Influence of strategies adopted by school management in containing conflicts in public primary schools in Lamu County.

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Abstract
Conflicts seem to be a continuous factor in leaning institutions these days and it is becoming a part of academic life. Schools frequently appear to be a field of disagreement and on occasion, they are perhaps a manifestation of problems in the community. For a school to be effective, individual members need to be able to work in a conflict free environment. The general objective of the study was to investigate on the influence of strategies adopted by school management in containing conflicts in public primary schools in Lamu County. Specifically, the study sought to establish the influence of competing strategy adopted by school management; the influence of collaboration strategy adopted by school management; the influence of avoiding strategy adopted by school management and the influence of compromising strategy adopted by school management in containing conflicts in public primary schools in Lamu County. The thesis was founded and based on the dual concern theory and max conflict theory. Target population for this study included 68 public primary schools of Lamu County and therefore targeted a population of 272 respondents comprising of the school's head teachers, Deputy Head teachers, senior teachers respectively and Chairmen of Boards of Management. The sample size was 80 respondents randomly selected from the 68 schools in both Lamu East and Lamu West Sub-Counties. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentages, means and standard deviations), and inferential statistics (t-test) using SPSS software version 23. The study adopted a survey design where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to analyze data. Piloting of the study was done in 10 schools randomly selected which did not take part in the real research. Information about the number of schools is as recorded by the MoEST and the TSC County offices. This excludes the schools prone to frequent attacks by the Al-Shabab militia from both sub counties. Generally, it is hoped that findings of this research study will help improve the understanding of strategies to be adopted by school management in containing conflicts in public primary schools in Lamu County and their ultimate effects conflict resolutions. This study's findings will also help improve on the future management of conflicts by head teachers, deputies, senior teachers and board members in public primary schools in Lamu County. The study concluded that school administrations have been adversely affected by lack of knowledge of conflicts management as most administrators handled conflict by trial and error approach because there were no specific procedures and methods of managing conflicts. The study therefore recommended that no one strategy is enough in conflict management and containment hence the study recommends that the school management to consider the utilization of at least two strategies in order to contain conflict. A blend of two or more strategies in containing conflict will enhance effective conflict management in public primary schools in Lamu County. It further recommended that; it is from the source of conflict where the best strategy shall be employed in containing the nature of conflict. It is therefore necessary to identify causes of conflict in an institution and subsequently suggest the best strategy to put in place.
Key words; containing conflicts, strategies

I.   Introduction

Conflict has become inevitable in human existence and indeed a lot of institution, organization, and individuals have put in enough resources in order to curb such a phenomenon (Nguvumali, 2016). Ferlie and Ongaro (2015) supported this view by indicating that conflict is part of change and therefore inevitable. It is therefore not shocking news of high rate of conflict in the senior high schools. Conflict implies dependence and interdependence. Parties rely to some extent on the other parties to realize their goals (Kaufman, Elgoibar, & Borbely, 2016). This interdependence can be positive (a cooperative context), negative (a competitive context), or mixed.

Conflict in schools takes different forms; for example, teachers seem reluctant to obey the principals, they do not seem to follow rules or accept extra work, they do not easily get along with their principals.

Principals too adopt an authoritative approach, for example they pressurize teachers for an uninterrupted working of the school activities. It, therefore, becomes common that conflict between teachers and the school principal occur frequently at any time in the school (Oboegbulem & Alfa 2013). In institutions, conflict occurs between various individuals because of their frequent interaction with each other. Conflict is an expression of hostility, antagonism and misunderstanding between the staff members.

Conflict is about cognitive and affective tension. When someone perceives blocked goals and disagreements, he or she can also, although not necessarily, feel fear or anger. According to Many authors conflict is emotionally charged (Sinaceur, Adam, Van Kleef, & Galinky, 2013), although the emotion doesn't need to be labeled necessarily as a negative emotion. Some people actually enjoy conflict. Emotional experiences in conflict are also scripted by cultural, historical, and personal influences (Lindner, 2014). The better educators and students understand the nature of conflict, the better able they are to manage conflicts constructively.

