Relationship between Mediation Conflict Management Strategy and Teachers' Productivity in Secondary Schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts occur more frequently in school system where there is human interaction. The current paper investigated the extent to which mediation conflict management strategy influence teachers' productivity, assess the effect of collaboration conflict management strategy on teachers' productivity, find out how avoidance conflict management strategy influence teachers' productivity and examine the extent to which teacher support influence the relationship between conflict management and teachers' productivity. The study adopted correlational research design and targeted 156 principals and 1783 teachers from 156 public secondary schools. Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula was used to attain a sample size of 427 respondents. The study employed purposive sampling, stratified and simple random sampling approaches. Data was collected using questionnaires. The study used mean, standard deviation, frequencies and percentages and Pearson Correlation Analysis to analyze data which was presented in tables. The study found out that there was a significant positive correlation between mediation and teachers' productivity ($r = .627$; $p = .000$) in secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu County. The paper concluded that mediation conflict management strategy positively improves teacher productivity in public secondary schools and thus it was recommended that to get the best results in the resolution of workplace disputes, the management or administrators of secondary schools may utilize a combination of several organizational conflict management approaches. This could be helpful in guiding management decisions and choices as to the most effective conflict management strategies to apply to resolve existing workplace conflicts.

Keywords: Mediation, Strategy, Teachers' productivity, Conflict, secondary school

INTRODUCTION

Conflicts occur frequently in human life and are prevalent both in businesses and educational institutions (Owan, 2018). Humans have always hated confrontation and developed a variety of methods to settle it, including mediation, negotiation, cooperation, and avoidance. Agreements on points of conflict between opposing governments or people have been reached through negotiation. Due to the fact that conflicts are universal, they have come to have a variety of meanings, which has left many managers unsure of the best way to handle them. Disputes create an uncomfortable, disruptive, and stressful work environment that lowers employee productivity.

roductivity, according to Arinanye (2019), entails both quality and amount of output, presence at work, a willingness to be accommodating and helpful, as well as timely output. Sorsatakaro and Wako (2018) claim that if productivity is apparent, organizations can apply direct bonuses and rewards based on individual performance. Businesses put a lot of work into pleasing customers, but often pay little attention to pleasing staff. Yet the truth is that until and unless staff are satisfied, customers won't be happy. Consequently, if staff are satisfied, they will do more work therefore ultimately customers will be satisfied (Ahmad, 2017). Motivation truly has an impact on productivity because motivated workers put more effort into their task,

which improves performance in the long run (Dukhan *et al.,* 2017).

According to Amoda, Awe, Ogunade, and Yakubu (2021), factors that contribute to school-based conflict include a lack of respect for teachers' autonomy, a lack of objectivity, an insufficient flow of information, and a perception of relevant concerns. Given these conflicts, teachers are unable to actively contribute to the teaching-learning process, which is essential to the delivery and achievement of high-quality education and the educational objectives set forth in the Policy on Education. Also, this causes students to linger more, make more noise in the classroom, have their classwork poorly evaluated, and submit their assessment results to the appropriate authority later than they should. These issues that lead to bad teaching practices may be caused by a variety of factors, including ineffective principal conflict resolution techniques. If these disputes are not settled peacefully, the educational system may be disrupted and instructors' performance may suffer. So, it may be safe to assume that, to a large extent, a happy and emotionally content teacher will exhibit a positive attitude that improves learners' academic progress and achievement of educational goals.

In order to improve performance and effectiveness within an organization, conflict management requires putting into place particular methods to lessen the bad parts of conflict while boosting the positive components of conflict. Proper and efficient conflict management techniques in schools decrease absenteeism and discontent among teachers while boosting output, originality, and creativity, all of which increase teachers' effectiveness. Constructive conflict management techniques, according to Johnson and Johnson (2017), provide solutions that are acceptable to all parties in dispute, enhance relationships, and increase their capacity to resolve future problems constructively.

