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DOI 10.70286/ISU-18.02.2026.005

STRATEGIES FOR NEUTRALIZING NEGATIVE EMOTIONS IN CONFLICT SITUATIONS BETWEEN ASYMMETRIC PARTICIPANTS IN JOINT VENTURES

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For a long time, conflicts in interorganizational partnerships were explained primarily through the lens of structural asymmetry, that is, the unequal distribution of resources, power, and managerial control. Contemporary empirical research on strategic alliances and international joint ventures increasingly demonstrates that conflicts in asymmetric partnerships are not only instrumental in nature but also deeply emotional and cognitive. In this context, the decisive factor is not the mere existence of resource or power asymmetry, but the way partners interpret their own contributions, the behavior of the other party, and the fairness of the distribution of control and benefits (Lebedev, Lin, & Peng, 2021; Wright et al., 2025). Such interpretive divergences shape the emotional context of conflict and largely determine its developmental trajectory, ranging from constructive tension to destructive escalation.

For the dominant partner, the most salient emotional mechanism is the fear of losing control, which is activated under conditions of strategic uncertainty or increasing dependence on the other party (Winardi et al., 2022).

Staw et al. (1981) demonstrated that threat triggers restriction in information processing and constriction of control across individual, group, and organizational levels, manifesting through centralized decision-making and limited dialogue. Building on this foundation, Marx-Fleck et al. (2021) established that under conditions of low psychological safety and high uncertainty, employees make defensive decisions that protect them personally, even when such decisions contradict organizational interests. This emotional dimension of threat response extends to executive behavior, as Brundin et al. (2022) revealed that negative emotional states among leaders, particularly fear and anxiety, reduce propensity for financial risk-taking and drive traditional strategic decisions characterized by risk avoidance. The interplay between psychological safety and leadership becomes critical here, since Artinger et al. (2025) experimentally proved that the combination of low psychological safety and low authentic leadership increases defensive decision-making, while leader authenticity compensates for the absence of psychological safety. Synthesizing these findings, Hasson Marques et al. (2024) systematically documented how emotions influence strategic decision quality in boardrooms through mechanisms of cognitive appraisal and emotion regulation.

At the same time, such behavior intensifies sensemaking discrepancies between partners and triggers a self-reinforcing cycle of emotional escalation that undermines trust and increases the likelihood of partnership dissolution. For the weaker party to the conflict, the cumulative dynamics of frustration and perceived injustice are critical, as they arise from the systematic neglect of its position in the decision-making process. Research indicates that these emotions are particularly detrimental to long-term cooperation because they do not encourage open confrontation but instead transform into latent resistance, formalized participation, and emotional disengagement (Lebedev, Lin, & Peng, 2021). The role of emotional regulation in this context is further supported by studies in organizational psychology, which demonstrate that low levels of emotional intelligence and limited coping strategies significantly reduce managers' ability to manage conflicts effectively under conditions of asymmetry (Mutongi et al., 2024; Odame & Pandey, 2025).

The most destructive factor for the stability of joint ventures is the formation of mutual distrust, which emerges as a consequence of repeated emotionally negative episodes and gradually becomes the dominant interpretive frame through which a partner's actions are perceived.

For this reason, contemporary scholars increasingly emphasize the need to integrate managerial mechanisms with psychoemotional strategies, particularly through the development of emotional competence and intercultural sensitivity among participants in joint ventures (Ho et al., 2024; Chi & Gao, 2024).

The scientific novelty of this study lies in systematizing strategies for neutralizing negative emotions in conflict situations within joint ventures involving asymmetric partners at the intersection of managerial and psycho-emotional approaches. Unlike traditional conflict management classifications that focus predominantly on behavioral response patterns (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; Jehn et al., 2008) or examine emotional factors fragmentarily, this approach accounts for the specifics of asymmetric partnerships. It differentiates strategies based on party status, level of control, and the nature of dominant negative emotions. Thus, the study fills the gap between joint venture management theories and contemporary concepts of emotional regulation in organizations.

This paper aims to substantiate strategies for neutralizing negative emotions in conflict situations among asymmetric joint venture participants. To achieve this aim, the study pursues the following objectives: (1) analyze the specificity of emotional conflicts within asymmetric partnerships; (2) identify key negative emotions characteristic of different conflict parties; (3) systematize strategies for neutralizing negative emotions from managerial and psycho-emotional perspectives.