Conflict containment is deliberate action to deal with conflictive situations, either to prevent or to escalate them. Unlike conflict behavior, conflict containment encompasses cognitive responses to conflict situations, which can vary from highly competitive to highly cooperative. Conflict containment does not necessarily involve avoidance, reduction, or termination of conflict. It involves designing effective strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and to enhance the constructive functions of conflict in order to improve team and organizational effectiveness (Dogan, 2016).

Educational institutions in Kenya occasionally experience conflict of varied nature, due to different reasons which most of the conflict ends up being destructive to life and property. Managing conflict in school teams, the impact of task and goal interdependence on conflict management and team effectiveness findings indicate that the configuration of task and goal interdependence affects a team's conflict management style, which in turn affects team performance, (Obuobisa-Darko, 2014).

Kenyan schools including schools in Lamu County also have their own share of conflict. What has not been established in the Kenya and specifically Lamu County situation is the influence of strategies adopted by school administration and board of management in managing conflicts in public primary schools in Lamu County. This study aims at establishing the influence of strategies adopted by school management in containing conflicts in public primary schools in Lamu County

Conflict is a general scenario experienced in the management of any social institution. It is considered as one of the major problems in the management of primary schools in Kenya. It has caused unrests ranging from sit in to violent destruction of property and loss of lives. Cases of student unrests became more rampant from 2017 when the recent fire at Moi Girls High School in Nairobi that claimed the lives of nine girls. Conflicts have been reported for example in Uasin Gishu, a paper presented to the District Schools Heads Association, by Adhiambo (2015), indicates that 10% of the head teachers in Uasin Gishu went on transfer and 2% left headship all together because of the conflicts.

According to Lefebvre and Thomas (2017) conflicts in schools may reduce strengths and resources such as social support and integration among teachers and all those involved in education which ultimately increase problems in schools. Several studies have been done on the area of conflicts in secondary schools and strategies to manage those conflicts. These studies include a study in Malaysia by Salleh, (2013) and a study in Nigeria Uchedu, (2013) among many others. However, the studies reviewed did not provide clear empirical evidence on strategies adopted by head teachers and board of management in containing conflicts in public primary schools in Lamu County. It is however anticipated that, competing, collaboration, avoiding and compromising are among strategies employed by school management in containing conflicts in public primary schools in Lamu County. The increased unrest from Lamu boys, Mpeketoni and others schools within the county has generally attributed to the need to resolve a long-lasting managerial solution to the problems in public primary schools. It was therefore argued that when there is peaceful co-existence in the school, higher productivity will be enhanced and the administrations, teachers and students will be in a better position to carry out their responsibilities without bitterness. The questions that guide this research therefore will seek to address various gap in strategies that when implemented will aid in avoidance, compromising, and collaborating, completing to contain conflicts in public schools specifically within Lamu County.

Objective of the study
The general objective of this study was to investigate influence of strategies adopted by school management in containing conflict in public primary schools in Lamu County.

II. Methodology
The study adopted descriptive research design approach in collecting data from the respondents. The purpose of the study was descriptive in form of a survey.The study targeted all Head teachers, Deputy Head teachers, and Senior Teachers and Chairman of Board of management in all public primary schools within Lamu

County. This implied a total of 272 respondents were targeted. They were targeted because they are the ones who are directly involved in school management and their appearances in solving all disputes in schools is paramount.The researcher sampled 30% of the total target population of 292 respondents from the 68 primary schools in Lamu County. This imply that, 20 schools were surveyed with each of the head teacher, the deputy and a senior teacher from sampled schools as respondent to the study. The sampling technique involved simple random sampling with schools from Sub-Counties of Lamu County, the east and the west sub-counties. This implied that schools from the East and those from the West were included and placed in draw for sampling.Questionnaires were developed as the main data collection instrument as the target population is widely distributed. The questionnaires were distributed to head teachers, the deputy head teachers, the senior teachers and the school BOM chairmen because leaders because they are al all involved in the management of their institutions. Data was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS); version 23.0; based on the questionnaires. In particular, mean scores, standard deviations, percentages and frequency distribution were used to summarize the responses and to show the magnitude on responses as highlighted by respondents from the different institutions within the County. Results are as presented in tables and charts. The study has further employed a Multiple Linear Regression Analysis to determine strategies adopted by head teachers and board of management in containing conflict in public primary schools in Lamu County.