Owan (2018) emphasized that teachers are essential to the teaching and learning processes and need a secure atmosphere to carry out their duties as teachers successfully. According to Ghavifekr and Nair (2019), who support this notion, the efficiency of a school is dependent on the administrative abilities of the school principal, who must be able to deal with disagreements in a way that doesn't negatively impact teachers' ability to do their jobs. Owan (2018) emphasizes that there is not a single conflict management approach that can be used in all conflict circumstances. As a result, it may be claimed that various disputes call for the principals to employ various strategies.

Conflict management strategies are many and include cause identification approach and integration strategy of conflict management. Cause identification approach is a technique for resolving conflict which stresses the identification of the fundamental cause of the conflict. According to Kwamboka and Nassiuma (2017), this tactic is crucial because it enables the discovery of the conflict's root cause, which opens the door for locating a resolution that is agreeable to all sides. On the other hand, an integration strategy is a method for resolving conflict that emphasizes incorporating the viewpoints of opposing parties in order to make it easier for opposing parties to respect one another's interests while the conflict is being resolved. The integration technique appears to be the most effective since it allows warring parties to grasp their current condition and prepares them for active engagement in resolving the dispute (Fareo & Jajua, 2018).

Nyakundi and Orodho (2020) claim that conflicts at secondary schools in Kisii County have had a negative impact on teachers' job performance, with only 5% of instructors in the county doing well on the job. Conflicts therefore serve as a blatant warning sign that something is amiss inside the company and that sound principles are not being used in the resolution of the conflict. In order to boost performance, school principals, who are the top executives, must effectively handle these conflicts. This poses a question about which conflict management strategies might be used to improve teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya. Therefore, this study sought to assess whether conflict management strategies affect teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The process of managing conflict includes the explicit interplay of knowledge types, attitudes, and abilities

that aims at productivity in organizational operations, as well as encouragement by the management of the organization (Majola, 2017). In an effort to discover answers to the issues affecting organizations, managing conflicts necessitates conversations between the opposing groups with conflicting viewpoints. The main goal of conflict management approaches is to completely prevent the escalation of negative or destructive linked conflict and to do so at all costs. A social process that includes all stakeholders must articulate competent and effective conflict management systems for this to be carried out successfully (Aja, 2018).

According to Anashie and Kulo (2018), post-primary education should be administered without crisis or conflict if education is to be managed productively for long-term peace and economic development in countries. Each and every school administrator needs to use conflict management techniques (Saka, 2020). Techniques or methods that can be utilized to prevent, control, or resolve disputes are referred to as conflict management strategies. Any school should prioritize conflict management techniques since they enable the reduction or management of the negative effects of disputes.

There are numerous methods for resolving disputes in educational settings. Among them are dominance, compromise, synergy, culture of civility, win-lose strategy, lose-lose strategy, and win-win strategy (Anashie & Kulo, 2018); integration, obligorization, smoothing, avoidance, and mediation; dialogue, arbitration, conciliation, and diplomacy (Crossfield & Bourne, 2018); negotiation, effective communication, and accommodating (Saka, 2020). Hence, secondary school principals are open to using a variety of dispute resolution techniques in their institutions.

Eze Ugbor, Onyali, and Okoye (2019) conducted a study with a sample size of 259 respondents to examine how school administrators in Nigeria adopt and use conflict management tactics. A descriptive survey study design was used, and several conclusions were recorded. Results showed that not all schools fully benefited from the various conflict resolution strategies used by school principals. In addition, there was a lack of use of conflict resolution techniques in schools.

Aja (2017) examined the conflict resolution tactics employed by principals in secondary schools in Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Data were collected in this study using questionnaires and a descriptive research methodology, with hypothesis testing serving as a study guide. The target group consisted of 3,285 teachers from 221 public secondary schools and 221 school administrators. According to the findings, school administrators in Ebonyi state primarily used intervention and non-intervention tactics to resolve conflicts that arose in their institutions.

