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The psychology of mediation

A qualitative study on mediation in Ethiopia

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Abstract

The objective of this bachelor thesis was to examine and analyse the psychological factors that were important in mediation processes on local, regional, national and international levels in Ethiopia. The research questions were what these psychological factors were and how they affected the mediation process. A qualitative, semi-structured method was used and six informants with experience as mediators have been interviewed in Ethiopia. The psychological factors identified were self-esteem, losing face, ability of letting go, and mirroring. The conclusion was that this research confirmed the findings of much of the previous research, in regards to the psychological factors active in the process. The research also revealed that the psychological factors needed to be considered in the light of the Ethiopian culture and it´s collective nature.

Keywords: mediation, psychological factors, self-esteem, losing face, ability of letting go, mirroring.

<div align="center">**The psychology of mediation**</div>

The objective of this bachelor thesis was to examine and analyse the psychological factors that were important in mediation processes on local, regional, national and international levels in Ethiopia. The research questions were what these psychological factors were and how they affected the mediation process. The aim was that this paper would lead to a deeper knowledge and understanding of the psychology of mediation in Ethiopia, which would facilitate peaceful conflict resolutions.

The history of conflicts in Ethiopia

Conflicts have always and will always be a part of every society but to me it seems like humans are driven by a desire to live in peace. As a result of this, methods of resolving conflicts have developed. Harty & Modell (1991) states that psychologists, human rights activists, governments, anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists have showed a great interest in alternative forms of conflict resolutions since the time of the Cold War. Shaffer (2009, p. 297) defines a conflict as "circumstances in which two (or more) persons have incompatible needs, desires, or goals". Bahta (2014) quotes Andreas (2010:1) who stated that Ethiopia, just like many other African countries:

> …has been consumed by strife for most of the nineteenth century and more than a third of the twentieth century. The horrors engendered by violent conflict in Africa are vivid and pervasive, among these: The loss of millions of lives, and the painful displacement of countless citizens and communities; no less tragic is the loss of opportunities and capabilities to improve the lot of the living.

As one of the oldest countries in the world, Ethiopia has a history that can be traced back to 1000 BC (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2014). Ethiopia is one of the few countries in Africa that has never been colonized but instead ruled by successive emperors until 1974. During the last one and a half decade of the reign of the last emperor; Haile Selassie, there had been repeated crop failures which led to famine. At that time there was also complaints about unequal distribution of land as well as a lack of development. In 1974 the Derg regime came into power after a military coup and a pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist military junta led my Mengistu Haile Mariam, established a one-party communist state and what is referred to as the *Red Terror* was launched (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2014). The resistance did however grow stronger and intrastate conflicts arised. In 1991 a number of separated groups joined force against their common enemy and in the mid of 1991, the main rebel group, EPRDF (Ethiopian People´s Revolutionary Democratic Front) seized power. EPRDF had cooperated with the Eritrean separatists in the conflict and when their joint goal was reached,

Eritrea, which at that time belonged to Ethiopia, initiated preparations for independence, which they gained after a referendum in 1993. A more de-centralised constitution was written in Ethiopia but conflicts rose in the regions of Afar, Ogaden and Oromiya, which criticized the constitution for not benefitting the whole nation.

Ethiopia has also been involved in conflicts with neighbouring states and has at different point in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s fought with Somalia over the Ogaden region. From 2006 Ethiopia has also sent in troops into Somalia to support the Somali government in its fight against the Supreme Islamic Council of Somalia (SICS). In 1998 Ethiopia and Eritrea came into conflict over their common border and it escalated into a conventional war that lasted until the year 2000 (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2014).

Ethiopia has around 70 ethnic groups and has faced a number of non-state conflicts between different ethnic groups. Conflicts between pastoralist communities and agriculturalists have also developed after draughts in the country (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2014).

Mediation as a resolution method

Mediation is an ancient conflict resolution method that is referred to both in the Bible, Homer's Illiad and Sophocles' Ajax (Berkovitch, 1996). However it was not until 1990s that mediation as a conflict resolution method became accepted as a viable alternative to litigation by the legal community (Bevan, Bromfield, Hollebon and Bevans, 2010). It has been used both in personal and neighbourhood conflicts, group and organizational conflicts as well as in political conflicts. The peaceful approach of mediation could be seen as an ideal way of dealing with conflicts (Berkovitch, 1996). He further stated that mediation could be seen as a continuation of the parties´ own effort of conflict management. The mediator could be one person, a group, an organization or a state whose goal would be to influence or resolve a particular conflict. The mediator can for example appeal to logic, use information, persuasion or social influence strategies. "The mediators' objective of changing, reducing or resolving a conflict, legitimates their intervention" (Berkovitch, 1996, p. 3). The mediation process has unique features as the interest of the parties, mediators and the overall interest of changing the outcome of the conflict, is intertwining. To sum it up, Berkovitch' s (1996) perspective of mediation involves:

1) A relationship between two parties and a mediator.
2) Some sort of behaviour within a context.
3) Outcomes that are consequent to that behaviour.

The outcomes can be a result of direct mediation or indirectly facilitated by the mediator, removing barriers that has been standing in the way.

Bercovitch (1996) defines mediation as an interaction between two conflicting parties within a specific situation. It is the parties' previous experience, culture, society and structure that determine their reaction to the conflict and to the mediation. He further suggests that it is these features that in turn affect the way the mediator intervenes. It also affects the perception of the strategies and the outcome.

According to Jameson, Sohan & Hodge (2014) the practice of mediation is often considered an "art" and intuitive rather than a science, although mediation strategies have been identified by scholars and practitioners.

Mediation in Ethiopia

The practice of mediation is according to my experience widely used in Ethiopia both on national, regional and local levels. On local levels the mediation is lead by elders of the tribe or village and the mediation often involves rituals, rhetoric strategies as well as non-verbal means of communication. It appears to be a commonly used practice among Ethiopia's many local societies to settle conflicts developed from example physical injuries, homicide, relational problems or bride abduction. Third-party methods were also used in large conflicts, for example when the Carter Center mediated between the government of Ethiopia and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) (Bercovitch, 1996).

The Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1994) states that religious and customary institutions are given constitutional right to handle family and personal matters in cases where the conflicting parties agree to get a decision by these institutions. The constitution does however limit the mandate only to personal and family matters (Enyew, 2014).

Bahta (2014) referred to the traditional mediation in Ethiopia as *Popular Dispute Resolution Mechanism* (PDRM). In his study he writes about how the role of the PDRMs has developed and what consequences this can have on the formal justice system in Ethiopia. In his article he recommends that a new regulatory organ should be established on macro level. The aim would be that this new organ would have the capability and legitimacy to adapt and harmonized PDRMs, so that the traditional African indigenous values would be preserved in the same time as the international human rights conventions would be respected.

Enyew (2014) referred to the traditional mediation as *Customary dispute resolution mechanism* and stated that it plays an important role in maintaining peace and stability in the

community. He continued to explain that these customary dispute resolution mechanisms, were run by elders who would try to reconcile the conflicting parties, using different customary rituals when needed. Many societies in Ethiopia have formed their own customary ways of dealing with crimes as a parallel to the formal criminal justice system of the country (Enyew 2014). In many regions in Ethiopia, these customary dispute resolution mechanisms were more applicable and influential than the formal criminal justice system (Macfarlane, 2007). Enyew´s (2014) experience from different regions of Ethiopia, showed that customary dispute resolution mechanism for reconciliation, sometimes is used even after a formal criminal court case in order to control acts of revenge.

According to Girma (2012) is Ethiopia a country with a strong collectivistic identity. Myers, Abell, Kolstad & Sani (2010, p. 487) defines a collectivistic self-esteem as "positive regard for a group of which one is a member". They state that two different types of self-esteem can be enhanced by being a member in a group. First an individual can by being a member of an in-group, form a collective self-esteem (Luthanen & Crocker, 1992). According to Myers et al., (2010) the collectivistic self-esteem is most common in cultures were the interconnectedness between individuals is of great importance. Second of all can a positively valued in-group be an important part of an individual's self-esteem and in that way be positive for the individual.