Emotional conflicts in asymmetric partnerships within joint ventures have a complex nature determined not only by objective discrepancies in resources, managerial power, and influence on decision-making, but also by subjective processes of party interpretation and expectations. Negative emotions – specifically frustration, distrust, anxiety, and fear of losing control – affect managerial decision-making and can intensify conflict dynamics. Under conditions of asymmetry, the dominant partner more frequently demonstrates intolerance or devaluation of the other party's position, while the weaker participant experiences uncertainty and powerlessness, which undermines trust and cooperation even when economic feasibility is maintained (Winardi et al., 2022).

Zhao & Stiles (2023) confirm that cognitive-emotional factors play a key role in conflicts between partners. Analysis of sensemaking discrepancy in an international joint venture showed that differences in strategic understanding and distinct interpretations of partner roles can lead to "disjointed collaboration," accompanied by declining trust and emotional alienation of managers.

Similarly, research on exit from international partnerships emphasizes that emotions and trust play a decisive role in the selection of cooperation termination strategies and influence subsequent learning and opportunities in external markets (Wright et al., 2025). At the same time, most existing models of conflict management in ventures focus on legal, contractual, or procedural mechanisms and rarely integrate emotional and cognitive aspects into their classifications of strategies. A systematic review of the contemporary literature indicates that emotional regulation and emotional intelligence are seldom considered as independent factors in models of conflict resolution (Winardi et al., 2022).

In this context, the proposed systematization of strategies for neutralizing negative emotions integrates managerial approaches with mechanisms of psychoemotional regulation according to the roles and status of partners, which allows for a deeper understanding and more effective management of emotional conflicts in asymmetric joint ventures.

Thus, conflicts in asymmetric joint ventures have not only a structural and managerial dimension but also a pronounced emotional and cognitive dimension that manifests differently depending on the position and role of each partner. The polarization of negative emotions driven by asymmetries in power, resources, and control shapes distinct trajectories of conflict escalation and exerts differential effects on the effectiveness of managerial decisions. This underscores the need to move from general descriptions of emotional dynamics toward a structured analysis of practical strategies for their neutralization. To this end, Table 1 presents a systematization of strategies for neutralizing negative emotions in conflict situations between asymmetric participants in joint ventures, which makes it possible to align types of emotional responses with appropriate managerial and psychoemotional instruments of influence.

Table 1. Strategies for Neutralizing Negative Emotions in Conflict Situations Between Asymmetric Participants in Joint Ventures

Negative Emotion	Conflict Party	Causes of Emergence (Asymmetry)	Managerial Neutralization Strategies	Psychoemotional Neutralization Strategies	Expected Effect
Irritation, Intolerance	Dominant	Decision delays, resistance to initiatives, divergent strategic expectations	Clear formalization of decision-making processes; KPIs for joint teams; facilitated strategic sessions	Development of managerial empathy; awareness of irritation triggers; training in emotional self-regulation	Reduced directiveness; improved quality of dialogue
Fear of Loss of Control	Dominant	Dependence on the local partner; regulatory and cultural risks	Balance of authority within boards of governance; transparent reporting mechanisms	Anxiety management; cognitive reframing of control	Reduced rigid control; increased trust
Frustration	Weaker	Limited influence on decisions; disregard for expertise	Formalization of the weaker party's role; institutionalization of advisory voting rights	Emotional awareness techniques; reduction of accumulated tension	Increased engagement; reduced passive resistance
Perceived Injustice	Weaker	Unequal distribution of benefits and risks	Revision of profit-sharing mechanisms; transparent criteria for contribution assessment	Addressing cognitive biases; recognition of the partner's emotions	Restoration of a subjective sense of balance
Anxiety, Fear	Weaker	Uncertainty regarding the venture's future; risk of unilateral decisions	Long-term agreements; protective clauses	Emotional stabilization techniques; development of psychological resilience	Reduced emotional exhaustion
Latent Resentment	Weaker	Devaluation of position; lack of feedback	Regular feedback sessions; independent mediation	Safe channels for emotional expression	Prevention of "silent" partnership deterioration
Distrust	Both	Prior negative experience; informational asymmetry	Joint committees; information transparency	Development of psychological safety	Increased level of cooperation
Emotional Disengagement	Both	Chronic conflicts; absence of shared vision	Joint strategic planning; team rotation	Restoration of emotional connection	Reintegration of partnership interaction

Source: created by the author.