Adeyemi and Ademilua's (2012) study focused on the methods used to settle disputes at school and how effective they were in Nigerian universities. Using 62 Nigerian public universities as the target population, this study used a descriptive research design. The results showed that current conflict management techniques were woefully unsuitable for handling recurrent disagreements. Gyan and Offin (2018) aimed to comprehend the methods for handling disputes in secondary schools in Ghana's Ashanti Region. 43 students that were chosen from Senior High School made up the targeted group for the descriptive study design. According to the study's findings, there is a good chance that a disagreement will be resolved when the appropriate conflict management tactics are developed and put into practice.

The assessment of conflict management tactics employed by Ghanaian school administrators was the focus of Afful-Broni's (2018) study. The research strategy was a descriptive case study in which the researcher collected observations, conducted interviews, and distributed questionnaires to get information from respondents about the best methods for handling disputes at the Winneba Senior High School. According to the findings, the school heads avoided arguing and criticizing staff and children when issues emerged, developed consensus, and met with the appropriate parties when conflict started to emerge. They also sought advice from counselors and the Ghana Education Service's help.

In order to evaluate the methods used by school administrators to resolve conflicts in public secondary

schools located in rural Tanzania, Angela (2018) conducted a research study. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were applied in this investigation. The different conflict management techniques employed by the school heads were ineffective for addressing the kinds of disagreements that frequently occurred in schools. Kipyego (2017) looked into the typical conflict-resolution techniques used by secondary school principals in the Nandi Central District. There were 456 tutors and 36 schools in the target population. The results showed that mediation and negotiation were standard conflict resolution methods.

According to Obizue and Ahukanna (2017), conflict is a condition of disagreement, perplexity, animosity, or opposition. A state of dispute, controversy, or opposition is what is meant by conflict in its most basic sense. It could imply the presence of a protracted conflict, struggle, or fight. when people act in a way that is contrary to social norms and expectations. Ineffective agreements and other types of relationship breaches can also cause conflicts. According to Nwaike (2017), conflict arises as a result of the unique characteristics of the human race. He continued by saying that due to individual, cultural, religious, and societal variances, no two people behave the same way under the same circumstances.

From the perspective of an employee, productivity is simply the outcome of a number of activities. The many jobs completed each day add up to overall productivity (Hrakhouskaya & van Schuppen, 2017). General work behavior, written and oral communication task proficiency, demonstrating effort: level of commitment to core tasks, maintaining personal discipline, promoting peer and team performance, supervision or leadership; and management or administration. Job-specific task proficiency: behavior related to core tasks of the job. Non-job-specific task proficiency: general work behavior. On the other hand, outcomes are the most important factors in a supervisor's assessment of productivity. Results are ultimately more significant to an employer than the activities that led to those results, so (Hrakhouskaya& Van Schuppen, 2017). Some researchers contend that the definition of performance is not as important as how it is constructed and assessed (Yahaya et al., 2017). Some academics even contend that personality plays a more particular impact in how well a person performs at work. Ndungu (2017) asserts that the measurement of performance is the issue with job performance.

One of the most crucial concepts in management study is productivity (Zulkiffli, 2018). Any organization's goal is continuous performance because this is the only way for them to advance and flourish. Also, understanding the factors that affect productivity is crucial, particularly in light of the current economic crisis, as it permits the identification of those elements that require specific attention in order to improve performance. The parameters under which initiatives, investments, and acquisitions are producing the desired results are estimated by performance measurement (Belvedere & Gallmann, 2018). Most performance measurements, according to Gavrea *et al.,* (2017), can be divided into six broad categories: productivity, efficiency, cost, quality, timeliness, innovation, and productiveness.

The methods a school principal employs to resolve disputes with teachers can have a significant impact on how the teachers feel about their jobs and how they interact with the principals (Badubi, 2017). Teachers will be more satisfied with supervision if they receive more guidance and supervision. In their investigations, Barasa (2015) and Iravo (2011) found that teacher employee productivity is negatively impacted when the school principal uses domineering and avoidance strategies to manage conflicts.