Mediation from a psychological perspective

The aim in a mediation is to replace the "win-lose" orientation with a win-win orientation by encouraging the conflicting parties to set aside their demands and think about the interest, goals and underlying needs of the other party (Myers et al., 2010). In order for this to happen there has to be an understanding of the psychological factors involved in the process.

[there is] "a psychological barrier between us, a barrier of suspicion, a barrier of rejection; a barrier of fear, a barrier of hallucination…" (Quotation by Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, to the Israeli Knesset, 1977 cited in Myers et al., 2010, p. 534).

The self in mediation. Self-esteem and self-identity form the psychological core of mediation and negotiation (Brown, 1968; Cloke, 2008; Piluttla & Murnighan, 1996; Stone, Patton & Heen, 1999; White, Tynan, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004). In conflict literature this is often described as a party's need to "save face", or a persons "ego" or a person's "egocentric" perspective (Birke & Fox, 1999; Brown, 1968; White et al., 2004). According to Bader (2011), this basic dynamic can be described as people taking the conflict personally,

leading to the feeling that the outcome of the mediation reflects who they are. These questions about self and identity often lead to difficult and painful processes according to Bader (2011).

Mahler (1979) suggested that already in the early stage of a conflict, the sense of identity is forged in and these conflicts affect our personhood. According to Mahler (1979) this would explain why we experience conflicts as an implication of the value and at times even the existence of self. To be able to hold a stable, mature view of oneself and seeing others as people with both negative and positive characteristics, would be a sign of maturity. In conflict people often tend to view the other party in a very negative way and it is therefore of great importance for a mediator to understand and learn to encourage the self and object consistency (Bader, 2011). According to Bader (2011) the self needs to be understood within the context of human interaction according to the intersubjective perspective. This would then lead to insight about conflict and its resolution.

Bader (2011) puts the role of self in mediation, in relation to the attachment theory. According to Fonagy, Gyergely, Jurist & Target (2004) the reflective function is of great importance during interpersonal conflicts: "Conflict – or rather its adaptive resolution – prototypically calls for the perception both of the self and of the other in relation to the self, requiring individuals to reconcile their own legitimate claims with concern for the other" (p. 62).

The capacity to recognize both one's own self and others, is by many different researchers found as an important factor in development theory. As a person develops a healthy sense of self, they at the same time also develop reality-based, objective and self-reflective sense of self- and-others (Bader, 2011). This is what Fonagy and his colleagues refer to as "reflective functioning" (Fonagy et al., 2004) and what Mahler (1979) calls "self and object constancy". By intersubjective theorists it is usually describes as the capacity for mutual recognition (Benjamin, 2004; Mitchell, 2000). According to Fonagy et al. (2004) and Cloke (2008) this capacity is of great importance during conflicts. This would mean that people who were able to function with adequate objectivity, not only about themselves but also about others, would perform better in mediation (McGuigan & Popp, 2007).

Bader (2011) states that the mediator's ability to deal with issues of identity and self, is one of the most important factors for a successful mediation and that the psychoanalytic understanding can help people deal with these issues in a way that social psychology cannot.

Bader (2011) writes that the parties in mediation move through a psychological cycle that she refers to as the IDR cycle. This stands for narcissistic *inflation*, *deflation* and hopefully *realistic* resolution. She claims that "this process demands a strength of self on a

basic, simple, healthy level, especially at the outset" (2011, p. 302) and states that this might perhaps be the most important psychological dynamic in the mediation of civil disputes. The cycle is most prominent where there is a pure peer- to-peer competition.

Furthermore is the capability to "let go" a critical aspect of the psychology of mediation according to Bader (2011). She also points out that the mediator's own issues of self and identity will be important in the mediation process. The usefulness of a mediator is therefore dependent on whether the mediator is able to deal with these issues of self and identity (Bader 2011). The importance of understanding that one´s true identity and values is not determined by the result of the mediation (Bader 2011).

The danger of wounded pride. According to Lazarus (2000) pride is a moral, self-conscious emotion that is the polar opposite of anger. It is about "taking credit for an achievement and a feeling of superiority" (Gooty, Gavin, Ashkanasy & Thomas 2014, p. 398). Piluttla and Murnighan (1996, p. 209) described wounded pride as a: "personal inwardly focused feeling when another´s actions violate a person´s sense of self-worth. When people were not given the dignity that they feel they deserve, they may question their image of themselves and/or feel hurt. This is wounded pride".

According to social psychology, conflicts produce something that is referred to as an "ego threat" (De Dreu & van Knippenberg, 2005, p. 28) and according to Bader (2011) this is something that makes conflict resolution complicated. She continues to explain that even an acceptable offer can be rejected out of spite when a party´s pride is wounded during negotiations (2011). De Dreus and van Knippenberg (2005) studied the possessive self as a barrier in conflict resolution and raised questions about why conflicts tend to become so emotional and personal. To find an answer to their questions they developed an idea that in any conflict or dispute would people from the beginning identify positions and arguments, which would become part of their self-concept. Therefore a threat to these arguments will be perceived as a threat to the self. This would mean that conflict in itself produces ego-threats and therefor is destined to be difficult to manage and will be bound to escalate. The four studies in De Dreus´s and van Knippenberg´s research showed that individuals value belief and arguments more when these were associated with the self. They also discovered that anticipated or real opposition did trigger ego-defence cognition and behaviour. The effect was however weaker for the individuals with high rather than low self-concept clarity and when epistemic need were raised through process accountability. De Dreus and van Knippenberg (2005) concluded that conflicts will be difficult to manage and are bound to escalate when individuals develop ownership of arguments and make this a part of their self-concept.

Piluttla & Murnighan (1996) did a quantitative research and studied psychological factors that can explain rejection of ultimatum offers. Their research was based on the wounded pride/spite model that predicts that knowledgeable and informed respondents may react to small ultimatum offers when they were perceived unfair, which produced feelings of anger and spiteful actions. The result from a large-scale experiment showed that rejections were most common when the respondents were able to evaluate the fairness of the offers and attribute responsibility to the party making the offer and this therefore supported the model. The research also showed that anger explained rejections better than the perception that the offer was unfair.

According to Ortony, Clore & Collins (1990, cited in Piluttla & Murnighan, 1996) anger is a feeling that follows the perception of an unavoidable and unexpected negative outcome that someone else is responsible for. Spite is the behavioral reaction that comes with anger and which is intended to hurt others (Piluttla & Murnighan, 1996). The Straub-Murnighan model suggests that when an offer is perceived as unfair, feelings of wounded pride and anger arises, which leads to the rejection of the offer in spite. The danger when parties come into conflict is that hate develops (Baumeister, 2005) and that they become chronic enemies. When it comes to conflicts about scarce resources an in-group and an out-group usually develops to differentiate between who belongs to which group and this is something that is natural and universal (Baumeister, 2005).

Face issue. Van Ginkel (2004, p. 475) describes face issues hidden under the surface, like mediation in a minefield. He writes about how mediators can "uncover critical face issues that can stymie the negotiations". The face is "one of an individuals most sacred possessions'' (White et al., 2004, cites Deutsch, 1961, p. 897) and therefore it is necessary to maintain face in order to sustain one´s self-esteem. They continue to state that negotiation is a very poignant context to study the impact of face, as a person in conflict often will experience his or hers face as threatened. If a person´s face is threated during a negotiation, it can redirect the persons balance of behavior away from the cooperation and towards competition.

According to Van Ginkel (2004), the word "face" has in Western writings been used as a metaphor for our self-image in relation to the public. Face is more related to the image we wish to project in regards to our social status, social position and credibility, rather than what we claim for ourselves. He brings out the way we dress as an example of which social status we wish to communicate.

