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**THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON
CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN SYRIA**

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The Impact of Technology on Conflict Resolution in Syria

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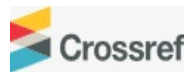
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Abstract

Purpose: The study sought to analyze the impact of technology on conflict resolution in Syria

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Findings: he results show that technology has had a profound impact on the way conflicts are managed, negotiated and ultimately resolved. Technology has enabled conflict resolution practitioners to access a wide range of resources and data, as well as to develop new strategies, tactics and tools to help them resolve conflicts more effectively. Technology has had a significant impact on the effort to bring about a resolution to the Syrian conflict. It has enabled the UN and other organizations to monitor the delivery of aid and to ensure that it is reaching those who need it most. Ultimately, technology has enabled the international community to engage more effectively with the conflict and to provide the necessary support and assistance to those affected by it.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practices and Policies: The communication theory and the resource mobilization theory may be used to anchor future studies in the conflict management sector. The study results will also benefit other stakeholders such as the policy makers as well as researchers and scholars from different parts of the world. The top management of conflict management sector in the country will also use the study findings to improve technology performance in all their activities and programs. The study recommends that the adoption of effective conflict management policies in the technology sector will help to improve efficiency in their major operations and activities.

Keywords: *Impact, Technology, Conflict resolution, Syria*

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INTRODUCTION.

Conflict resolution is a complex process that involves the use of power and authority to reach a mutually acceptable outcome. The process of conflict resolution involves a variety of stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society, businesses and individuals. In recent years, technology has had a profound impact on the way conflicts are managed, negotiated, and ultimately resolved. Technology is viewed as a cultural process that reflects societal values and societal transformation (Nesterkin, 2016). The successive evolution in communication technology has significantly altered the conduct of conflicts, warfare and conflict resolution in the world today. Similarly, there is millions of global news networks that broadcast live from all corners of the world and via the internet, providing immediate access to unfolding events and under certain conditions influencing the way those events develop and end. The new media is a powerful tool of communication in peace and conflict situations. It is used positively to promote peace and resolve conflicts at appropriate times. Conversely, it is used negatively to initiate, escalate and sustain conflict covertly and overtly. Technology has become an integral part of conflict resolution as it has enabled various stakeholders to access and share information, communicate more effectively, and collaborate more closely (Talabi, 2022). Technology has enabled conflict resolution practitioners to access data from a variety of sources, including public records, government documents and social media. This data is used to inform decisions and inform strategies for resolving conflicts.

Technology enabled the development of new tools and techniques for resolving conflicts, such as online dispute resolution, artificial intelligence and virtual reality simulations Technology has also enabled the development of new tools and techniques to facilitate the process of conflict resolution. This includes decision-making tools such as collaborative decision-making platforms and software, as well as negotiation support tools such as automated negotiation systems (Zeitoff, 2017). These tools help parties to negotiate more effectively, reach better outcomes, and reduce the time it takes to reach a resolution. The conflict has caused extensive destruction and displacement, with more than half of the Syrian population now living in poverty. The United Nations (UN) estimates that more than 13 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, of which 6.6 million are internally displaced. The conflict led to a significant humanitarian crisis, with an estimated 4.8 million refugees now living in neighbouring countries. The Syrian conflict has been ongoing for over eight years and the death toll is estimated to be around 500,000 people (Almasri, 2018). It remains a complex and multifaceted civil war, with multiple actors involved in a fight for power and control of the country. The conflict has been fueled by sectarian divisions, regional power struggles and foreign interventions from both regional and global actors. Despite numerous attempts at a diplomatic resolution, the conflict still rages on and the humanitarian crisis in the country continues to worsen.

Technology has been identified as a potential tool for conflict resolution and a way to improve the humanitarian situation in the country. The use of technology as a tool to facilitate dialogue emerged as a key element in the effort to bring about a resolution to the Syrian conflict (Leander, 2018). Technology has been used to bridge the physical and geographical gaps between the various actors involved in the conflict, enabling them to communicate and negotiate in real time. For example,

the United Nations has been using video conferencing and other online tools to engage with the Syrian government and the opposition. This has enabled the UN to facilitate discussions between the two sides and maintain a dialogue on a range of issues, including the humanitarian crisis in the country (Almasri, 2019). The use of technology has also enabled the UN to hold virtual meetings with Syrian civil society groups and refugees, giving them a platform to voice their concerns and engage in meaningful dialogue with the international community. This has been particularly important in providing a space for those affected by the conflict to express their needs and wants, and to be heard by the international community. Technology has been used to create virtual networks of communication between the various actors in the conflict. This has enabled them to share information and coordinate their activities, as well as to build relationships and trust. For example, the Syrian Network for Human Rights has been using social media to share information and coordinate its activities. This has been critical in providing accurate and up-to-date information on the conflict and in connecting the various actors involved in it (Corbane, 2016). Technology has also been used to improve access to aid and other forms of assistance for those affected by the conflict in Syria.

