

## THE IMPACT OF POWER INFORMATION AND TIME IN NEGOTIATION AND SOCIAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESSES: A CASE STUDY OF BRT PESHAWAR, PAKISTAN

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### Abstract

Negotiation is the most cost effective and sustainable alternative, leading to successful resolution of disputes. Disagreements, disputes, and conflicts arise in every field of life; if not resolved properly and in time, it has dire consequences. Power, information, and time play a crucial role in the success or failure of any negotiation. Although the edge of power, or influence can favor a party in the process, unnecessary use of power has adverse effects on the outcomes. On the other hand, time pressure impacts negotiations, the more the time, better are the results as more research, information and discussions could be done for a better outcome. Similarly, information about the negotiators themselves and the other parties plays a key role in having robust negotiations. This study investigates the role of power, information and time in negotiations. The aim is to understand their role in resolving the disputes. For this purpose, 30 open ended interviews were conducted among various stakeholders associated with BRT project Peshawar. The results show power, information and time directly influence the decision-making process in negotiations.

Keywords: Negotiation, Power, Information, Time, BRT Peshawar

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## Introduction

Negotiation is the most cost effective and sustainable alternative, leading to successful resolution of disputes. Disagreements, disputes, and conflicts arise in every field of life; if not resolved properly and in time, it has dire consequences. Negotiation facilitates the disputing sides to resolve the differences, with mutual consensus and compromise, benefiting both eventually. Among other factors, like good communication skills, negotiation skills and interpersonal skills, the role and importance of power, information and time cannot be neglected. All these factors and skills work in harmony to have acceptable solutions for all the parties and stakeholders.

Power, information, and time play a crucial role in the success or failure of any negotiation. Although the edge of power, or influence can favor a party in the process, unnecessary use of power has adverse effects on the outcomes. Similarly, a negotiating side having more information means that they have got an upper hand because they know the loopholes of the other side and thus got an edge over them. On the other hand, time pressure impacts negotiations, the more the time, better are the results as more research, information and discussions could be done for a better outcome. A negotiating party in less time could not be in a position to have an outcome of their choice.

Negotiation is the best solution as not only conflict and disputes are resolved with mutual consensus but also, relationships are not hurt and may get stronger with time. Power plays an important role in determining the nature of negotiations as the party with more power has more influence in the process.

Power and information substantially impact the negotiation process according to the literature. Power creates influence, which favors a party in getting a desirable result. Similarly, the more information about the other side, the value at stake, and the process, the higher the chances of an agreeable solution for the negotiating parties. Relationships in businesses are dependent on power hierarchies. People with less power are dependent on those with more power.

Information has the key role in any process and those with more information in a negotiation get the upper hand. A skilled negotiator makes efforts to know about counterpart's motives, beliefs, needs, and values and the negotiators should view themselves as problem solvers and look for beneficial alternatives for both sides.

On the other hand, time pressure impacts negotiations, the more the time, better are the results as more research, information and discussions could be done for a better outcome. A negotiating party in less time could not be in a position to have an outcome of their choice. As per the data from the respondents, power, information, and time impacts the outcomes of a negotiation.

This study investigates the role of power, information and time in negotiations. The aim is to understand their role in resolving the disputes. For this purpose, 30 open ended interviews were conducted among various stakeholders associated with BRT project Peshawar. The results show power, information and time directly influence the decision-making process in negotiations.

## **Literature Review**

The literature review shows that negotiation is not a stand-alone process. Negotiation itself is a combination of many components, including the role of power, information, and time. It also encompasses the importance of preparation and homework in negotiations. On the other hand, various styles of negotiation like integrative, distributive, and principled approaches are discussed in the literature. The literature also discusses the role of TCE, game theory, the role of emotions, gender, traits, tactics, and training in obtaining effective results out of negotiations.

Bus Rapid Transit, Peshawar falls under "TransPeshawar", an urban mobility company owned by the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The project has 244 buses, 30 stations, 32 bicycle stations and 360 bicycles. The total length of the route is 27 kilometers. There are 2 bus depots. One depot is at Chamkani, Peshawar while the other is at Hayatabad, Peshawar (Transpeshawar, 2023). The service has provided benefit to masses, including women and children. School, college, and university going students use the bus service on regular basis because it is safe, convenient, and cost effective.

