actions of the other negotiators during the negotiation process (Thompson, Wang & Gunia, 2010). Negotiators should use and control emotions in manner that promotes their interests during negotiations as well as understand the critical role that emotions play in the decision-making process. In addition, negotiators should be aware of different techniques applicable in understanding different emotions that arise during negotiations and how to manage them to facilitate reaching an amicable agreement. As such, emotions are a critical part of the negotiation process and determine the overall outcome of the process.

### **Negotiations and Emotions**

Negotiation is a decision-making process where two parties with opposing ideas resolve these differences through the exchange of offers and agreements and other options. Negotiations allow individuals, nations, firms or domestic relationships solve their differences by reaching a compromise or an agreement thus pre-empting arguments or disputes. Parties in a negotiation seek to achieve a win-win situation through the application of principles of fairness and mutual

benefit hence, establishing and maintaining a successful relationship where both parties are satisfied with the outcomes (Thompson, Wang & Gunia, 2010). On the other hand, emotions are feeling that are stimulated by the immediate environment. They are brief, quick responses to situations, opportunities, and problems and are associated with behavior, physiology and experimental activities. Emotions influence the outcome of the negotiation process due to their impact on the decisions that an individual takes during an emotive situation. The conscious or unconscious actions or decisions that a negotiator makes in response to various situations that evoke emotions during negotiations affect the overall outcome of the negotiation process.

### **Emotions and Decision-Making Process in Negotiations**

Emotions play a central role in the decision-making process since they guide most of the individual's actions and act as the motor behind the reasoning behind such actions (Filipowicz, Barsade & Melwani, 2011). The impact of emotions in the decision-making process can be established by an evaluation of the decision process that begins with a stimulus from the immediate environment. In this context, the decision-making process begins when the other party in negotiations presents information. The information can be conscious or unconscious and may vary from first impression, verbal and non-verbal communication and body language. The information stimulates an emotional reaction, which is unconscious. The unconscious processing of the information shapes our feelings and prompts a behavioral change in line with the created perception. The unconscious emotional reaction changes to a conscious feeling that shapes our attitudes and behavior towards the other party (Thompson, Wang & Gunia, 2010). Thus, these gut feelings shape the decisions undertaken in line with the created perception, thus affecting the decision making process during the negotiation process.

Emotions are central in the decision-making process and shape our behavior and attitudes towards the other parties. As such, emotions may have a positive or a negative impact on the negotiation process.

### **The Role of emotions in Negotiations**

Negotiations trigger a variety of emotions especially fear and anxiety that can lead to tension or advance irrational behavior during the negotiation process resulting in conflicts or negotiations break down. Emotions are an essential evolutionary legacy of human beings that assisted in survival as they provided a means of response to different situations. Understanding emotions are critical since emotions are rapid, a brief response to situations and stimulated before the rational mind assess that particular situation (Filipowicz, Barsade & Melwani, 2011). Negotiators cannot get rid of emotions during the negotiation process, and as such, it is important to understand your emotions as well as those of the party to improve the efficiency of the negotiation process. Strategic management of emotions can be an important resource in the attainment of the negotiation goals.

Emotions can lead to positive or negative outcomes during negotiations. Positive emotions allow negotiators to take care of their own negotiating goals and be considerate towards the needs of the other party thus enabling the parties to reach a win-win situation and establish a mutual relationship. Empathy facilitates communication during negotiations, thus enhancing understanding of the other party's opinions and improving the quality of discussions. In addition, expressing legitimate anger shows sincerity in negotiations. On the other hand, negative emotions have a negative impact on negotiations. Fear and anger are cited as the most harmful to the negotiation process as they undermine the core values of negotiation and may lead

to conflicts and negotiation breakdown. However, some negotiation tactics such as hiding emotions or making a display of emotions may have a positive or negative impact on negotiations.