The UN has been using technology to deliver aid to hard-to-reach areas, using drones and other unmanned aerial vehicles to deliver food, water, and medical supplies. The use of technology has enabled aid to be delivered more quickly and efficiently, ensuring that it reaches those who need it most. In addition, technology has been used to monitor the distribution of aid and to ensure that it is reaching those who need it. For example, the World Food Programmes has been using drones to monitor the delivery of food aid in Syria (Alnafrah,2020) This has enabled the organization to track the progress of the aid and to identify any potential problems with its distribution. Technology has also been used to provide access to information for those affected by the conflict in Syria. For example, the UN has been using mobile phones to provide accurate and up-to-date information on the conflict and its impact on the civilian population. This has enabled those affected by the conflict to stay informed and be aware of the latest developments in the conflict. In addition, technology has been used to provide access to educational resources for those affected by the conflict. For example, the UN has been using online platforms to deliver educational materials to Syrian refugees. This has enabled them to continue their education even while they are displaced and has helped to ensure that their educational needs are met.

Statement of the Problem

The conflict in Syria has been ongoing for over a decade and there is still no end in sight. The complexity of the conflict and the intractability of the issues have made it difficult for existing conflict resolution mechanisms to resolve the conflict. The current situation in Syria is a result of the failure of existing conflict resolution mechanisms to address the underlying causes of the conflict. Moreover, the conflict has been characterized by a lack of trust between the various stakeholders. This has made it difficult for the stakeholders to engage in dialogue and to develop solutions to the conflict. Furthermore, the lack of trust between the stakeholders has made it difficult for them to collaborate and to develop new strategies for peace. This paper seeks to explain how technology has led to increase of conflict in Syria at the same it has been used in reducing conflicts by stakeholders. The lack of access to technology in Syria has also been a major

hindrance to the conflict resolution process. Technology can be used to facilitate the exchange of information between stakeholders and to facilitate the development of new strategies for peace. However, in Syria, access to technology is limited due to the destruction of infrastructure and the ongoing conflict. Furthermore, the use of technology in Syria is highly regulated. This has limited the ability of stakeholders to access and use the technology. Furthermore, the use of technology in Syria is highly regulated and monitored by the government, which limits the ability of stakeholders to access and use the technology.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study will benefit from the communication theory which was proposed by Marshall McLuhan (1964) and resource mobilization theory by John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (1977).

The Communication Theory

The communication theory suggests that technology can be used to enhance the communication process between parties involved in a conflict. This theory is based on the notion that the use of technology can create an environment which is conducive for constructive conversations between conflicting parties (Nagy, 2015). Technology can be used to facilitate the exchange of ideas, feelings, and opinions in a way which is not limited by physical distance and time. The use of technology may also increase mutual understanding, reduce misunderstandings, and help to identify potential solutions that can be mutually beneficial. The communication theory is particularly useful for resolving conflicts that involve two or more parties who are geographically separated, as it allows for a more efficient exchange of ideas and opinions. Additionally, technology can be used to bridge cultural differences, allowing for a better understanding of different perspectives and interests (Roh, 2014). For example, video conferencing can be used to bring together representatives from different countries and cultures, allowing them to discuss their differences and find common ground. Communication theory is also useful for resolving conflicts that involve large numbers of people, as it allows for a much faster exchange of information and ideas and reduces the chances of communication breakdown.

The Resource Mobilization Theory

The resource mobilization theory suggests that technology can be used to mobilize resources to help resolve conflicts. This theory is based on the notion that technology can be used to access resources which can then be used to facilitate resolution of conflict. Technology can be used to access information and data which can help to identify potential solutions and strategies (Edwards, 2014). Additionally, technology can be used to access financial resources, legal resources and other resources which can be used to facilitate resolution of conflict. For example, technology can be used to access financial resources which can be used to fund conflict resolution efforts (Kohl, 2014). Additionally, technology can be used to access legal resources which can be used to help resolve conflicts in a more efficient and effective manner. Furthermore, technology can be used to access other resources such as experts and consultants which can help to facilitate the resolution of conflict.