Van Ginkel (2004, p. 477) states that face plays two important roles in mediation. First he states, "Saving face may be one of the *underlying interest* – or even the primary interest –

that one party has in the resolution of the dispute". Second, "face plays a role in the *process* of the mediation as part of the interaction among disputants during various stages of the mediation" (Van Ginkel, 2004, p. 477). Goffmann (1967, cited in Van Ginkel, 2004) states that face, always plays a role in mediation, not only during the mediation process but also in regard to the outcome.

According to Ting-Toomey (1988, cited in Van Ginkel, 2004) face-giving is more common in cultures that are predominantly collectivistic, such as cultures in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In these cultures there is primarily a focus on preserving the social status of the in-group and then face-giving can be a way to support members of the group (Van Ginkel 2004). It is therefore important for the mediator to develop an understanding of the cultural differences, in order to develop awareness about the face issue. Individual differences can however sometimes outweigh cultural similarities (Van Ginkel 2004).

Mirroring of parties. Bader (2011) highlights the importance of mirroring, as it together with the intersubjective core itself, relates mutual recognition that the self comes to know (Benjamin, 1995; Fonagy et al., 2004; Mahler et al., 1975; Mahler, 1979; Mitchell, 2000; Stern, 2000). Bader (2011) emphasizes the good of mirroring as a major element during mediation. She draws parallels from how a child mirrors it's mother and states that mutual cuing is a part of the identity formation. According to Bader (2011) neuroscientists have in recent years studied how the brain shapes who we are and who we think we are. This research has led to the finding of what is referred to as "mirror neurons".

> These neurons map the visual information we receive when we watch another's behaviour on equivalent motor representations in our own brain. For example, when we watch another person reaching for a glass of water, our own brain registers the scene as if we were reaching for the glass" (Stern, 2004, p. 79).

She stated that the findings of mirror neurons and other similar neurological system validate the psychoanalytic approach that give emphasize on recognition and mirroring. Gallese, Eagle & Migone (2007) presented evidence that indicated the existence of mirror neuronal systems, which were used to "read" other people´s intentions, emotions, somatic sensations and linguistic expressions. They argued that this showed that these neuronal mechanisms trigger an automatic and unconscious "embodied simulation" of other people´s sensations, emotions, actions and intentions. They further claims that this embodied simulation forms the fundamental functional mechanism for empathy and the ability to understand another person´s mind.

The objective of this bachelor thesis was to examine and analyse the psychological factors that were important in mediation processes on local, regional, national and

international levels in Ethiopia. The research questions were what these psychological factors were and how they affected the mediation process. Finding answers to these questions would hopefully lead to a deeper knowledge and understanding of the psychology of mediation in Ethiopia and would in that way benefit mediators, parties, organizations and organs involved in mediation and peace reconciliation in all different levels.

Method

Participants

In order to gather data about the mediation process, the informants that were interviewed had personal experience of mediation in Ethiopia. The initial idea presented in the research plan was to interview five elders with experience in local level mediation in Ethiopia and two informants with experience of mediation on higher levels. The first interview was held with an elder in a local community in Addis Ababa but after the interview I it could be conclude that what had been referred to as mediation, did not apply to the western way of understanding the term. The "mediation" the elder was involved in was rather a arbitration where the elders listened to the conflicting parties only to give a judgement, making a decision about how the conflict was going to be solved. As this process did not give the parties the option of accepting or rejecting the solution presented and there was no process of negotiation, it became clear that this type of arbitration/mediation would not provide the data needed for the study. This interview did not contribute with any usable data regarding the psychological factors involved in the mediation process and can be considered an internal reduction of informant and has therefore not been included in the study. Therefore the focus of the study was redirected in order to find mediators with experience of what was referred to as facilitating mediation, which is a negotiation where the parties have the option to reject the solution suggested by the mediators.

The snowball sampling method was used in order to get in contact with people with experience in mediation. The people suggested as possible informants were contacted by telephone or by e-mail. After accepting the invitation to participate as an informant in the study, the time and venue was arranged. Everyone asked personally to participate agreed to take part in the study. Six informants were interviewed and they were all males with an age between 40-51 years, with an average age of 43 years. Their years of experience in mediation ranged from 5-18 years with an average of 9 years. All of the informants were residing in Ethiopia, except the informant from Sweden, who was living abroad.

The level of mediation had for this study been structured in four levels, starting with a

local level that included mediation in family conflicts as well as community and organizational conflicts. The other levels were regional, national and international. Five of the informants had experienced of mediation on local level, four on regional level, four on national level and three of the informants had experienced of mediation on international level. The participants had all been active in mediation in their professional career and three of the informants had also been working with mediation in family conflicts privately as individuals. Five of the informants were of Ethiopian nationality and one came from Sweden. Four of the Ethiopian informants had been studying abroad.

The objective of this bachelor thesis was to examine and analyse the psychological factors that were important in mediation processes both on local, regional, national and international levels in Ethiopia. In order to put the experience of the mediators into a context they were asked to describe what has been the most common reason for conflict they had been mediating in. On a local level, marriage problem, conflicts about financial matters and conflicts among neighbours were mentioned. As an example of a reason for conflict among neighbours, one of the informants shared his experience as a party in a conflict concerning parking space at his apartment complex. He also mentioned that problems with sewerage were creating conflict in this apartment complex, as the neighbours did not want to take responsibility for the shared facilities.

On regional level, territorial and resources conflicts were the most common according to the informants. The conflicts between pastoralist, herders and farmers were well known in Ethiopia according to several of the informants. One informant also mentioned that there were conflicts between municipalities (woreda and woreda) that were administrational conflicts and another of the informants mentioned conflicts among churches and denominations. Several informants pointed out that Ethiopia has a history of conflicts among ethnic groups and in these conflicts it might not be possible to identify a clear reason for the conflict, as there might be a very complex historic background behind the conflicts. Religion was also mentioned as a common source of conflict on the regional level.

On a national level the major conflicts that were highlighted were the political ones. On the international level the conflicts that the mediators had been involved in were mostly conflicts in other countries like Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

Instruments

The data of the study was collected through a voice memo recorded semi-structured interview. An interview guide was created by the author based on the psychological factors

that the previous research on the theme had identified as important in the mediation process. The aim was to illuminate the role of self-esteem, losing face, ability of letting go and mirroring. During the interview it became clear that the meaning of some of the terms used in the study such as mirroring and self-esteem, were not clear to participants. In Amharic, which is the national language in Ethiopia, there is only one word used for both self-confidence and self-esteem. Therefore it was difficult to discuss the importance of self-esteem as I and the informants in many cases had different understanding and definitions of the meaning. One of the informants explained that women have low self-esteem whereas the men have high self-esteem and this shows how the understanding of what self-esteem really means, differ from the definition used in this study.

The informants were asked to share their perspective on what psychological factors that were involved in the mediation process and how they affect the mediation process.

Data analysis. The purpose of this bachelor thesis was to examine and analyse the psychological factors that were important in the mediation process. The research questions were what these psychological factors were and how they affect the mediation process. During the interviews it became clear that the term mediation was being used in an ambiguous way and several of the informants were talking about a paradigmatic shift in regards to mediation in Ethiopia. It is therefore important to understand the difference between what the Ethiopian informants referred to as *traditional mediation* or *arbitration* and what mediation means in a western context. According to me, mediation in Ethiopia cannot be understood without the cultural context it is functioning in. One of the informants described it in the following way:

> The mediation we have, has the nature of arbitration, they decide on your behalf. So they resolve the issue on your behalf, so you rely on people you trust, that you believe can make wise decisions. You only rely on wise counsellors, wise mediator, also in the family. So if I have an issue as part of a family, with my family members or with my neighbour, I look into who is an elder, who is senior, who is more experienced? I am not looking into who is technically good in terms of know how, that is more of the western approach. Now we are also trying to adapt that one. But here traditionally it is about who knows me better, who knows our issue better, who can decide for the best of my interest, that is what we have been looking for.

One of the informants described peoples approach to arbitration by saying:

> In the Ethiopian context, the people want you to make decisions on their behalf and that is a challenge here in Ethiopia. When you say, "The decision is yours", they say, "Ok, this is not the kind of mediator we are looking for". They want you to be their judge.