This project was selected for research as it was a mega-project in the known history of Peshawar city and many complex negotiations took place while resolving disputes.

According to (Gosselin,2007) conflicts are unavoidable and inescapable and could be resolved with the help of negotiations because it is a skill for survival in tough situations. Cohen (1982) introduced three important variables in any negotiation process. They are power, information and time. These three together help in identifying others' needs. He warned about confusing negotiations for a battlefield also known as "Soviet Style Negotiations," Zero Sum Game, win-lose negotiations, and distributive negotiations, where one party wins and the other loses.

Power in negotiation is conceptualized in several ways like more alternatives, information or social status (Galinsky et al. 2017; Schaerer et al. 2020). In addition to power, information is another important component in the negotiation process. Information should be gathered about the standards and norms which other parties accept as legitimate. Anticipation about the arguments that the other side will be making and to counter it well, designed, and persuasive argument can help in overcoming any difficulty (Shell, 2006).

Carter (2020) states that information about the negotiators themselves and the other parties plays a key role in having robust negotiations. And for gaining information, asking questions is important. The issue is that fewer than one out of ten people ask questions. No questions, less are the chances of successful negotiations. Getting information about the other side is helpful in analyzing the other side's needs and making the deal successful (Susskind, 2020).

In negotiations the time is limited, and information is incomplete which compels the negotiations to use appropriate skills and prior knowledge to come up with some workable solutions. Kesting and Nielsen (2020) explain the importance of intuition in the negotiation process.

## **Methodology**

The grounded theory approach is suitable because this theory has been used to investigate complex phenomena in business and management studies (Battisti &

Deakins, 2018; Intezari & Pauleen, 2018). Grounded theory is structured, and a flexible methodology (Glaser, Strauss & Strutzel, 1968). This methodology is appropriate for exploratory purposes when little is known about a phenomenon under study (Birks & Mills, 2015).

Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1965 (Glaser & Strauss, 1965) while studying the experiences of terminally ill patients (Tie, Birks & Francis, 2019). Since then, many versions of grounded theories have evolved in addition to the original theory. Some of the main versions are Classical (Glaser & Stauss, 1965), evolved (Strauss, Clarke & Corbin, 1990) and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008).

## **Sampling**

The purposive sampling method is employed as the data is collected only from those officials that were involved in the extensive negotiation process with different stakeholders. Also, according to (Morse, 2007), purposive sampling is supported by grounded theory. Grounded theory has its contributions in developing creative, evolutionary, and new frameworks for explaining diverse phenomenon's (Gregory, 2006).

## **Data Collection Method**

The data was collected using the interview method. The rationale for using the interview method is that it gives in-depth information about the participants, their viewpoints and experiences of a particular issue and topic (West, Turner & Zhao, 2010). According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005), the interviews should not be too short that it would be difficult to reach data saturation, nor should it be too long that it is difficult to analyze the data.

Baker, Edwards, and Doidge (2012) stated that the number of interviews should range from 12 and 60. On the other hand, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggests that the interviews between 5 and 25 will satisfy the purpose. Bertaux (1981) recommends up to 15 interviews, whereas Baker, Edwardes, and Doidge (2012), also stated that in some cases one participant may be sufficient.

Being a constructivist ground theory approach, the limit for data collection was not predefined. A few interviews were conducted, and coding was done as per the protocol

of constructivist grounded theory approach. Then further interviews were conducted. The codes from all the interviews were constantly compared with one another until the level of abstraction (Birks and Mills, 2015).

The data from the interviews was recorded and transcribed by the researcher. After transcription, the data was analyzed qualitatively using the “constructivist grounded theory methodology”. Coding from the data and field notes were applied as the primary grounded theory analytical conventions. Line by line coding led to the coding of interview transcripts, and co constructed the data with the respondents. In vivo codes were picked from the narratives of the interviewees.

