

# Conflict Resolution Theory in Pursuit of Social Justice

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The author analyzes different theories of conflict and conflict resolution such as systems theory, relative deprivation, structural violence, theory of cooperation, and attribution theory. These theories help people determine the root causes of social conflicts and aid in gaining skills to solve problems. The purpose of this article is to explore how these theories can explain social structure and social interaction as well as contrasting how these theories are applied in the fields of psychology and sociology. In addition, the author discusses the relationships of different theories through an integration of study, which helps to understand how to apply theories into practice. There are important differences in the motivations and goals of these theories in studying conflicts, the author finds useful insights to identify the potential challenges and opportunities of each theory.

**Keywords:-** *systems theory, relative deprivation, structural violence, theory of cooperation, attribution theory.*

## II. UNDERSTANDING SYSTEMS THEORY

The systems theory is the interdisciplinary study of various systems. A system is a unity of interacting parts, but with inputs from the surrounding environment (Schellenberg, 1996, p. 71). Every system is influenced by its environment. The surroundings are constantly changing, and the process may evolve to adjust to a new environment. Systems theory can be applied to the integration of system elements such as individuals and groups. The goal of the author's systems theory was to discover a system's dynamics and clarify its purposes. By learning the systems theory, people can prevent failure in advance by observing common patterns.

Inequality can be impacted by different religions, cultures, and political systems. Systems theory is a method that not only analyzes individual behaviors and goals, but also focuses on the interaction patterns within a group and explains how the role of an individual impacts a group. For example, systems theory focuses on analyzing different relationships, motivations, and behaviors of people. The systems theory helps people discover knowledge by understanding the elements of a system. Another purpose of this theory is to illustrate how a social system works. For example, people can be considered a system, and a community is a larger system. A community is a system with various elements, such as people, schools, and supermarkets. A society combines different elements like people, communities, and governments. It interconnects the different rules of regime and different concepts of laws. The advantages and disadvantages of these rules and laws might be different under specific circumstances (Meadows, 2008, p. 12).

## III. APPLYING SYSTEMS THEORY IN CONFLICT ANALYSIS

Conflicts are dangerous signals on social innovation. Systems theory helps people understand social conflicts. Also, mutual distrust and resentment can cause conflicts in a society. Systems theory helps people consider how to reconstruct a society and promote democratic procedures. When individuals, groups, and countries interact with each other, it can lead to stress and conflict. Persons can be friendly and live in peace with each other, but unavoidable factors that create friction do exist. People may look for balance when the society has conflicts and chaos. For example, when people live healthy for many years and suddenly catch a flu, that person's immune system is compromised, and germs can invade the body temporarily. If people regularly pay attention to their health and try to protect it, the body's immune system will remain well. The social system is just like our immune system, if people do not properly take care of it, it can decay and even perish. When people ignore the root problems of conflicts and do not pay attention to their mistaken actions and extreme ideas, the social system crumbles. People need to understand the context surrounding individuals and should focus on improving the overall nation's livelihood and stability, instead of creating a larger scale of conflicts.

When it comes to developing the application of religion and politics, the future is unpredictable because things are always changing. One of the shortcomings of the systems theory relates to measurement. It may be difficult to find appropriate evidence to make a final decision based on a phenomenon or an event. This is because things always change, and we are impacted by the surroundings. Also, another limitation of the systems theory is that it is hard to weigh its advantages and disadvantages for different events. In addition, when people interact with each other, they may gain different information within a system. People are created differently and play different roles to make a society function well. However, destructive behaviors of individuals may lead to long-lasting consequences such as environmental pollution and humanitarian crises. When considering the functional systems such as community or the hierarchy of a society, people are supposed to cooperate with each other and understand the importance of coexistence.

## IV. UNDERSTANDING ATTRIBUTION THEORY

Attribution theory is centered on causes. Causes explain outcomes or end results, such as failure and success (Welner, 2010, p. 558). When people want to seek a reason for an event, attribution theory enlightens people to think about how and why things happen. There is always some sort of continuity between a past and a present, or a present and a future social

system (Coser, 1957, p. 201). Attribution theory seeks to understand how thoughts and behaviors may attribute to internal and external causes such as attitude, character, or personality.

Attribution theory and systems theory have something in common. All of them can help us focus on managing different processes and resources for resolving conflicts. They also provide us methods of how to analyze different relationships from internal and external factors, and explain the reasons caused by violent emotions. In my opinion, attribution theory is about how we feel. Success and failure in a conflict might be related to pride and shame. Failure in a dispute might cause hatred and anger. The relationship between efforts and outcomes is that failure does not mean people lack in ability, it might relate to a lack of personal effort. People need to consider both external and internal factors to gain enough information. For example, when people have a high expectancy, it might make them feel more depressed when they fail. However, low expectation will let people be more sensitive to an unsuccessful outcome.