The mediation where negotiation takes place and where the parties have the possibility to reject a proposed solution, is referred to as facilitating mediation. According to the informants this is now developing. In 2013 the German Civil Peace Service Program (GIZ) created together with the House of Federation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and

other partners, a training manual with the aim to merge what is referred to as Wise Council Mediation and facilitating mediation. This shows how the culture of facilitating mediation is developing. This paper will not go further into the cultural context of Ethiopia but just present one example of the mediation ritual of the Ethiopian tribe Oromo told by one of the informants:

> If you kill a person by mistake, then just like the biblical times, there is a tradition among the Oromos that you run away from this area and hide in another Oromo territory. Then those people don't come after you. But then you should start the mediation process right away with mediators, the shemagele, with the elders, the traditional thing, it is a bit disgusting but anyway...if they agree, they slaughter either a cow or whatever, then a curtain will be put in-between so the conflicting parties don't see each other first. So they shake hand with blood. As I said it is disgusting but after that it is just like brother-to-brother, shoulder-to-shoulder, it is sealed, no one comes after you.

All the interviews were transcribed and a qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the data collected from the interviews (Burnard, 1991). The data analysis was based on Burnard's several stages framework in order to analyze the data in a structured way and identifying related categories. The data was analysed through all the Burnard´s stages, except stages six, seven, eleven and twelve.

The first stage was to carefully read the transcriptions followed by a systematic coding by comparing and merging related head categories. This coding was carried out manually by using a colour system. The analyse revealed four head categories (self-esteem, losing face, ability of letting go and mirroring) that appeared to be of great importance in the mediation process. Every factor was then analysed in order to find under categories that would describe the role of the specific psychological factor in the process but also describe what expression it can take and in what context it could be understood. The factors were then coded into what can be understood as the meaning of the action the psychological factor results in. To describe the factors through condensations the meaning of the factors were analysed. For every head category a quotation was presented as a meaning unit in order to describe the factor, using the informant´s own words. The data has been analysed in a semantic approach, which means that the categorization has been based on the informants' explicit statements.

Interview procedure

Five of the six interviews were held between the 12-18 of November 2014 in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa in the offices of the informants. The interviews were held during office hours. The interview with the informant living abroad was held through the telephone in the evening of the 7th of December 2014. Some follow-up questions were used when needed during the

interview. The time of the interviews ranged from 36 to 84 minutes with an average of 57 minutes. The interviews with the Ethiopian nationals were held in English and the interview with the Swedish participant was held in Swedish.

Due to the time limitations of the gathering of data, no pilot interviews were conducted. In accordance with the aim of the study, a qualitative research interview method was chosen as it seemed as the most beneficial method to study the psychological factors in mediation in Ethiopia (Banister et al., 2011).

Ethical consideration

This paper was based on the ethical principles of research stated by Vetenskapsrådet (2002). The principles is formulated in four principles: 1) The principle of information; 2) The principle of assent, 3; The principle of confidentiality and 4; The principle of use.

The informants were all given information about the study's purpose, the procedure, the amount of time estimated, and that the material would be obliterated after the paper had been completed. They were also informed that the information conveyed would be handled in such a way that identification of the informants would not be possible. The informants received information about their right not to answer one or more question without any justification, to remove any response already given and to withdraw at any point, without any penalty. The research did therefore fulfil the requirements of the principle of information.

The principle for assent was also fulfilled as the informants were able to reject the offer to participate as an informant in the study. They also had the possibility to withdraw the answer of one or more question without any justification, to remove any response already given and to withdraw at any point, without any penalty during the interview. Approval of audio recording during the interviews was given before the recording started and all participants accepted that the interviews were being recorded.

The principle of confidentiality was met by the interviews being anonymous. In order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the voice memo recordings were anonymous and if answers given by the informants could reveal their identity, their answers were presented in an unidentifiable way in the result.

The objective of this research was to look into the psychology of mediation from a academic approach and the data collected has only been used in this research paper. I therefore consider the principle of use fulfilled.

This research has considered the Ethics Code of the American Psychological Association (2010) and has intended to follow the General Principles. The principle of

Beneficence and Nonmaleficence has been considered as the study did not intent to cause the participants harm but to promote benefits for not only the informants, but also the society in general (Banister et al., 2011). The interviews aimed to be held in a professional standard of conduct in accordance to the principle of Fidelity and Responsibility. The principle of Integrity was also important during the study as well as treating all informants with fairness and justice in accordance with the principle of Justice. The fifth principle was to show Respect for People´s Rights and Dignity and by respecting the culture, role and individual differences, the effect of bias was hopefully minimized (American Psychological Association, 2010). The psychology of mediation in itself do from my perspective not lead to great misgivings but when this is put into relation with conflict, especially on higher level, it can easily become sensitive. In order to handle possible sensitive situations, I made an effort to make the informants feel confident in the anonymity protection and to not formulate the result in a way that anyone could be identified.

Result

The objective of this bachelor thesis was to examine and analyse the psychological factors that were important in mediation processes on local, regional, national and international levels in Ethiopia. The research questions were what these psychological factors were and how they affect the mediation process. Self-esteem, ability of letting go, losing face and mirroring were revealed to be psychological factors of great importance in the mediation process in Ethiopia. In the this section the informants' answers will be presented and have been given a number between 1-6, which will be linked to the quotations and statements the informants have made.

Self-esteem seemed to play the most important role as it was related to pride, which appeared to be a very important part of the Ethiopian culture. Losing face was also found to play an important part in the mediation process and the fear of possible future consequences and the fear of being perceived as a loser became clear during this research. The ability of letting go was described as crucial in the mediation process as it is one of the most important factors for a successful mediation. The study showed that the need for solving the core issue of the conflict was a crucial factor for a successful mediation. Mirroring was according to the findings in this research, important in the mediation process, as it gave the parties the opportunity to step into the other party's place and see the conflict from their perspective. This was according to the informants a good way of facilitating communication and empathy.

Table 1.

Summary of identified categories of the psychological factors identified to play an important role in the mediation process in Ethiopia

Meaning units	Condensation	Code	Under category	Main category
"The way they perceive themselves, they bring it to the mediation, they want to speak a lot, they want t be the one that is perfect, not doing anything wrong"	The factors that affect the self-esteem and how that affects the mediation	Emotional evaluation of the parties' own worth	Pride Respect Irrational self-esteem Rational self-esteem Trust Social prestige Gender Ethnicity	Self-esteem
"Losing face is not only about PR issue, it is also about losing, ground. Next time around, they are not going to be respected by others"	To loose respect	Fear of of losing respect	Within the group Future consequences Perceived as a looser	Losing face
"The thing you are leaving is for your children, let go for them. This thing you are leaving is for peace, let go for your neighbour, community"	Giving up your position in order to find a solution	Moving on	"The winner takes it all" The real source of conflict Crucial moment	Letting go
"You as a party in conflict with me, try to go into my problem, my situation and try to understand my problem and I am doing the same thing on my side".	How parties mirror each other during the mediation process	Interaction	Root cause of the conflict The mediator as a mirror Walk in someone else's shoes Facilitates listening Rational state Communication Demonization Importance of words	Mirroring

Self-esteem

The result showed that self-esteem did play an important part as a psychological factor in the mediation process. The following under categories were identified; pride, respect, irrational versus rational self-esteem, trust, social prestige, gender and ethnicity.

When I raised the question of self-esteem with one of the informants and asked him to describe the role the parties' self-esteem plays in the mediation process, he replied by saying: "Probably you are bringing this question as a westerner" and he was reflecting on whether there was such thing as a parties' self-esteem (1). He meant that it is difficult, if even possible to talk about a group's self-esteem. After clarifying my question; that it was referring to an individual self-esteem, he confirmed

that this did play an important role.

Another informant with experience of mediation on an international level, said he found the group and the individual in Ethiopia, as rather diffuse and that it was hard to know the boundaries between those two (6). He continued by saying that an individual, who has made a political or military career in a country like Ethiopia, could get so tied up by the system that a collective self-esteem was formed.