The systematization presented in Table 1 demonstrates that managerial and psychoemotional strategies for neutralizing negative emotions in conflict situations between asymmetric participants in joint ventures are closely interconnected and cannot be considered in isolation. Managerial approaches, including the formalization of procedures, delegation of authority, monitoring systems, and standardization of communication flows, form the institutional framework of cooperation that reduces uncertainty and minimizes structural risks for participants. However, the effectiveness of these instruments is determined by the parties' capacity for emotional self-regulation, reflective analysis, empathic understanding of the partner's experiences, and the development of mutual trust. Without such a psychoemotional foundation, formalized managerial measures risk not only failing to alleviate tension but also intensifying the emotional dynamics of conflict, particularly under conditions of power asymmetry. Accordingly, effective mitigation of negative emotions in joint ventures requires the synergistic application of managerial and psychoemotional strategies aimed both at eliminating structural disproportions and at moderating the emotional states of the conflicting parties.

In asymmetric joint ventures, negative emotions are not limited to a reactive role in conflict situations but function as mechanisms through which structural imbalances are transformed into persistent behavioral patterns of interorganizational interaction. Empirical studies of international strategic alliances demonstrate that the decisive factor in conflict escalation or constructive development is not the objective parameters of asymmetry but its subjectively emotional interpretation by partnership participants (Winardi et al., 2022). Yilmaz and Yilmaz (2025) argue that dimensions of emotional intelligence significantly influence the choice of conflict management strategies.

In this context, for the dominant partner, the key emotional determinant becomes the perceived threat of losing control, which is activated under conditions of strategic uncertainty or increasing dependence on the local partner. This emotion triggers a mechanism of defensive rationalization, as a result of which managerial decisions become more centralized in nature, the tendency to disregard alternative positions increases, and interorganizational communication increasingly shifts toward a directive mode.

Emotions of irritation and intolerance in interorganizational interactions may perform a stabilizing function by sustaining existing patterns of interaction; however, at the same time, they substantially constrain opportunities for the joint construction of meaning (sensemaking). Empirical observations indicate that this leads to a decline in the level of interorganizational trust and increases the risk of destabilization or dissolution of partnership relationships (Schruijer, 2020).

Studies of joint ventures show that these emotions, rather than overt conflict, are key predictors of passive resistance, formal participation without genuine engagement, and the gradual erosion of cooperation (Zhao & Stiles, 2023; Lebedev, Lin, & Peng, 2021). Importantly, frustration in asymmetric partnerships rarely transforms into open confrontation; instead, it accumulates in the form of emotional exhaustion and distrust, which significantly complicates the use of classical negotiation or contractual mechanisms.

Distrust and emotional alienation emerge as the most destructive forces for long-term collaboration, forming as a joint outcome of asymmetric emotional reactions between both parties in international business. de Wit et al. (2013) demonstrated that relationship conflict leads to biased information processing, which results in rigidity in decision-making and undermines trust, cohesion, and identification between partners. Research on cross-border partnerships shows that emotionally charged conflicts, unlike instrumental ones, exhibit a high degree of inertia. Even after formal resolution, such conflicts continue to shape how partners interpret each other's actions and influence their strategic expectations.

Under these conditions, each new managerial decision is perceived through the lens of prior negative experience, which creates a self-reinforcing cycle of emotional escalation and reduces the effectiveness of any formal control mechanisms.

Conclusions. Thus, the study demonstrates that in asymmetric joint ventures, negative emotions function as mediators between structural inequality and the behavioral responses of conflict participants. The most destructive impact on partnership stability is not exerted by isolated emotional states but by their dynamics, particularly the accumulation of frustration, perceptions of injustice, and distrust, which transform managerial disagreements into prolonged emotional confrontation. The proposed systematization of strategies for neutralizing negative emotions indicates that managerial instruments are effective only when combined with psychoemotional regulatory mechanisms. The formalization of procedures, allocation of authority, and control reduce structural uncertainty; however, without consideration of the emotional perception of asymmetry, these measures may intensify conflict escalation, especially on the part of the weaker participant. The practical contribution of the study lies in substantiating the need for an integrated approach to conflict management in joint ventures that simultaneously accounts for power asymmetry and the emotional and cognitive processes of the parties. Such an approach provides a foundation for shifting from reactive conflict resolution to the proactive stabilization of partnership relationships in the long term.

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