III. Results

Out of 80 questionnaires distributed, only 55 were successfully filled and returned giving a response rate to be 69%. According to Mugenda & Mugenda, (2013) a response rate of 50% and above is considered adequate for analysis and reporting; a rate of 60% is good and a response rate of 70% and above is considered excellent for this study therefore the response rate was good for analysis and reporting as 69% (55) responded to the questionnaires while 31% (25) were non-respondent and this means that the sample was well represented in the questionnaires that were filled and returned.

Response on Containing Conflicts

On the final dependent variable, the respondents were asked to indicate the extent in which they agree with the various statements on the containment of conflicts in the school. The following scale was used: Strongly Disagree =1, Disagree =2, Neutral=3, Agree =4 and Strongly Agree =5.

Table 1: response on Containing Conflicts

Opinion Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
The management of conflict is very important for the school	3.3118	1.12268
Conflict helps in the management of interpersonal situations	3.1828	1.02094
The management is aware of the possible causes of conflicts	2.9892	1.13726
Preventive measures have been put in place in the containment of conflicts	2.9785	1.34309
The management has put in place mechanisms in conflict identification in the school	2.6667	1.16408
Communication mechanisms has been put in place to manage conflicts	2.5806	1.07666

The respondents agreed that the management of conflict was very important for the school with (M=3.3118; SD=1.12268) and they agreed that conflict helps in the management of interpersonal situations with (M=3.1828; SD=1.02094). They were neutral on the statements that the management was aware of the possible causes of conflicts with (M=2.9892; SD=1.13726) and they were neutral on the statements that preventive measures had been put in place in the containment of conflicts with (M=2.9785; SD=1.34309). The respondents were further neutral on the statements that the management has put in place mechanisms in conflict identification in the school with (M=2.6667; SD=1.16408) and they were neutral that communication mechanisms had been put in place to manage conflicts with (M=2.5806; SD=1.07666). It was evident that majority of the respondents were neutral on the statements about containing conflicts in the school.

Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was carried out to test the theoretical proposition regarding relationships between independent, moderating and dependent among the variables. This analysis was also carried as initial step in statistical modelling to determine the relationship between the variables. The values are interpreted between 0 (no relationship) and 1 (perfect relationship). Also, the relationship is considered small when r = ±0.1 to ±0.29, while the relationship is considered medium when r = ±0.30 to ±0.49, and when r is ±0.50 and above, the relationship can be considered strong.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis.

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

		Containing Conflict	Competing Strategy	Collaborating Strategy	Avoiding Strategy	Compromising Strategy
Containing Conflict	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig (2-tailed)					
Competing Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.304*	1			
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.025				
Collaborating Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.267**	-.025	1		
	Sig (2-tailed)	.004	.550			
Avoiding Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.403**	.165	-.163	1	
	Sig (2-tailed)	.002	.234	.242		
Compromising Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.313*	-.028	.091	.221	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.021	0.634	.512	.110	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results in Table 2 shows that the correlation analysis among the various variables. The output indicated that there existed a significant and positive relationship between containing conflicts and competing strategy since (r=0.304; p=0.025). It was further determined that there existed a significant and positive association between containing conflicts and collaborating strategy since (r=0.267; p=0.004). The results indicated that there was a significant and positive relationship between containing conflicts and avoiding strategy since (r=0.403; p=0.002). Finally, it was determined that there was a significant and positive relationship between compromising strategy and containing conflicts.

Regression Analysis without Moderating Variable

Multiple linear regression analysis is applied to analyze the relationship between a single dependent variable and several independent variables (Hair et al., 2010). Multiple regression analysis was therefore selected as it is viewed as an appropriate method for this study to establish the nature and relationship between independent variables (competing strategy, collaborating strategy, avoiding strategy and compromising strategy) and dependent variable (containing strategy).

