

# Secondary Role-Players Key to Conflict Resolution

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**Abstract:-** A lot has been written about conflict management and its approaches and the primary focus has been on various ways of resolving conflict through traditional ways which include negotiation, mediation, arbitration and litigation ( Accord, 2022; Waks, 2022).

Usually, negotiations in conflict resolution draw on the same principles of collaborative negotiation that are used in dealmaking (Moore, 2018). In many writers' views, the responsibility for resolving conflicts is held by those directly affected while outside forces play a secondary role (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023; Mariani, 2022). Lawler (2018) argues that cultural and socio-economic factors drive conflict and post conflict settings. The exercise of any of the two or both is many cases the cause of conflict and this extends to politics most of the times. This article will not attempt to discuss approaches to resolving conflicts as these have been discussed extensively by many writers (Thomas, 1976; Kilman, n.d.) hence Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). It seeks to explore, examine and discuss in detail the role of secondary role players such immediate family members, friends, close associates and so forth of in conflict situations.

**Keywords:-** Conflict resolution, mediation, negotiations, cultural and socio-economic factors, primary role-players (conflicting parties), secondary role-players (family, friends and associates), power and individual dimensions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The paper discusses the role played by secondary role-players in conflict resolution situations. This discussion is guided by literature highlighting the critical role played by secondary role-players in political, cultural and socio-economic conflicts (Achankeng, 2013; Collier, 2017; Le, 2022; DFID, 2010). As per arguments that are advanced by other researchers the role that is played by the secondary role-players needs to be recognised and be taken into consideration when conflict resolution teams are established (Behfar et al., 2008; Indeed, 2022; and Smiley, (2018). According to these researchers, neglect of involving secondary role-players tends to frustrate conflict resolution initiatives to the point of total failure.

Conflict resolution is a way for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them (Shonk, 2023; ctb.ku.edu). Each party that is involved in a conflict has secondary role-players (study.com;

beyondintractability.org). Other researchers refer to secondary role-players in a conflict as secondary stakeholders. Secondary stakeholders are those who are more indirectly or less affected by the outcome of the conflict. For example, the conflict does not affect their basic livelihoods, but they may influence or be influenced by the conflict management process (Section 6: Broadening Stakeholder Engagement in [www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)). By implication, therefore, it seems that it would be a serious mistake to fail to identify and recognize secondary role-players or stakeholders as critical parties in conflict resolution. It is the objective of this paper to discuss secondary role-players key to conflict resolution

## II. DISCUSSION

Traditional means of solving conflicts have failed because those in conflict resolution tend to ignore the aspect of close allies of those individuals in conflict (Wertheim, n.d.). It is for this reason that they fail in resolving conflicts. Psychologically, it is common cause that parties at conflict always look for allies to support them during the fights. In the process of fighting, they receive advices and all forms of support from their allies, be it a family, friends and/or close associates (ICRC, n.d.; Shaw, 2017; Halperin and Schwartz, 2010; Rummel, n.d.). The advices they receive during the course of conflict and when they try to resolve such conflicts become their weapons and defence during the negotiation process (Shonk, 2023; Parmer, 2017)).

The first people to know what is going on are those close to their hearts as in family, friends and close allies. These people provide advice which are either linked to power and/or individual dimension. Wiilliam (2020) argues that power and individual dimensions represent social justice and individual rights as well as guidelines for the distribution of power. Budd (2017) states that integration of secondary role-players in conflict resolution is critical and is very effective.

A model focusing on the role of the two added conflict resolution approaches and how they both contribute to effective conflict resolution needs to be developed. Dix (2019) says that conflict resolution is a very intrinsic to power and individual. Cox (2019) concurs with Dix (2019) and argues that power dimension has to do with respect for authority, independency and autonomous power. Individual dimension is about satisfaction, recognition and reward, self-worth and responsibility.

For conflict resolution to succeed it is dependent on trust, integrity and humility emerging as the strongest characteristics that impact on effective conflict resolution. The conflicting parties and secondary role-players from both sides have the same characteristics and they payout whenever there is a conflict. Dales (2021) makes a link between conflicting parties and the secondary role-players and argues that any brokered peace process and/or conflict resolution is determined by what the conflicting parties get as an advice form the secondary role-players. Ricarte (2023) concurs with Dales, (2021).