The importance of the mediator´s own self-esteem was also highlighted as something that can have impact on the mediation process (1-6). The way the mediator perceives is own role, his position as a respected mediator, can influence the way he facilitate the process. One of the informants pointed out that the ability of neutrality and to listen to others, was something that was based on the self-esteem of the mediator (1).

Pride. Two of the informants equated or associated self-esteem with pride or status (1, 2). When one of the informants was asked whether he would say that self-esteem and pride was the same thing we said: "To me it looks as it is the same in this context. In this context self-esteem is about pride of something, about the pride of having better culture, a better value…" (1).

Respect. One of the informants defined self-esteem as respecting yourself (2). He continued by stating that a person who respect themselves "don't lie, don't want to hurt others, don't want to be users or don't want to have the psychology that others are suffering because of me, I don't want to be that kind of person, kind of self-esteem there".

Irrational versus rational self-esteem. The informant also believed that there was something called an *irrational self-esteem* and went on to explain the type of thinking that would be typical: "I am better than the rest of the community, we are the senior clan, we are a strong clan" (2). Further more he highlighted how pride and ego was connected to self-esteem in the mediation process:

> People also have ego issues. The way they perceive themselves, they bring it to the mediation, they want to speak a lot, want to be the one that is perfect, not doing anything wrong. They are accusing others, they don't want to be accused, they don't want to accept, that's the problem.

The informant continued to explain that he believed that the opposite of irrational self-esteem was a *rational self-esteem*, which was characterized by a desire of doing good and not degrade others:

> That its good to be a good community member, it´s bad to hurt others, "I don´t want to be the one harming others, I don´t want to be the one taking advantage, I don´t want to be the one bullying"….in that case it contributes positively.

He mentioned that he sometimes asks the parties whether there was something they would admit having blame in but stated that it was unusual that parties were willing to do so.

Trust. Several of the informants emphasised the importance of trust in the mediation

process, especially when it came to the partied trusting the mediator but also trusting that something good will come out of the negotiations (1, 2, 5, 6):

> Respected mediator….that identity helps him to cool down parties in a conflict, means they trust him, he wins easily the trust of the parties in a conflict and he also helps to smoothly facilitate towards a positive outcome from the mediation.

One of the informants highlighted the responsibility he felt over the trust the parties had in him as a mediator (4):

> It is important with the level of understand and also the level if trust they have on the commissioners, so it also requires us to watch out own steps, in addition to our services, that is to be a personal challenge, in fact a good challenge.

Social prestige. During all of the interviews the importance of social prestige in the mediation process was emphasised. The social prestige of gender and ethnicity was according to the informants an important part of the self-esteem, that affected both how the parties perceived each other as well as how the parties viewed themselves. One of the informants described the consequences of a changing society by the following statement (2):

> If you continue with this stand, you are going to loose personally, as a leader of this community, as a leader in this political group, could also be business. They are going to loose, so that´s what they fail to perceive. So it comes with a perception of self and the others also. I am a big party, I am in community, I am a big business.

Another of the informants shared how parties' perception of their position in some kind of hierarchy, can influence their self-esteem in various ways (6). He mentioned that this hierarchy could be based on geographic areas, heritage or family and that the way a party defines himself and the expectations he feels from the surroundings, can cause an immense emotional tension, creating the impression that "losing" the mediation is no option. He meant that this often means that parties are unwilling to come to the mediation until they were forced to. The parties often come with an inflated self-esteem, terrified to loose power by going into negotiations. According to the experience of the informant, these parties rather sacrifice human lives before accepting to participate in a mediation process.

Gender. All of the informants with experience of local or regional level mediation mentioned how the gender issue was a vital part in understanding the mediation process. One informant explained that (1):

> The male has high self-esteem in regards to expression what he needs, in regard to expressing his interest, in regard to remaining on his position, like in case she is a wife, "if she needs we can get divorced and I will marry another one", like that, but the woman doesn't say like that most of the times. They say "no, I can't get married to somebody else because I had some kids and I need to nurture them, I cannot take them with me to a stepfather". In our culture the male generally can generate the income, so he feels self-confident, he has high self-esteem.

He continues to explain that when a woman was faced with this situation:

> She will not be able to be honest during the mediation process and she will accept the man's terms as there is too much at stake for her to loose; "I might loose my property or my kid because of the divorce so let me accept the mediation". She might not speak this out but psychologically she will have this feeling and most of our mothers, grandmothers have been having this, I know it very well, both in the rural area and in Addis Ababa.

He concluded by saying that "with women there is low self-esteem and with men there is high self-esteem". Another informant gave his perspective of gender in relation self-esteem in this way (4):

> At a family level, you know Ethiopia is a patriarchal, where being a male has its own value, in fact in most African countries, so even if it is changing in the cities now, if not already changed, there are commonly accepted standards of self-esteem, like if you are a man, in any way superior, you have the right to dominate over your family, including your wife while the wife also has obligations to be laid on her husband, first by her father and then by her husband.

He stated that the result in traditional mediation would often include a solution that benefits the man. Another informant believed that a woman's feeling of lack of power and her fear of losing face, can stop her from going into a mediation process (2). Another one of the informants found it surprising that men and women were perceived differently after a divorce in Ethiopia (4). He described that women are judged, being referred to as a divorcee and will have a hard time to get a second chance, while the man does not face that kind of judgment or consequences.

Ethnicity. Several of the informants reflected on the impact a party's ethnicity status can have on the self-esteem and on the mediation process (1, 2, 3, 6). One of the informants explained that this status could be based on the historic background, their resources, relation to important powers and social relations of other ethnic groups (1). He gave the following example on how the ethnicity can influence the mediation process: "The Tribe X believes they are better than the Tribe Y. When they have some social conflict and they go to a third party. The Tribe X is most of the time acting with high self-confidence." He continued:

> It is not cast like that of Indians or some other communities, it is not cast, but it is an outlook, a kind of cultural outlook, so this does also have direct impact on that mediation. It is not an equal conflicting parties sitting together to come up with their interest, with their needs and to generate possible options that would help them for a positive existence in the future.

Losing face

The result showed that the fear of losing face was not only relevant in the mediation process itself but also in relation to the own group, the party. The fear of the future consequences and the fear of being perceived as a loser, were also identified as under categories linked to losing face.

All of the informants believed that losing face played an important role in the mediation

process. The risk of losing face did not only apply to the fear of losing face before the other party during the mediation negotiation, but seemed to go much deeper and involve many relational structures. It also seemed to be relevant on all levels of mediation with the exception of business conflicts. One of the informants described how he was using the "losing versus saving face" as a tool in the mediation process, that he by explaining to the parties the *new face,* which they would benefit from if they would let go of their old face, meaning that if they could make sacrifices and come to an agreement, they would be perceived as a *good guy* (2). This new face (good guy) would therefore replace the old lost face (loser) and the pride would still be intact. Another example of this came from another informant who was telling about the political crisis that developed during the election in Ethiopia in the year of 2005 (4). Many of the opposition party leaders were put in jail for three to four years. Finally a group of very famous people were formed and authorized as mediators. One of the mediators was the legendary athlete Haile Gebre Selassie. According to the informant the use of these famous mediators was a way for the opposition party leaders to take the necessary actions in order for the government to release them but without losing face.

Fear of losing face within the group. When parties are representing a group, the fear of losing respect among the group seems to have a great impact. One of the informants gives the following example (1):

> Say for example that I refuse to accept the mediation process, I might lose my job, I might lose my relation with these groups. Because if I lose that relation, if I lose that, if I lose that relation with that group, I lose again, I will be a loser. People don't need to be a loser. It is not about what is at stake now. Sometimes we might communicate that officially, formally but informally we might deal with it so deep that if I do this, I might get this, if I do this, I might loose this.

