



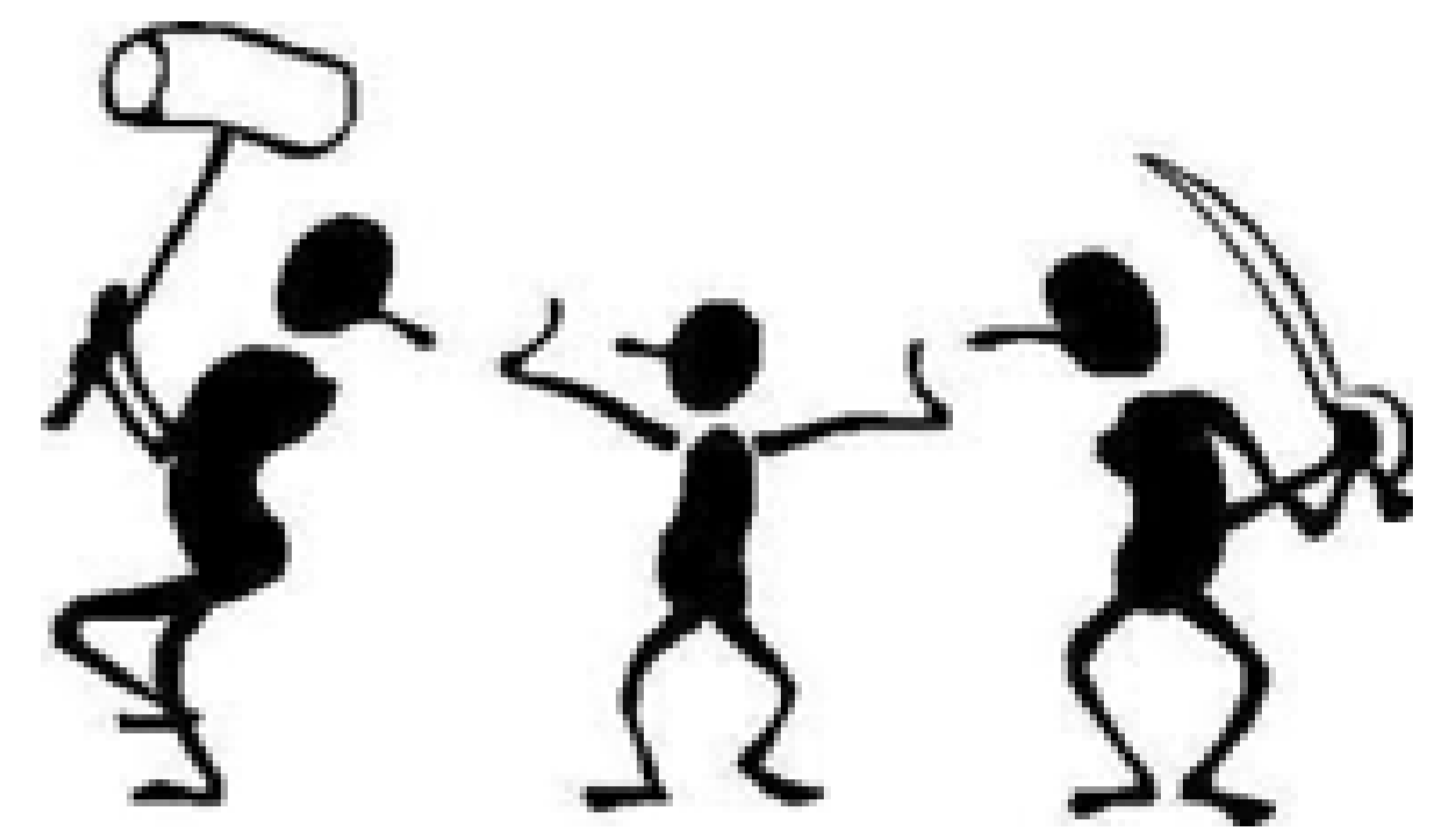
Online Conflict Resolution Processes - Analysis of Online Negotiation and Online Mediation

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Introduction

Conflicts are part of everyday life – in a business as well as a private context. While several approaches to solve conflicts are available, only two approaches leave full control over the outcome to the parties at conflict, i.e. negotiations and mediation. While in negotiations disputants try to resolve the conflict on their own, in mediations a neutral third party supports the conflict resolution process without imposing an agreement. In our increasingly globalized world, conflicts are often routed and handled in the virtual world. While in face-to-face discussion mediators add value to the conflict resolution process, it's not clear whether the reduced transmitted cues, i.e. lack of body language or tone of voice, in text-based online communication challenges the mediator's ability to resolve a conflict.



Hypotheses

To investigate, whether a mediator is able to substantially shape an electronic conflict resolution process, the following hypotheses regarding socio-psychological dimensions are formulated:

H1: Parties supported by a mediator express a higher self-satisfaction (SatSelf).