As stated above, anger is cited as among the most disturbing emotions in negotiation process and is derived from a perception of rules contravention. In addition, feelings of shame and rudeness from one part of the negotiators leave the other party feeling exposed or vulnerable, resulting in feelings of anger. Anger arises during negotiations in the instances where one party is angry thus creating a foul mood in the negotiating table, or when the parties are under pressure, constraints or deadlines or in the event where the parties have a don't care attitude. In addition, violation of one's authority or excessive use of one's authority and extreme demands may result in anger (Van Kleef, De Dreu, 2010). Anger has a threefold effect on the negotiating process: it shifts focus from the broader purpose of the negotiations, and the parties concentrate more on the actions that led to anger, it blocks the objectivity of the negotiators thus making them make irrational decisions since anger diminishes trust on the other party's goodwill. In addition, anger makes the parties concentrate on revenging against the offending party, hence shifting the original goal of the negotiations.

Anger management techniques are critical in effective negotiation process since instances of anger often arise during the process (Van Kleef, De Dreu, 2010). Successful negotiators are aware of signs of own and the other party's anger. As such, they control how they express their anger and displeasure efficiently without offending the other party. Efficient negotiators also express themselves assertively without provocation of the other party. In addition, they avoid negotiation bias; they do not respond to anger with anger and are quick to offer concessions to make it up for other party's losses.

On the other hand, fear arises due to the feelings of unpreparedness, or difficulties in facing a stronger party. Fear affects negotiations as it makes one party sign rushed agreements, may progress to anger, affect the establishment of a mutual relationship, and may paralyze discussions due to the feelings of inadequacy (Filipowicz, Barsade & Melwani, 2011). Accepting and becoming aware of self-fears is an efficient way of handling fears that may arise during negotiations. In addition, careful physical and psychological preparation can assist in overcoming fears. Also, sharing such fears assists in regaining confidence and helps in creating trust and assurance in the process.

Emotions are an indispensable part of a human legacy. Negotiators cannot do without them and therefore, should not suppress or hide them during negotiating process. Instead, negotiators should be aware of their distinct emotions and learn how to manage them effectively to facilitate the process. In addition, negotiators should learn how to control the expression of varying emotions to promote the outcomes of negotiations (Filipowicz, Barsade & Melwani, 2011). Positive emotions enhance negotiations and result in positive negotiation outcomes as they promote a sense of trust and cooperation. They attract concessions and cooperation from the other party and are essential in creating a mutual relationship even after the negotiation process is over. Negative emotions sabotage effective negotiations and result in poor outcomes. They promote the spirit of competition and aggressiveness among the negotiating teams and eliminate the consideration of each other needs. Negative emotions attract non-compliance from the other party and the other party seeks means punishing the other party in retaliation. Therefore, negotiators should learn of the significant emotions in negotiations and express them effectively to achieve the negotiation goals.

### **Emotion management to Achieve Negotiation Goals**

Emotions are unconscious responses to immediate environmental stimuli that cannot be done away with in the negotiations. They affect the decision-making process and in turn affect the outcome of the negotiations, and hence, it is important to manage emotions to promote positive outcomes of the negotiation process (Filipowicz, Barsade & Melwani, 2011). Understanding our own emotions and the emotions of the other party is significant during the interactions of the negotiators.

The most important technique is the awareness of one's emotions and the emotions of the other party to gain an insight into their worries and areas of interest. That way, one understands areas of mutual concern where the parties can reach a win-win situation. In addition, expression of self-emotions provides the other party with an insight of your concerns and how you intend to be handled. Effective emotion management involves improving the negotiation climate through appreciating the other party point of view, finding common ground where you share common interests to build trust, respecting the independence the other party, and acknowledging the status of the other party (Kopelman, Avi-Yonah & Varghese, 2011). Effective management of emotions and efficient expression of the same enhance the outcomes of negotiations and promote the interests of the negotiator during the process.

### **Conclusion**

Emotions are an integral part of the human nature that cannot be avoided and therefore, affect the outcome of negotiations. Emotions affect the decision-making process and hence affect negotiations since they involve decision-making. Emotions can have a positive or a negative impact on negotiations depending on the response of negotiators to various communications

from the other party. As such, it is important to be aware of your emotions as well as emotions of the other party to achieve the negotiation goals. Emotion management is an important tool in negotiations as it allows effective management of emotions and how they are expressed.

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