Fear of future consequences. Another informant explains it in this way: "Losing face is not only about the PR issue, it is also about losing ground, next time around, they are not going to be respected by others (2)." When I asked the informant whether he believed this was a likely consequence he confirmed this and meant it actually was a rational fear. The fear of what consequences losing face could result in, was also highlighted by the informant "If you are not able to save face with this one, the next time around you are also a loser, so people believe that they have to stand firm and strong. Because if you negotiate in pity matters with your neighbours, the other neighbour also comes and bullies you" (2). He continues by raising the following questions: "Do we give in to mediation? Is it our culture? Or are we rather fighters and also proud over our fighting tradition, history?"

Fear of being perceived as a loser. Several informants explained that parties could be viewed as losers only by accepting taking part in a mediation process (1, 2, 4, 5, 6). In many of the interviews, pride was high lightened as a crucial part of losing face. One informant explained what an important part pride and respect played in the Ethiopian culture (5). Several of the informants also meant that this was applicable when it came to parties involved in political conflicts as well as the government of Ethiopia (2, 4, 6). One of the informants said that a powerful government would not be interested to go into mediation and negotiate with a small political party (2). He continues by saying "Maybe the biggest war we had, we could have resolved it through mediation." According to him, the danger of losing face in international matters, could lead to increased invasion threats from other countries. This fear can be handled by the parties either by withdrawing from the mediation, distracting the process, trying to manipulate the process or standing firm in position, unwilling to compromise and to resolve the conflict.

Letting go

The informants were all of the opinion that the ability of letting go was vital for a successful mediation process and a mind-set that "the winner takes it all" was highlighted. The importance of finding the real source of the conflict in order for parties to let go, was identified as crucial for a successful mediation process and the moment when a party decides to let go of his or hers position was described as the most crucial moment in the whole process. One of the informants described the way he motivated parties to let go, in the following way (2): "The thing you are leaving is for your children, let go for them. This thing you are leaving is for peace, let go for your neighbour, community". He continued to explain the techniques he used in order for the partied to let go of demands, rejection, resistance and whatever can stand in the way for the conflict to be resolved.

> In my experience it helps much to bring everything out in the open because when people express their fears, their mistrust or their need, things like that, when you let them talk about it freely, they get relieved of their burden, of their tension. When they get relieved of that, they come back to their human potential, to think of another alternative, but the more they talk it out, the will come to realize, there is also another option and even they might understand the problem of the opposite party.

One of the informants said that the ability of letting go comes through experience, training and exposure among other things (3). Another informant brought up the long-term consequences of not letting go of a conflict, which he meant, would lead to new conflicts and feelings piling up and creating damage (4). He continued to state that the likelihood of a party letting something go, was strongly dependent on the source of the conflict as well as its level.

The winner takes it all. Another informant used the symbol of a pie when talking about the ability of letting go and the perception of the parties (2). He explained that the parties often viewed the pie as fixed, undividable, instead of seeing the possibility of dividing the pie into pieces. He also used the expression the *winner takes it all* to explain the mind-set of many conflicting parties. Furthermore he mentioned traditions, belief systems, values, habits, attitudes and perceptions as thing parties often were unwilling to let go of.

The real source of the conflict. Another informant brought up the importance of bringing out the true source of the conflict in order for the parties to let the source of conflict go and move on (5). As an example he used an expression in Amharic that was commonly used in the traditional mediation by elders in Ethiopia. The elders would in a family conflict tell the parties "stop, both of you" (ante tew, anchi tew) meaning that the elders will not deal with the real conflicting issue but rather work for the parties to forget about the conflict and move on, instead of dealing with it.

Crucial moment. One of the informants who had a lot of experience from mediating on international level, defined the moment when parties let go, as the *crucial moment* and continues to explain that there were a number of factors that play an important role in this process (6). He mentioned the benefits of the solution suggested as most important of all and stated that the answer to the question "what will I get in return for letting this go" is crucial. He also highlighted the power struggle that often takes place between parties. The one perceived to be the strongest party will be less likely to be willing to make compromises. He mentioned Israel and Palestine as an example where this was visible and he continued to point out the danger of a stronger party running over or excluding a weaker party. If this happens and the weaker party loses face, it can start losing control to the parliament of the street, young angry men and it can lose its grip of terrorists, according to the informant. He continued to explain that the line was very fine between using a weakness of the conflicting party and totally run them over. He said that if the line was crossed, the conflict would come back and explode once again. He concludes by saying that if the real source of the conflict was not solved, it would only be a temporary solution.

Mirroring

The result showed that mirroring was important in the mediation process and the following under categories were found: Walk in someone else´s shoes, the mediator as a mirror and Demonization.

One informant also believed that mirroring brings the source of the conflict to the

surface and that this facilitates listening (2). The listening would lead to something he referred to as a rational stage, were the parties would start to communicate and look for solutions. According to the informant the rational stage was defined by a desire to find a solution that would benefit both parties, a win-win solution.

> How do we become farmers without taking land away from the pastoralists and affecting their livelihood? How do we benefit together?"

He also brought in the pie again as a symbol of the endless solution possibilities in this world and he concludes with that this is the purpose of mediation and that mirroring is a important factor in this process.

One informant confirmed the importance of mirroring and stated the importance of words and language in high-level mediation process (6). He pointed out that the language used in mediation was a language of codes. The negotiations are held in a gentlemanly way and he describes the language as fictitious and stated that mirroring was present in the negotiation was an important factor when an agreement had been made and it was time to put it on paper.

Walk in someone else's shoes. One of the informants stated that he had experienced mirroring in all different levels of mediation and that it was, according to his understanding, a critical stage in the process (1). He explained it as a perspective exchange "means you as a party in conflict with me, try to go into my problem, my situation and try to understand my problem and I am doing the same thing on my side". In this context he also highlighted the expression *walk in someone else's shoes*. He explained that he found this particularly important in mediation of family conflict. Furthermore he empathized how the mirroring can bring parties to go to the root cause of the conflict and to understand the essence of the conflict and that a sustainable solution would not be far away. The informant concluded by saying that mirroring was about *what if* you were in the position of the other party.

The mediator as a mirror. One of the other informants believed in mirroring as a good strategy and saw the mediator serving as a mirror at least in the initial state (2). He envisioned the mediator as a mirror standing in-between the conflicting parties, which could facilitate communication. "If it is a one-way mirror it will reflect back and it will probably destroy the eyes of the party. The mirror has to be a both-way mirror to reflect the feeling of both".

Demonization. Another of the informants understood mirroring like the way the parties perceive each other (3). He used the expression of the parties demonizing each other and believed that the severity did depend on the situation and level of the conflict.

Before three to five years ago two conflicting parties X and Y used to be friends, now they are enemies because something happened through the conflict so that was one of the interesting dynamics of conflict. It makes even your brother as your enemy and if you see hostility in your conflicting party, the human reaction was to avoid or to kill or to dismiss your enemies.

Discussion

The result of this research confirmed previous research, as it was clear that self-esteem was an important part of mediation (Brown, 1968; Cloke, 2008; Piluttla & Murnighan, 1996; Stone et al., 1999; White et al., 2004). The question raised weather there is such thing as a collective self-esteem was discussed and this was interesting considering that Ethiopia has a collective culture (Girma, 2012). One informant reflected over how diffuse he perceived the boundaries between the individual and the group. He gave the example of how an individual, who has made a political or a military career in a country like Ethiopia, could get so tied up by the system that a collective self-esteem is being formed. Another informant was doubtful weather it was even possible to talk about a group's self-esteem. I believe this is an interesting question and weather or not there is such thing as a collective self-esteem, I would like to state that the collective culture in Ethiopia does have an immense impact on individual´s self-esteem. According to Bader (2011), the self needs to be understood within the context of human interaction according to the intersubjective perspective. The individual self-esteem should according to my understanding therefore be understood in the light of pride, social status, gender and ethnic groups, as these play an important part in human interaction in Ethiopia.