Coefficient of Determination

To determine the percentage of containing conflict which can be explained using the independent variables, R^2 was determined

Table 3: Coefficient of Determination without Moderation

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.613[a]	.376	.326	.4054

a. Predictors: (Constant), Competing Strategy, Collaborating Strategy, Avoiding Strategy, Compromising Strategy

The analysis indicated there a strong positive relationship between conflict management strategies and conflict containment since (r=0.613) The analysis further showed an adjusted r^2 of 0.326, which implied that conflict management strategies (competing strategy, collaborating strategy, avoiding strategy and compromising strategy can explain only 32.6% of containing conflicts in Lamu County.

Analysis of Variance

To determine the significance of management strategies in containing conflicts the study used ANOVA analysis.

Table 4: Analysis of Variance

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	4.773	4	1.1933	7.56019	.001[b]
1	Residual	7.892	50	.15784		
	Total	12.665	54			

a. Dependent Variable: Containing Conflict

b. Predictors: (Constant), Competing Strategy, Collaborating Strategy, Avoiding Strategy, Compromising Strategy

The ANOVA model showed (F {4, 50} = 7.56019; p=0.001), the analysis indicated that the model was statistically significant since p-value<0.05. Hence conflict management strategies incorporated in this study significantly determines containment of conflict.

Regression Coefficients

A regression coefficient was carried out in order to explain the nature and relationship between each independent variables and dependent variable.

Table 5: Regression Coefficients without Moderation

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	.679	.511		1.327	.190
	Competing Strategy	.185	.082	.258	2.233	.030
1	Collaborating Strategy	.212	.078	.314	2.701	.009
	Avoiding Strategy	.204	.067	.364	3.019	.004
	Compromising Strategy	.072	.136	.492	3.533	.004

a. Dependent Variable: Containing Conflicts; Durbin-Watson= 1.704

Based on the regression coefficient table, the following regression equation was determined:

$Y=0.679+ 0.185X_1+ 0.212X_2+ 0.204X_3+ 0.072X_4$

Whereby:

$Y =$	Containing conflict
$X_1=$	Competing strategy
$X_2=$	Collaborating Strategy
$X_3=$	Avoiding Strategy
$X_4=$	Compromising Strategy

Results in Table 5 showed that competing strategy and containing conflicts were positively and significantly related ($\beta=0.185$; p=0.030), which means that a unit increase in competing strategy will lead to significantly 18.5% improvement in containing conflicts. Further the analysis showed that there was a positive and significant between collaborating strategy and containing conflicts ($\beta=0.212$; p=0.009), which means that a unit increase in collaborating strategy will lead to significantly 21.2% improvement in containing conflicts. Further, on the relationship between avoiding strategy and containing conflict as ($\beta=0.204$; p=0.004), which means that a unit increase in avoiding strategy will lead to significantly 20.4% improvement in containing conflict. Finally, on the relationship between compromising strategy and containing of conflict as ($\beta=0.072$; p=0.004), which implied that a unit increase in compromising strategy will lead to significantly 7.2% improvement in containing conflict.

IV. Conclusion

The study concluded that the competing strategy is characterized by assertiveness and uncooperativeness that occurs when the parties involved work for their respective gains at the expense of opposite party hence perfect in situation involving conflicts educational institutions which demand moral authority and leadership integrity to resolve them conflict. The study concluded that school administrations have been adversely affected by lack of knowledge of conflicts management as most administrators handled conflict by trial and error approach because there were no specific procedures and methods of managing conflicts.

V. Recommendations

The study recommends that the school management to consider the utilization of at least two strategies in order to contain conflict. A blend of two or more strategies in containing conflict will enhance effective conflict management in public primary schools in Lamu County. It further recommended that; it is from the source of conflict where the best strategy shall be employed in containing the nature of conflict. It is therefore necessary to identify causes of conflict in an institution and subsequently suggest the best strategy to put in place

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