## Findings

Power, information, and time play a crucial role in the success or failure of any negotiation. Although the edge of power, or influence can favor a party in the process, unnecessary use of power has adverse effects on the outcomes. Similarly, a negotiating side having more information means that they have got an upper hand because they know the loopholes of the other side and thus have got an edge over them. On the other hand, time pressure impacts negotiations, the more the time, better are the results as more research, information and discussions could be done for a better outcome. A negotiating party in less time could not be in a position to have an outcome of their choice. As per the data from the respondents, power, information, and time impacts the outcomes of a negotiation.

**Figure 1.1 Shows the impact of Power, Information and Time in Negotiation and Dispute Resolution**

Dispute/ Conflict

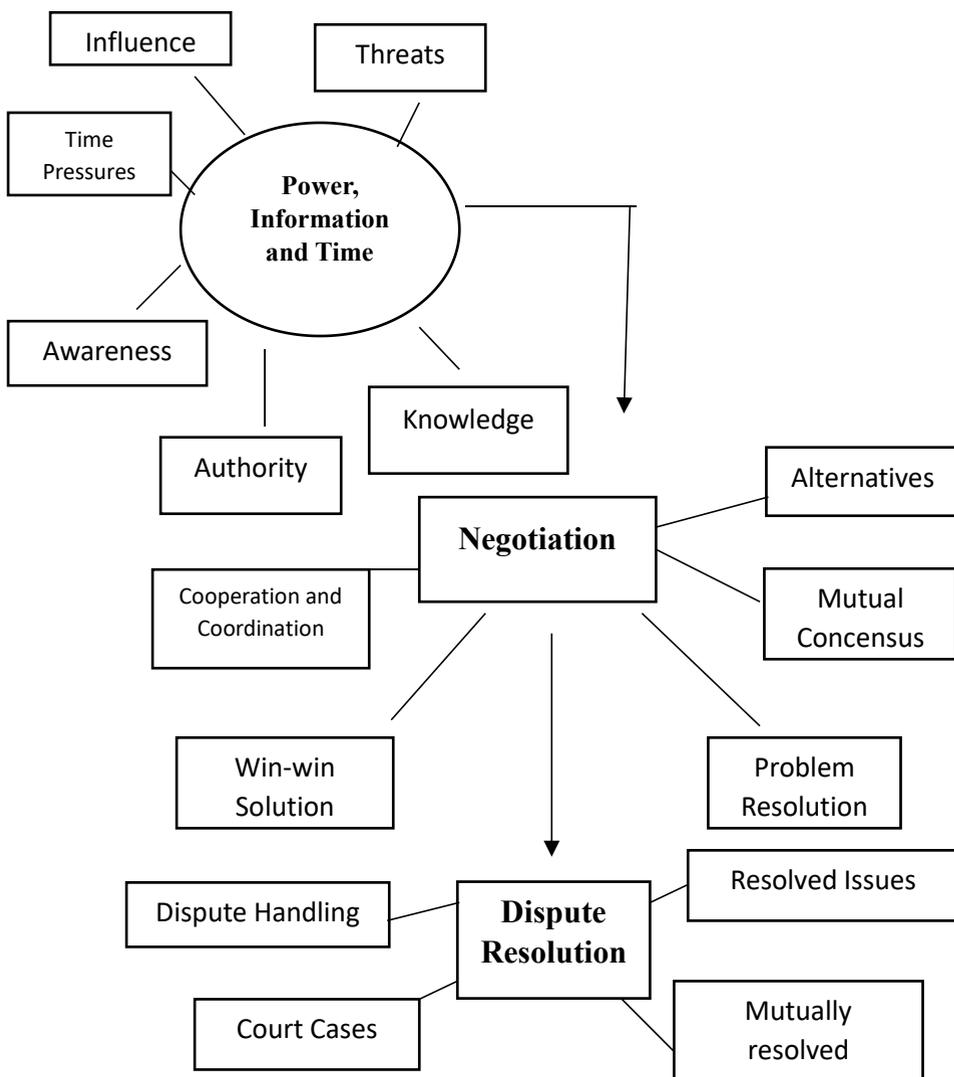
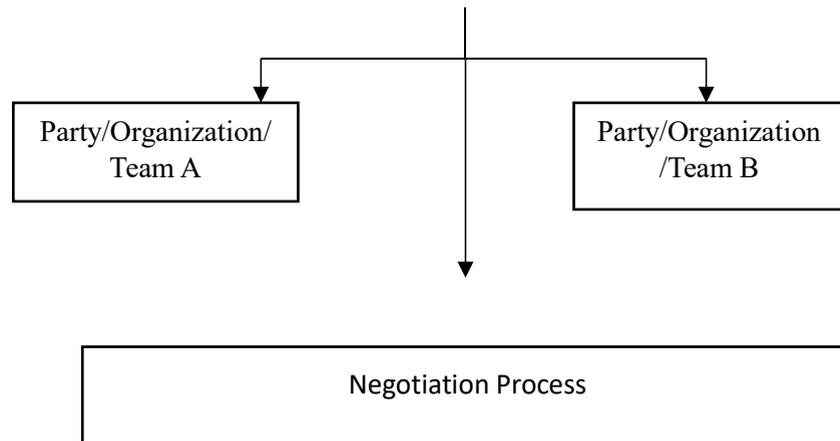