To reconnect this discussion to the role self-esteem plays in mediation, I would like to point to what was said about the negative consequences of losing face, not only before the other party but also before the party´s own group. Mahler (1979) suggested that the sense of identity is forged already in the early stage of a conflict and that these conflicts affected our personhood. This would explain why we experience conflicts as an implication of the value and at times even the existence of self. One informant explain that the fear of losing face before your own group, could result in so much more than only losing face, like for example losing your position in the group/society, losing respect or losing your job.

According to me that shows that there can be so much more at stake during the mediation, than what is obvious in the conflict itself. The parties might therefore stand firm in their position for reasons that has nothing to do with the conflict itself but perhaps for reasons like the fear of loosing their jobs or position in the society. From my perspective this is something to consider when studying and working with mediation in Ethiopia.

The result showed that some of the informants equated or associated self-esteem with pride or status. This might be a result of the importance of pride in the Ethiopian culture, meaning it might be so intertwined with the common understanding of self-esteem, which they blend together. One of the informants even clearly stated that he viewed self-esteem and pride as the same thing in the context of psychology in mediation.

According to Gooty et al. (2014, p. 398) pride is about "taking credit for an achievement and a feeling of superiority". This quotation became very interesting in relation to the reasons for conflicts that the informants mentioned as the most common ones. When conflicts were rooted in different ethnic groups, religious or denominational affiliation, I found it likely that a pride of belonging to these groups would be an important part of the parties' identity. The consequences of a wounded pride can from my perspective therefore affect the mediation in a very dramatic way.

Piluttla & Murnighan (1996, p. 209) described wounded pride as something that develops when another person´s actions violates an individuals sense of self-worth, which leads to a personal inwardly focused feeling. This can lead to a questioning of the self-image and create feelings of hurt when an individual feel that she is not given the dignity she deserves. So if an individual representing for example an ethnic group and the feeling of belonging to that group is a big part of that individual´s identity, then it only seems natural to me that a wounded pride can violate the sense of self-worth for that person. I therefore claim that pride is an important part of the self-esteem of a party and that it will affect the mediation process.

According to Fonagy et al. (2004) was the reflective function of great importance during interpersonal conflicts, which required individuals to reconcile their own legitimate claims with concern for the other. As a person develops a healthy sense of self, they at the same time also develop reality-based, objective and self-reflective sense of self- and-others according to Bader (2011). This is what Fonagy and his colleagues refer to as "reflective functioning" (Fonagy et al., 2004), what Mahler calls it "self and object constancy" and what many intersubjective theorists describes as the capacity for mutual recognition (Benjamin, 2004; Mitchell, 2000). I would like to draw parallels to what in the result was referred to as rational self-esteem, where a party would have a positive attitude, not wanting to hurt others. From my understanding this is also linked to the relationship between respect and self-esteem, as one of the informants defined self-esteem as respecting yourself.

According to Fonagy et al. (2004) and Cloke (2008) the capacity of mutual recognition is of great importance during conflicts. This would mean that people who were able to

function with adequate objectivity, not only about themselves but also about others, would perform better in mediation (McGuigan & Popp, 2007). The inability to do so could maybe apply to what one of the informants referred to as irrational self-esteem where a party would consider him or herself better than the conflicting party and be unwilling to put pride and ego aside in order to find a mutual resolution of the conflict.

Bader (2011) states that the mediator's ability to deal with issues of identity and self is one of the most important factors for a successful mediation. From the result I draw the conclusion that this research confirms the statement made by Bader, as self-esteem according to all of the informants was of great importance in the mediation process.

Bader (2011) describes the need to "save face" as parties taking the conflict personally, leading to the feeling that the outcome of the mediation reflects who they are. The result of the study showed that the need to save face was of great importance in the mediation process. According to Ting-Toomey (1988, cited in Van Ginkel, 2004) is face-giving more common in cultures such as those in Asia, Africa and Latin America that are predominantly collectivistic. In these cultures there is primarily a focus on preserving the social status of the in-group and then face-giving can be a way to support members of the group (Van Ginkel 2004). Several of the informants mentioned the fear of losing face, not only before the other party but also losing face before their own group and in the community and as mentioned earlier, this could seem like an even worse scenario. It seems like it could be hard for an individual representing a group, to evaluate the consequences of his or her stand and decisions during the negotiation and according to me, this could be assumed to create insecurity, fear and anxiety. Therefore it seemed like the person representing a group, has a lot at stake and might lose respect and position within the group or community if the mediation process is perceived as a failure.

If a person´s face is threated during a negotiation, it can redirect a person´s balance of behavior away from the cooperation and towards competition (White et al., 2004, cites Deutsch, 1961, p. 897). I would like to reflect on this in the light of the wars Ethiopia has been involved in. One of the informants said that a powerful government would not be interested to go into mediation and negotiate with a small political party out of fear of losing face. He continues by saying that he believed that Ethiopia could have resolved one of the biggest war they had, through mediation. According to him, the danger of losing face in international matters could lead to increased invasion threats from other countries. It therefore seems like the fear of losing face or the behaviour of competing, could be influential even in high level conflicts.

According to Van Ginkel (2004, p. 477) face plays two important roles in mediation. First he states that the underlying interest or at times even the primary interest of the conflicting parties, can be to save face. He also states that face plays an important part in the process when it comes to interaction among parties. One informant mentioned a fear in conflict that might stem from an underlying interest of saving face, meaning that saving face is the primary interest.

The informants did all state that the ability of letting go was an important factor in the mediation process and Bader (2011) has come to the same conclusion. After analyzing the informants´ responses, the ability of letting go seemed to be related to stubbornness and pride. As I could not find any research focusing on the ability of letting go, it was difficult to have a deeper discussion on the impact it has on the mediation process.

Gallese et al. (2007) presented evidence that indicated the existence of mirror neuronal systems that was used to "read" other people´s intentions, emotions, somatic sensations and linguistic expressions. They claimed that this showed that these neuronal mechanisms trigger an automatic and unconscious "embodied simulation" of other people´s sensations, emotions, actions and intentions. They further claimed that this embodied simulation forms the fundamental functional mechanism for empathy and the ability to understand another person´s mind. The ability of understanding the other party´s mind came up in the interviews and the saying *walk in someone else´s shoes* was used. From my point of view it therefore looks like the "reading" of the other party can lead to empathy and willingness to communicate in order to find solution. One informant pointed out that mirroring facilitates listening and to me it seemed likely that this gives the other party an opportunity to share his or her perspective and that it would benefit the mirroring, as there would be room for reading the other party´s intentions, emotions, somatic sensations and linguistic expressions.

One of the informants viewed mirroring as the way the parties perceived each other and mentioned that parties tend to demonize each other. Bader (2011) stated that people in conflict often tend to view the other party in a very negative way and it is therefore of great importance for a mediator to understand and learn to encourage the self and object consistency. According to Mahler (1979) is it a sign of maturity to be able to hold a stable, mature view of oneself, as well as the ability of seeing others as people with both negative and positive characteristics. The work by Bader (2011) confirmed the problem of demonization that one informant mentioned and Mahler (1979) believed that the inability of seeing others as people with both negative and positive characteristics, is a sign of immaturity which could shed some light of the reasons parties demonize each other.

Practical implications.

The result of this research can hopefully be of use for individuals working in the field of conflict resolution, especially in Ethiopia. The factors that have been identified can help conflicting parties to become more aware of the factors nvolved and how they can impact the mediation process. If this would lead to a greater understanding and self-reflection for a party, this could hopefully benefit the process and have a positive impact on the process. The aim with this research was also that mediators would benefit from the findings and be able to transform the findings into knowledge that can be used during future mediations.

Methodological discussion

The focus of this research was to study mediation in Ethiopia as I had been told that this form of conflict resolution method was commonly practiced in the country. The first interview was held with an elder in a local society and at the end of the interview it became clear that what the people I talked to about the culture of mediation in Ethiopia, referred to as mediation in reality turned out to be arbitration. This would mean that elders, authorized as mediators, listened to the parties to then make a decision of a solution to solve the conflict. The way the term mediation was being used in Ethiopia was therefore in my opinion, a source of confusion and misunderstanding. I did however learn that facilitating mediation did happen on different levels in Ethiopia, which gave me the opportunity to collect the data needed for the research. Due to the short time this had not been possible without my widespread network I had from my previous years in the country. My seven years in the country had also lead to a cultural understanding which also was a great advantage during the research.