Empirical Review

Felix (2021) tested the effectiveness of a music-based counselling intervention that was digitally recorded on 470 herdsmen in Nigeria. The study was a quasi-experiment with the questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The result of the study showed that the intervention was effective because respondents in the treatment group scored higher regarding the acceptance of ranching, had more positive intention towards cattle ranching, and more readiness to address challenges that come with cattle ranching than their counterparts in the control group.

Hecheng (2020) verified whether digital transformation strategy (DTS) could improve the organizational performance and provide a comprehensive analysis for enterprises on the necessity of implementing digital transformation in the context of China. An empirical investigation was used to collect a large sample data of Chinese enterprises' digital transformation. A multiple linear regression analysis with SPSS was used to test the proposed hypotheses such as the inverted U-shaped moderating effect of the cognitive conflict. Findings indicated that the DTS has a positive relationship on the short- and long-term financial performance. Moreover, this relationship was moderated by cognitive conflict such that the relationship between DTS and short-term financial performance could be further enhanced under the moderate cognitive conflict; however, the relationship between DTS and long-term financial performance was considerably influenced for higher cognitive conflict.

Eymoi (2020) explored how the mobile phone technology contributed in resolving communal conflicts in Mandera County, Kenya. This study adopted a descriptive survey. Primary data was derived from questionnaires formulated to target employees in ICT and security department. The data analysis included qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data was summarized and categorized according to common themes and was presented using frequency distribution tables, graphs and charts. The results confirmed that short message service, social media platform, instant messaging applications, and video conferencing play a role in resolving communal conflicts in Mandera County. The study concludes that Short Message Service, Social Media Platforms and Instant Messaging Applications can be used conflict such as communal conflicts.

Mehmet (2017) examined the attitudes of headmasters in conflict management process within the school culture. The study had qualitative nature through the interviews with 76 teachers on the leadership and conflict management strategies of the headmasters. The findings proved the merits of information technology in conflict management in schools. Being involved in a collaborative dialogue provides valuable opportunities for a bridge on communication, negotiation for personal and professional development as regards to the motivation and productivity in school context.

Dmitriy (2016) examined how team collaboration and goal setting mediate the effects of team relationship conflict and conflict management on team performance. Primary data were collected from students who worked in teams to design functional information systems (IS). The data were then analyzed using structural equations modeling (SEM). Full results supported a partial mediation model in which 60% of the total effect of relationship conflict and 80% of the total effect of conflict management on team performance are carried through team collaboration and goal setting.

Odera (2015) evaluated the actual role the radio played in propagating hate speech and to suggest effective strategies that the radio could employ to mitigate hate speech. Data for this study was obtained from secondary sources. This was descriptive contained in notes form. Guided by the objectives and premises of the study, the data was arranged according to the major themes. Findings from this study confirmed the involvement of media in exacerbating conflict. Radio in conflicts, i.e. Rwanda genocide and Kenya post-election violence, took the leading role because it has a wider listenership compared to television viewership and newspaper readership. At the height of the Conflict in 1994 Rwanda genocide and the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya, the media was distracted from pro-peace analysis in their coverage.

Shitemi (2015) investigated the role of the Kenyan media during the Tana Delta Conflict and to assess the impact of the media reports on the Tana delta conflict. Questionnaires were used for data collection using both structured and unstructured questions. Personal interviews were also used to get in-depth data. The researcher analyzed the data and generated findings which demonstrated that media does have a role in conflict situations. Data collected illustrated that media has a role in framing conflicts depending on how it reports on them. It also has a role in escalating conflict if it does not report on it informatively. The media has a critical role in providing balanced reporting through good investigative journalism. Peace building and the use of community and vernacular radio stations are tools that can be used during conflict situation to promote peace and tranquility

Larama (2014) established the influence of social media during and after the conflict in Maghreb Countries in North Africa. The study utilized secondary data by intensively collecting, reviewing and analyzing published texts from books, internet, magazines, journals, newspaper articles, periodicals and any other reliable information to ascertain the role social media played during the height of conflict in the Maghreb countries in North Africa. The study established that the borderless social media is a very critical tool to organize and mobilize movements and protests even from the Diaspora more especially because it is real time. Social media was very key in providing leadership and managerial infrastructure during the crisis besides creating awareness of the happenings both locally and internationally.

Maundu (2014) investigated to what extent is the reporting conflict sensitive and what are the factors influenced conflict sensitive reporting. The study targeted the two main daily newspapers, The Daily Nation, and The East African Standard. A purposive survey was used to select a representation of variables from the two main daily newspapers. The study concluded that through its dissemination withholding and manipulation of information media represents a powerful weapon during conflict. In situations of violent conflict or high tensions such as the Tana delta clashes, the print media should not just be a mere reflection of what is happening on the surface but rather give possible solutions on how to end the conflict.