#### **V. UNDERSTANDING THE THEORY OF COOPERATION**

The theory of cooperation is an important strategy that people can use to reduce risks and gain more interests. Cooperation facilitates social interaction and productivity. The theory of cooperation helps people understand the dynamics of relationships. It explains how and why people behave differently within relationships and provides the strategies for solving conflicts. Violence has always been the final arbiter for human conflicts. This is rooted in people's basic nature, and the feelings of aggression and frustration are extreme forms of human behaviors (Schellenberg, 1996, p. 40). Cooperation can facilitate productivity and help people complete tasks more effectively. In cooperation, people's effective actions influence others to reach their goals. Communication is important in cooperation. People working in cooperation can encourage others to achieve their goals.

#### **VI. UNDERSTANDING RELATIVE DEPRIVATION**

The relative deprivation theory evaluates the problems of predicting the referent people who use the comparison of different processes and predicts how groups choose to analyze and compare events (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984, p. 308). It focuses on inequities of phenomenon and can be explained from an individual's feelings and actions. Also, it can be applied to social, political, and economic problems. Inequalities can happen between different ethnicities and regional groups. In my opinion, the relative deprivation theory explains the political and territorial conflicts or the gaps between the rich and poor. This theory is also a view of social change and movement.

#### **VII. APPLYING RELATIVE DEPRIVATION IN SOCIAL ANALYSIS**

How is the relative deprivation theory related to the understanding of the conflict? The relative deprivation theory can be applied to cultural conflict resolution. The conceptual critique of Walker and Pettigrew for relative deprivation brings ideas that focus on strengthening relationships. Understanding relative deprivation theory can contribute to anti-poverty action and the peace process. The goal of this theory is to provide people with a better understanding on how individuals are involved in conflicts, and it helps people explore the coexistence of different cultures and enhance cooperation. Furthermore, the relative deprivation theory helps people understand traditions and the norms of social groups. Under social deprivation, people have negative emotions, which can lead to violent behaviors. From my perspective, people need to consider external factors for identifying justice as well as strengthening self-control. It teaches people the importance of developing empathy and showing respect to others. Prejudice and unforgiven thoughts not only harm others but also decrease the chance to solve problems. There are special needs of the public that require government action, this theory helps people understand individual's motivations and cognitions (Schellenberg, 1996, p. 63). When people are under the stress of an unfair hierarchy, it can impact people's motivations and cause violent behaviors.

Moreover, a phenomenon related to the relative deprivation theory can be illustrated with systems theory. A system should emphasize self-initiated activities rather than anti-social activities or a protracted dependence on the government (Masters & Smith, 1987, p. 258). In my opinion, paying attention to and considering others is the best method of understanding the underlying causes of conflicts. People should comprehend the differences between cultures and understand that everyone has different ideas. A critique of the relative deprivation theory is its difficulty in explaining the phenomenon of people who fail to act in social movements. It is not clear whether the conflicts are caused by an individual's behavior or if the conflict always remains by itself. This is because the performances of different individuals are hard to predict.

#### **VIII. UNDERSTANDING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE**

The theory of structural violence examines the interrelationships among structural violence. It helps people trace the historical roots and structural violence. It helps people understand how everything coexists by observing an individual's behavior, motivation, and action, and illustrates unequal power relations and social violence. Also, this theory brings into focus a bias which is present in many people who think about violence, peace, and related concepts (Galtung, 1969, p. 172). By understanding the theory of structural violence, people can gain ideas about analyzing economic inequalities and pursuing justice in a society. It also enhances

our understanding of social problems such as poverty, related stress, and social oppression factors including gender, race, and religion.

### IX. APPLYING STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IN SOCIAL ANALYSIS

The theories of structural violence and relative deprivation highlight the significance of social inequalities, and they provide knowledge regarding future conflicts. Both of them can help people understand social injustice. Does inequality of discrimination and marginalization cause violent conflict? How can people promote peace? The goal of conducting the theory of structural violence is to cultivate the sense of justice and help peacemakers analyze the violence. The term “structural violence” can be applied in our spiritual life. I find myself sometimes feeling at a loss and disappointed, but I understand that there is always a hope that is growing gradually. People always find the light and escape the darkness. New life is always being created to make the system naturally well-operated. Spreading love to encourage people to overcome spiritual weaknesses is important in understanding the theory of structural violence.

Furthermore, “structural violence” explains the differences between how people live differently in their lives and how they play different roles to make contributions in this world. People need to consider how to reduce the structural violence from the perspective of motivations and behaviors, and they need to seek the truth and justice to remain in long-term relationships in the social system. I believe that paying attention to how structural violence can be understood and affected by discrimination and racism will be a challenge to explain how it can lead to self-destructive behavior and extremism. For example, structural violence can also show the invisible prejudice. People can consider issues in protecting women from domestic violence and the violence against opposite genders. By studying the theory of structural violence, people might find peace among their neighboring countries.

### X. CONCLUSION

This article focuses on the conceptual issues based on analyzing different theories and raises many interesting questions. It offers reflections on the use of different theories. These theories can effectively contribute to explain conflicts and social inequality. From an integration of study, it helps people understand how to flexibly apply these theories into practice, cultivate compassion for others, and develop improvement in people’s livelihoods by adequately addressing human rights. By using these theories, individuals can recognize the global inequality, fulfill basic human needs, and raise the need for individuals to pay attention to international cooperation and promote justice.

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