According to Allen (2022) involving secondary role-players helps resolve problems in a short space of time regardless of the type of conflict. To illustrate this point, one can consider many marital conflicts which are by and large are influenced by in-laws from both sides (Bryant et al., 2001; Piercey, n.d.). Renowned and famous Swedish Psychologist Lisbeth Palme concurs with Allen supra (2022) and argues that if a married couple fights the in-laws and those close to the conflicting parties usually take sides and attempts made to resolve the problem will be entirely in disarray. Accordingly, the fighting parties at times cannot comprehend with what is happening and how they got into such conflict (Bryant et al., 2001). The only people who are rational are those surrounding them but unfortunately, they take sides or prefer to avoid the situation. Any advice that is provided by the secondary role-players is informed by their cultural and socio-economic values (Community Tool Box, n.d.). If one considers some reasons for increase in domestic violence, they clearly show cultural and socio-economic factors (Pereira and Gaspar, 2021). People who have been married for over 30 years, when a woman is beaten by her husband, they will emphasize resilience, patience, we all survive that and giving assurance that things will get better.

The younger generation will advise the woman to opt out of marriage and apply for the protection order (Alexander and Garda, n.d.). This is a clear demonstration of the influence of the secondary role-players in escalating or resolving conflicts and how cultural and socio-economic factors play a role in conflict resolution (Richards, 2020). This applies to all forms of conflict resolutions.

In the political sphere one glaring example is the current Russia- Ukraine war (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). The secondary role-players such America and other NATO member states are not only influencing the process of conflict resolution but funding the war. In this regard, no one can negotiate a peace process with Ukraine without the involvement of the second role-players. This has given Ukraine the courage to dare whoever tries to negotiate end to the conflict ([www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org), articles 2022/12/20). The US and other member states are secondary role-players to the war but power and individual dimensions are clearly visible and bear testimony on the importance of secondary role-players in conflict resolution ([www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org), article Liana Fix, June 28, 2023). Ansoff (2019) states that power dimensions which may exist on both the primary and secondary role-players can easily transcend to all those who are directly or indirectly affected by the conflict.

Another practical example in the political arena is that conflict between Palestine and Israel where countries such as the US support Israel and there is condemnation or any attempt to resolve the conflict (Hosking, 2021). One can also think of China and Taiwan. The secondary role-player as in the US, has influenced Taiwan to reject any conflict resolution with China and has been promised protection in any eventuality (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.; [www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org)). This in essence makes the US the last pot-of-call in the affairs of the above-mentioned conflicts.

The closer that fragile primary role-players or conflicting parties are to the secondary role-players and the more important cultural, socio-economic and security factors are, the more willing secondary role-players are to use their influence and adopt a more interventionist approach (Council on Foreign Relations, n.d.). This is either through special family emissaries or setting the table for amity meetings.

Secondary role-players turn out to be more involved in conflict resolution as primary role-players are fragile and confused (Dingwall, n.d.; Rummel, n.d.) It is the secondary role-players is entrusted with finding a common ground for conflict resolution between the parties in conflict. It is the secondary role-players who are tasked to help find a solution and better safeguard the interests of both parties in conflict, most of all, the interests of people affected by conflict. Secondary role-players are best suited to provide a potential convergence of these interests (Floyd, 2000, Deitelhoff, 2023). If the above makes logic, it is quite clear that the secondary role-players must be involved in conflict resolution as that will save time and pave way for a peaceful conflict resolution.

### III. CONCLUSION

There is a need to ensure that conflict resolution approaches include secondary role players in dispute resolution strategies as they are deeply ingrained and play a more active role in the management and prevention of conflict. A new era must be ushered where conflict resolution takes seriously the role played by secondary role-players as they are critical to lasting peace negotiations in all categories of conflict resolution. Secondary role-players are gradually gaining prominence in varying contexts in the field of conflict resolution (Crawford and Bodine, 1996). This will ensure that conflict resolution model is established to engender peace and stability in relations and in the interest of the primary role-players and in pursuit peace model that challenges traditional peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives promoting rule of law, democracy, or respect for political, cultural and socio-economic rights.

This model further ensures that the responsibility for resolving conflicts is held by those directly affected and their influential support structures as it puts emphasis on indigenous ownership of peace initiatives and the pursuit of local solutions (Accord, 2022; Castro and Ettenger, 1996). Therefore, from a peacemaking and peacebuilding perspective, there is a need to seek common ground for cooperation between all affected parties as that will help to

better safeguard the interests of both and, crucially, the interests of people at the receiving end of conflict and fragility.

Consequently, from a peacemaking and peace building standpoint, there is a need to pursue reciprocated ground for teamwork between all affected parties as that will help to better preserve the interests of both and, momentarily, the interests of people at the receiving end of conflict and fragility. This method provides a possible convergence of interests and invests a great deal in noteworthy transformative potential for conflict environments where all affected individuals are also involved. There is a need to continue to study how this initiative is transforming conflict environments. This is vital for a better understanding of how interventions affect peace and conflict dynamics, as well as for deriving practical suggestions for how local actors can coordinate between each other to address conflict.

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