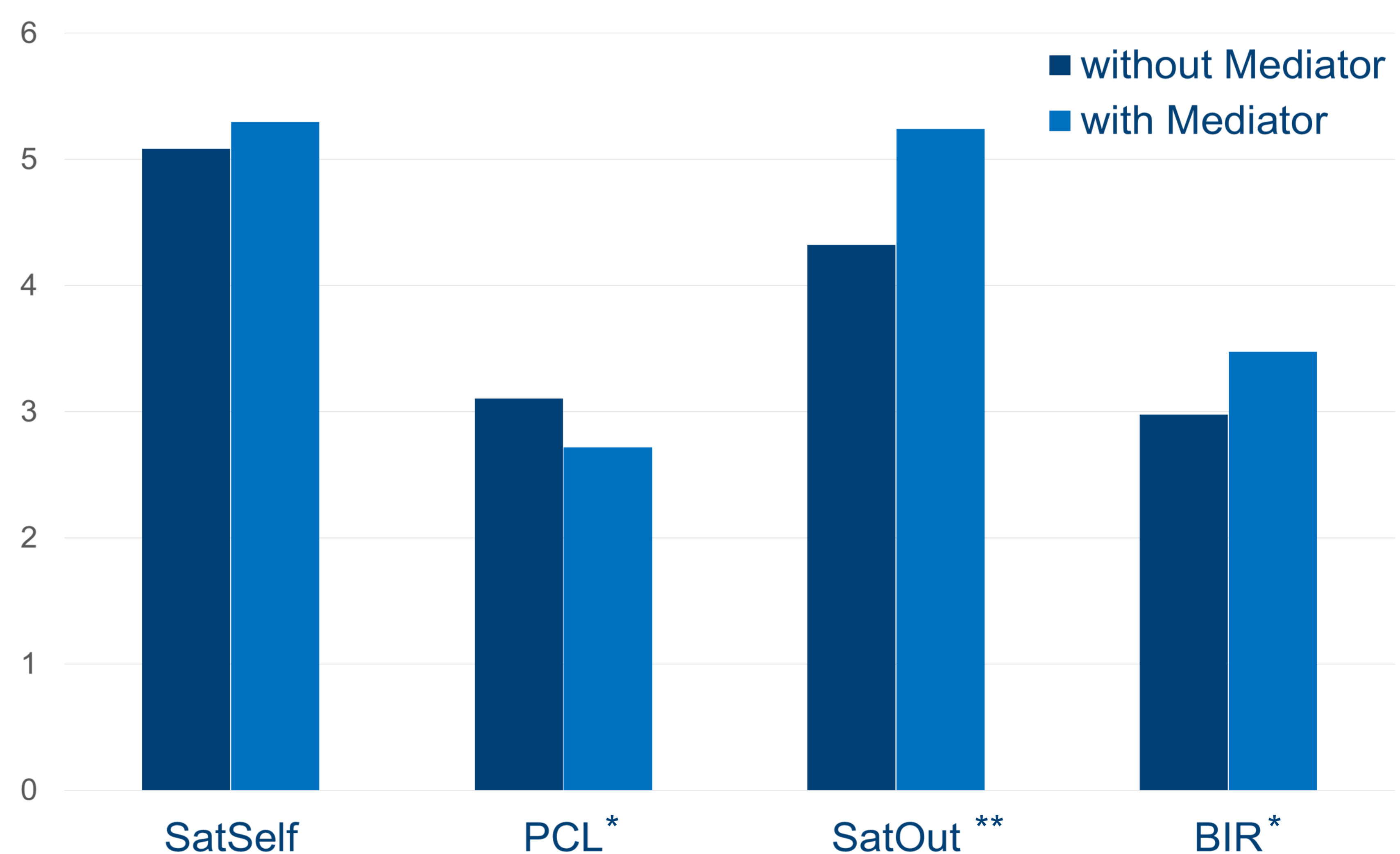
H2: Parties supported by a mediator experience a lower conflict level (PCL).

H3: Parties supported by a mediator express a higher satisfaction with the outcome (SatOut).

H4: parties supported by a mediator are more likely to use this conflict resolution method again for future disputes (BIR).

Empirical Analysis

The graphs below display the arithmetic means of the dimensions of interest regarding the conflict resolution method. While the scale for PCL and BIR is between 1 and 5 (1=low, 5=high), SatSelf and SatOut are scaled between 1 and 7 (1=low, 7=high).



* p < 0.05
** p < 0.01

Implications

Results demonstrate that indeed a mediator is able to create a more benevolent conflict resolution process. Parties supported by a mediator experienced a lower conflict level, expressed a higher satisfaction with the outcome and are more likely to use this conflict resolution method again for future disputes. Only satisfaction with the own performance is not influenced by the choice of the conflict resolution method.

In total, a mediator adds substantial value to the online dispute resolution process. The mediator smoothes the conflict resolution process reflected in several social-psychological dimensions and therefore assures that parties are more likely to stick to their reached agreements.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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