The fact that I was a foreigner, studying something so intertwined with the Ethiopian culture as psychological factors, has also to be considered to have an impact. Whether that impact was positive or negative or both, can only been conjectured but it was likely that it had some kind of impact.

The interviews with the Ethiopian informants were held in English and although all of them spoke English it was not their mother tongue, which might have caused some language barriers. I found it likely that it might have had a negative impact on the result as the informants may have felt limited in their linguistic expressions. As I however do speak a bit of Amharic, the informants could express cultural sayings in Amharic and use some words in the language that could not easily be translated to English easily and I believed this to be a great advantage.

My knowledge about the Ethiopian culture, traditions, ethic tribes, conflicts and geography of the country, was also a great advantage as I more easily could understand the context the mediators were functioning in and understand the background of what they shared. One example was when one informant shared the conflict that arose after the election in 2005 and the mediation that took place in order to get the opposition party members realized from prison. As I moved to Ethiopia during this the time, I could more easily understand the context in comparison to someone who had never experienced the conflict. Living in Ethiopia has also been giving me a deeper understanding of the role of pride, self-esteem and of how gender, social prestige and ethnicity are complex but important parts of the Ethiopian culture and I believe this also had a positive impact on the research.

Due to the short time available for the collection of data, some of the informants squeezed in the interviews in their already busy schedule and this could have affected the study in a negative way. The topic did for one of the informants appear to be sensitive and the location of the interview (his offices) could therefore also have had a negative impact on the result, as he might have felt uncomfortable sharing his perspective freely. Some of the informants did also share offices with colleagues and during some interviews the colleagues were present during part of the interviews, which might have had some impact on the freedom the informants felt in giving their answers. During the telephone interview the line disconnected a few times and this might also have affected the interview.

The fact that a semi-structured method was used, lead to that some factors already from the start was highlighted. This might have influenced the result as the informants did not get a chance to freely reflect on what psychological factors they believed were present and important in the mediation process. It might have been a good idea to first let the informants brainstorm on what psychological factors they believed were important.

As I during some interviews got the impression that we did not have a common understanding of the psychological terms used, I draw the conclusion that this might have had a negative impact on the result. The informants did not have any previous academic experience in psychology and therefore some terms such as mirroring, were not familiar to all of the informants or the understanding might have diffed from the way it was used in the study.

Although the psychological factors in themselves might not be considered a sensitive topic, it might be perceived that way when the informants talked about mediation related to the government. It was not improbable that some of the informants might have felt uncomfortable criticizing the government. I did however find that the informants were

speaking freely and did not seem to feel restricted by fear when giving their answers. This was most probably contributed to the protection of anonymity the informants were given.

The Ethiopian informants were all middle aged men with professional experience in mediation and the result might had differed if the participants would have had a greater variety in age and only experience in mediation in family conflicts. The facilitating mediation is to be considered something new in Ethiopia and although it is developing, arbitration as a form of conflict resolution method is still the most known and common. It was therefore challenging to find people in Ethiopia with experience in facilitating mediation and it was hard to estimate how common it is. The informants did all have what according to me must be considered to have high positions within their organizations and ministries and they had higher education, which to me makes sense as mediation is serious business and especially on higher level can be of extremely high importance, causing great damage if it fails. This is also something to take into consideration when discussing the method as I think their academic background, had a positive impact on the research as they had an outside world knowledge and experience in reflecting.

External reliability. The objective of this study was to study the psychological factors involved in the mediation process and in what way they affected the mediation. The factors presented in the result were confirmed to be important by all of the six informants, which imply that the findings have a high external reliability. It is however well-known that "the question gives the answer" and this should be taken into consideration as the study has been based on a semi-structured interviews, which means that the study was somehow already directed into the factors that was emphasized. Therefore it could be other factors involved in the mediation process that were not mentioned in this study. This study did therefore not state that the mentioned factors were the only factors involved in the mediation.

Internal reliability. The questions used in the semi-structured interviews were formulated on the basis of previous research in the field and other related studies. From that perspective, I believe the internal reliability could be considered high but the cultural context needs to be taken into consideration as it at several occasions became obvious that some of the informants were unfamiliar with some of the psychological terms used. The understanding of a psychological term can also differ as a result of an individual´s understanding but also from different cultural understanding. One example was the difference between self-esteem, self-image and pride. Those three terms were by some informants used in ambiguous and synonymous way. This was not strange considering the fact that there is only one word in the language of Amharic used for both self-esteem and self-image. In the Ethiopian culture, it

from my perspective seems like pride and self-esteem appeared to be so closely related that it for some informants was used synonymously. This has to be taken into consideration in relation to the internal reliability.

External validity. This study took a very specific stand as it focused on mediation in Ethiopia and it was in my opinion therefore difficult to assess in what extent the result can be generalized in other cultural contexts. The study also focused on what was referred to as facilitating mediation, not studying the traditional mediation, which according to me is not really mediation but arbitration. It was therefore important to have a clear understanding of the difference about these two as the Ethiopian society usually does not distinguish between them. Having said that, I believe that the result from the research does have a high external validity in relation to facilitating mediation in Ethiopia and that the finding can be generalized.

Internal validity. The informants have had several years of experience in the field of mediation and also had experience from mediation in different levels of conflicts, which would be expected to have a positive impact on the internal validity. The interview questions have in my opinion been clear in order to avoid misunderstandings and form a common ground of understanding of the subject explored. My conclusion was therefore that the result of the research in a high extent does represent the reality of mediation in Ethiopia.

Unexpected findings

This research did confirm much of what previous research on the subject had presented and no unexpected findings were found but this research appears to be the first one of its kind, focusing on the psychological factors involved in mediation in Ethiopia. The ground was therefore unexplored, leading to a lot of new insight about the psychology of mediation in Ethiopia as it shed light over how the Ethiopian culture influence the mediation process. This was most obvious in regard to the self-esteem, where social prestige, gender and ethnicity turned out to closely related to it.

Future research

This research gave several ideas of topics that would be of great interest to study. As mentioned earlier it seems like not much, if any, research has been made in the same area as this paper and that makes it even more inviting to study it closer. During this research I have found the several areas of research that could be possible inspiration for future research. The issue whether there is such thing as a collective self-esteem was brought up and it would be

interesting to study this closer, especially in a collectivistic culture where the group is of such a high importance. It would also be interesting to look closer at the group dynamic in a party going through a mediation process. How does an individual representing a group, perceive the process and the role and what coping strategies do they use to handle the pressure from the group? Another interesting question to study could be: Are individuals with high self-esteem less susceptible of having conflicts? This would be interesting as self-esteem and conflict seem to be closely linked, judging from the result of this study.

The role of pride in the Ethiopian culture has been emphasized and therefore I believe it would be interesting to raise a question like: what does the relationship between self-esteem and pride look like in Ethiopia?

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Interview guide

Sex:

Age:

Years of experience in mediation:

Level of mediation:

-Could you tell me how you started mediating?

-What are the most common reasons for conflicts that you have been mediating in?

-What are the greatest challenges in mediation?

-Do you remember a mediation that was a great success? Why do you think it was so successful?

-What makes someone a good mediator?

-Can you describe the role the parties' self-esteem plays in the mediation process?

-In what way could the mediator's self-esteem play a part in the mediation process?

-In what way can a parties' need to "save face" play a conclusive role in the mediation process?

-Can you describe the emotions that usually develop during the mediation process? Do you have a strategy to handle them?

-Research has found that the ability of "letting go" is critical in the aspect of psychology when it comes to mediation. What are your thoughts on this? Is this something you can confirm is a challenge in mediation and if so, how do you handle it?

-In what way do you think the mediators own identity can influence the mediation process?

-In what way can parties *mirroring* each other, can you describe what this look like and what influence you think it has.