Odero (2013) evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of social media as a tool for conflict prevention and peace building and to analyze the contribution of regulatory mechanism of social media in promoting peace building. The research study covered four locations in Nairobi's Eastland's areas; Dandora ward three, Dandora ward Four, Kariobangi North and Mathare Mabatini. The researcher used questionnaires, key informant interview and focus group

discussions to collect data. The study found out that over 80 percent of the respondents were on social media. Majority of the respondents had a circle of social media friends of about 101-1000. The study also established that mainstream media (televisions and newspapers) was used by respondents to complement social media in giving political updates. The study revealed that government regulation of social media would result into the users mostly using it for social reasons. The study also showed that social media is still an unpopular tool for early warning and for reporting violence.

Magwana (2013) assessed the Media and Ethnic Conflict Management by looking at various ways through which the media have been abused which include; through blog sites, hate speech messages and incitement. The study used a descriptive design approach. The target population in this study was Nation Media group departments. The data collection instrument used was self-administered questionnaire. The findings indicated that 66.6 % of the respondents trust blogs sites, 68.2% of the respondents felt that hate speech is wide spread among Kenyans and 68.1% of the respondents indicate that incitement is rampant in the media fraternity which therefore affect conflict management

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a desktop methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library

RESULTS

The results were grouped into various research gap categories namely as conceptual, methodological and geographical gap.

Conceptual Gaps

Studies by Felix (2021), Hecheng and Eymoi (2020), Mehmet (2017), Dmitriy and Odera (2016), Shitemi (2015), Larama and Maundu (2014), Odera and Magwana (2013) had conceptual framework gap in addition, all the mentioned studies did not establish the challenges of technology on conflict resolution. The studies did not outline the challenges in a clear manner. Therefore, the current study seeks to address these conceptual gaps

Geographical Gap

Studies by Felix (2021), Hecheng and Eymoi (2020), Mehmet (2017), Dmitriy and Odera (2016), Shitemi (2015), Larama and Maundu (2014), Odera and Magwana (2013) had geographical gap because they were not conducted in Syria. This implies that the results may be inapplicable in Syria since the social economic environment of Syria and other countries differ. The current study seeks to address this gap.

Methodological Gap

A methodological gap presents itself in this study, Eymoi (2020) explored how the mobile phone technology contributed in resolving communal conflicts in Mandera County, Kenya. This study adopted a descriptive survey. Primary data was derived from questionnaires formulated to target employees in ICT and security department to analyze data while our study will use a desk study literature review methodology.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Technology enables the development of new tools and techniques for communication and collaboration, as well as for monitoring and evaluating the progress of conflict resolution. However, technology can also present a number of challenges such as the cost of implementation and maintenance, security risks, and ethical challenges. Despite these challenges, technology is a powerful tool for conflict resolution practitioners and it is used to improve the process of conflict resolution. In conclusion, technology has had a significant impact on conflict resolution in Syria. Technology has enabled the rapid dissemination of information, enabling stakeholders to view and analyze the situation in real-time. This has facilitated dialogue and collaboration between the parties, allowing them to develop a shared understanding of the situation and to identify potential solutions. Technology has also enabled the parties to communicate and collaborate with each other, enabling them to develop joint strategies and build trust. Technology has enabled the parties to negotiate more effectively, allowing them to discuss their perspectives and to identify potential solutions. In this context, technology has become an increasingly important factor in the conflict resolution process, with the potential to enable the parties to find common ground and to develop sustainable solutions.

Recommendations

The Syrian conflict has been going on for over a decade, and has caused widespread destruction and displacement of millions of people. The conflict has had an immense impact on the lives of the people of Syria, as well as the surrounding region. Technology has been used extensively in the conflict, and has had a major impact on the way the conflict is fought and resolved. Technology can be used in both positive and negative ways and it is important to consider ways to use technology to promote conflict resolution in Syria. This study recommends that communication should be strengthened. This should be done by providing access to reliable and secure communication networks, as well as promoting access to platforms that enable dialogue between stakeholders. This include social media platforms, online discussion forums, and other online communication tools. Strengthening communication networks would help to improve communication between all sides of the conflict, ultimately leading to better understanding and improved dialogue. Another way is to promote digital literacy. This include providing free or low-cost access to digital resources such as hardware, software and internet access. Additionally, it includes providing digital literacy courses, workshops and other resources to help people learn how to use technology safely and effectively.

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