Figure 1.1 Shows the role of Power, Information and Time in Negotiation and dispute resolution.

## Field Narratives

The respondent IR1 working in a government organization and involved in many negotiations with the stakeholders shared his understanding regarding the role of power, information, and time in negotiations. He said that power has direct impact on the outcomes of negotiations, the more power, higher are the chances of getting a favorable outcome for a negotiating side. He also stated that government is very powerful, they have autonomy therefore in most of the cases, government implements their decision. According to the respondent:

*Government machinery is very powerful and usually they impose their own decisions but, in this project, all the government departments worked in coordination and eventually the issues were resolved, in a peaceful manner (IR01).*

Usually in our country, the government has ultimate power, and their decisions are final. For example, if the government imposes section 4, they can take anybody's property in return for compensation.

*When the government imposes section 4, it means the landowner has to hand over the land to the government. They have no other option (IR01).*

The respondent IR2, holding a prominent position in a government organization linked with the BRT project, provided examples from the project, where the use of power, information and time impacted the negotiation process and ultimately the final decisions. He stated that being a government entity, we tried to use power, but the other side had formed a council, where they discussed the issues and acted accordingly. As per the respondent:

*We tried to press them, so that they could agree with us, but they had a "Shura" like a committee, with 2 to 3 representatives and they as a team, worked for the resolution of their problems (IR02).*

Similarly, on other instances when the project team wanted to implement the design, they preferred to use force to impose their decisions.

*The first attempt was that we tried to forcefully enforce the design that it is the plan, and we have to implement it (IR02).*

Similarly, the respondent IR5 shared his views regarding the balance of power, information, and time in any negotiation. He shared an example that once a complainant had some reservations about the project. The scope of GRC was unable to address it. Some of the influential departments tried to use their power to compel the complainant, but he did not give us because he had information about all the procedures and the project. Finally, when the matter was taken to ADB, they considered it, and the problem was resolved. Although proper investigation took a lot of time, about a year and a half, the problem was resolved.

*As an example, the underpasses at Hastnagri and Firdous, namely B 7 and B 8 had complaints that were beyond the control of the GRC. Although the PDA and the Officials used influence to dismiss the complaint, the person who compliant was a "smart" person who had the information about the portal and he knew that if the complaint remain unresolved, he will knock the ADB door. With the intervention of the ADB, eventually the issue got resolved but it took about one and half years (IR05).*

Respondent IR6 highlighted the importance of information in a negotiation. He added that without information and without proper assessment, decisions made are not long-lasting and problems could arise. He shared an example from the process where without information about the market conditions and availability status of a particular light, the contractor recommended it but later they were not available and not sustainable to the environment of Peshawar city. In the words of respondent:

*The contractor recommended a light be installed in the corridor and it was approved in the contract. The specifications were very good, but the limitations were that we are unaware of the market conditions, that whether this light is available in Pakistani market or not. The contractor also did not say whether it was available or not. At the bidding time, the contractor also does not note many things. They just want they should get the contract in*

*the bidding process and do not care much about the minute details and specifications of the contract. When they went to the market the light of the requirement which they quoted was 58000 thousand, but its actual cost was 120,000 (IR06).*

Respondent IR7 was a social resettlement specialist and worked directly in the field with the affected people. She stated that some of the affected people were not providing accurate information and tried to hide their identities. They were afraid of what purpose we were gathering information. As per respondent:

*They were not giving information. They did not tell their real name or their actual CNIC numbers. So, at the start there were many issues with our data. Also, the team hired for the purpose of doing the survey was not efficient. They do not have experience in handling such matters. They did not work properly. Likewise, at one instance the owner of the shop was a lady, she further gave the shops to someone else like a Tikka maker or a barber shop. These women were widows, and the report did not mention their names. When it came to the payment, which was paid to their employees, they started protesting, that is why our names are not there. So, we took their grievance, made an addendum, and included their names and then they got their payments (IR07).*

Respondent IR8, an employee with the BRT organization, stated that information plays an important role in negotiations and decision making. He added:

*The management is usually aware of the intentions of the staff, and they take measures to resolve the issues before escalating and reaching protest. Once the drivers have some planes to stop the service in the corridor, of which the management became aware. On that day those bus drivers were not allowed to drive. So, the plan failed. Then the vendors and Daewoo got involved in solving the issue (IR08).*

Respondent IR9, a consultant with the project, explained the contractual terms, problems in the contract and how they are resolved. He stated that due to poor assessment or lack of information, certain things are not well defined in the contract, which creates problems. He further stated the processes by which such issues are addressed.

*When a contractor starts work, he already knows what to do and what not to do. We do not have to remind them what their duty is, but sometimes certain scenarios arise where*

*things are not well defined in the contract. It means that in the bill of quantity (BOQ) these things are not defined. In such cases, we as consultants give advice to the contractor that contractually, this needs to be done in such a way. We sign it and then it becomes part of the contract automatically. It is mentioned in BOQ that what the engineer instructs will become part of the contract (IR09).*

During the interactions with respondent IR10, an engineer and consultant provided many accounts of incidents, where the lack of information created hurdles for them. He shared an instance where a large old ancient drainage came across their way, and nobody had information about it, not even the institutions responsible for such things. He added:

*In Firdous there was a "Shahi Khata", an old ancient drainage No body has any information about it. There was an existing underpass, and we only wanted to renovate it. With the renovation, we wanted to extend it and make stairs for it. During work that huge drainage came in our way. We asked PDA, they were also amazed. They said we only had information regarding that ancient drainage, but this is very huge. People were amazed that Shahi Khata came from the Bara, through Dabgari area and through our route. There was proper cover on the nullah, and people started living on it. So, such issues were very frequent. Nobody knows about the existing utilities (IR10).*

Respondent IR12, a shopkeeper and member of the council for fellow shopkeepers, shared his insights. He stated that government has authority and power, and it cannot be regarded as helpless. They also have a monopoly over their decisions. He added:

*The second thing is that a government is not helpless. As government has power, authority, and resources. If the government says that it is helpless, therefore it cannot compensate you, it will be a lie (IR12).*

Respondent IR14, a consultant and engineer, stated that they made efforts to resolve the problems based on the available information. In case if they failed to compensate the affected people, the matter was forwarded to a higher form:

*We worked to resolve all their demands and all their concerns. If some of the demands were out of our scope, and we have no information to address them, we ask the client i.e., PDA. As PDA is the client, those problems were then resolved by the PDA (IR14).*

The respondent IR19, a market caretaker, stated that when the project started and the officials tried to force us to evacuate the shops, we did not take it seriously and continued our business. As per the respondent:

*In the start days, they were pressurizing us, but we did not take notice of it. They were doing their work, and we were doing ours (IR19).*

Similarly, respondent IR21, an electrician and supervisor, told the researcher that people use power in decision-making to influence the other side. He said it is a psychological tactic to pressurize the other side to make a decision of their own benefit.

*They are using power tactics. It is a psychological game (IR21).*

## **Discussion**

Power, information, and time are important components of negotiation and provide an edge to a negotiating side. The findings reveal that the more time, information, and power, the better the chances for a side to have a desirable outcome. The study further shows that they work in coordination and influence the decisions. Furthermore, the data shows that the powerful side influences the decision-making process during the BRT project. Power creates alternatives, and information creates value, which helps in negotiating better results, if more time is available in accessing alternatives and options. Further in the project, as it was supervised by ADB, that facilitated the affected persons and resolved their issues on priority, which created a balance of power between the project team and the affected people. Similarly, negotiation theory and literature also support the findings of this research, as Cohen (1982) stated that power, information, and time shape any negotiation process. Similarly, Iconomopoulos (2021) added that a party with more power is in a favorable position during negotiations. Also, Nalebuff (2022) added that power adds value and influence on the process. Likewise, Shell (2006) stated that information about the counterpart gives an edge in negotiation and helps in achieving better results. Also Fells and Sheer (2019) stated that negotiation is a complex

process, which requires knowledge, data and information for achieving better outcomes. Similarly, Zartman and Faure (2005) argue that information about the strengths and weaknesses of the other side must be available when negotiating with them.

Moreover, Carter (2020) stated that information has a key role in robust negotiations. Similarly, managing time is important in negotiation to avoid pressures while taking a decision as in the theory, McCarthy and Hay (2015) emphasized that taking time and doing research will provide space for good decisions and one should never rush to quick decisions. Furthermore, Tracy (2013) stated that time is money and must be managed properly. On the other hand, Schneider (2009) argues that time limitation had to be blamed for bad decisions. This shows that the power, information, and time assist in the process of negotiation. The data also supports the notion whereas the literature confirms the findings.

## **Conclusion**

Power, information, and time have a vital role in the negotiation process. Usually as per the results from the findings, they work in coordination and effects the process. The more power, information, and the better time are the chances for reaching a better outcome. The findings from the study also suggest that those with more information, time and power had an upper hand and influenced the process.

## **Power**

Power gives an edge in negotiations. It is the influence of one side over the other. If one has a better alternative available, more knowledge and a better strategy, they are in a better position to make the most out of the negotiations. The findings from the data suggest that the parties with more information influenced negotiations and got an outcome of their choice. As per findings, a party with more power presented more demands in negotiations, as they were in the better position, but when their power decreased, their demand decreased with a leniency in their stance. Also, it was noted that government has more power, authority and using the power, they can get an outcome of their choice, but in this case, ADB, the main financing and supervising

agency used with own protocols for the purpose to facilitate the general people and created power balance among the negotiating sides.

## **Information**

In relation to power, information also helps in getting a better outcome. Information about the other side, the matter to be negotiated, and the value facilitates the negotiation. From the data it has been observed that the negotiating side having more information was in the position to get a better outcome. This is also confirmed from the literature that the more information about the other side and matter at hand, the better the outcomes are.

## **Time**

Time has a crucial role in the negotiations process. The analysis of the findings shows that when more time was available to gather information, more promising were the results. Lack of time to negotiate creates time pressures for a negotiating side and thus, the decisions are not much optimized or favorable. The negotiation literature also shows that the availability of time provides flexibility in accessing available options and thus impacts the outcomes.

## **Recommendations**

Negotiation, theory and practice cover almost all aspects of life and business. This research study has proved that negotiation is not just a process but an integration of many processes and theories. Some of the recommendations from this research that could further improve negotiation theory and develop the literature on negotiations are explained in this study. It was found that power, information, and time impacts the negotiation process, shedding light on the notion that the more power, information, and time, the more effective the negotiations are. Power, information, and time are the key components of any negotiation process as stated by the Cohen (1982) and thus were analyzed within the available literature in negotiation theory.

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