Several academics have studied a variety of conflict management strategies for use in organizations. In order to prevent disputes from impeding production, lowering morale, causing more conflicts, and resulting in improper actions, Bar-Tal (2013) argues that schools must have processes, knowledge, and strategies for handling conflicts. The major ways to managing conflicts are clearly illustrated in (Ghaffar, 2019), with structural and confrontational approaches supposing that conflicts are already present and need to be managed. However, they diverge in that confrontational approaches seek to surface conflict by bringing the parties together, whereas structural approaches strive to minimize direct expression of conflict by isolating the parties. Unresolved conflict, which is the issue, has a tendency to escalate; as a result, it should be

resolved at the proper stage before it escalates. The current paper investigated the extent to which mediation conflict management strategy influences teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed quantitative approach encompassing the use of correlational research design. Quantitative research as a structured, objective, systematic process for defining and testing relationships and for analyzing interactions between variables as to cause and effect. Correlational research design was chosen owing to it effectiveness in determining the relationships that exists between variables. It was employed in the definition, estimation, forecasting, and analysis of synergistic associations (Zangirolami-Raimundo, Echeimberg & Leone, 2018). This study was undertaken in Uasin Gishu County targeting principals and teachers from 156 public secondary schools. According to County Director of Education (2022), there were 1783 teachers and 156 principals. The sample size for this study was based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination formula where 316 respondents was used as the sample size.

The schools and individual participants were sampled using a combination of stratified random sampling technique, simple random sampling technique and purposive sampling technique. Teachers from selected schools were selected through simple random sampling technique while principals if each selected school were purposively sampled to participate in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data in this study.

The Content Validity Index (CVI) for the questionnaires was obtained in order to confirm the validity of the study's tools while reliability was determined through pilot study and calculation of Cronbach Alpha. The Quantitative data collected were analyzed using quantitative analysis to provide descriptive statistics (Creswell, 2014). Descriptive statistics were used to better comprehend and assess the study's outcomes, as well as to identify patterns, tendencies, and connections. Frequencies and percentages were utilized to examine data trends in the descriptive statistics study. Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to determine the strength and direction of association between mediation conflict management strategy and teachers' productivity.

RESULTS

The aim of this paper was to establish the extent to which mediation conflict management strategy influences teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County. To achieve this objective, the study participants were requested to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement on statements which covered the influence of mediation as a conflict management strategy on teachers' productivity.

The participants rated their response on a five-point Likert scale questions as; on a scale of 1-5, as Strongly Disagree (SD=1) Disagree (D=2) Neutral (N=3) Agree (A=4) and Strongly Agree (SA=5). Their responses were tabulated and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Responses on influence of Mediation as a Conflict Management Strategy on Teachers' Productivity

Statement	SD		D		UD		A		SA		Mean	Std Dev
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
In mediation, the parties are active participants in dispute resolution and are provided with the chance to listen to each other without confrontation and in a confidential setting	21	5.8	42	11.6	51	14	119	32.8	130	35.8	4.14	0.691

Mediation enhances staff productivity as there is potential to a speedy resolution of conflicts, saving various resources including time and money	12	3.3	22	6.1	50	13.8	107	29.5	172	47.4	4.09	0.827
Mediation provides the conflicting parties with a chance to test the strengths, weaknesses and theories of their case	7	1.9	8	2.2	46	12.7	141	38.8	161	44.4	4.01	0.76
Mediation enhances staff performance as it preserves or allows continuing relationships between parties in conflict	13	3.6	34	9.4	50	13.8	154	42.4	112	30.9	4.2	0.65
Mediation facilitates staff performance as it is the parties, rather than the mediator who makes the final decision	12	3.3	5	1.4	45	12.4	204	56.2	97	26.7	4.27	0.679

Table 1 shows that 130(35.8%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement that in mediation, the parties are active participants in dispute resolution and are provided with the chance to listen to each other without confrontation and in a confidential setting, 119(32.8%) respondents agreed with the statement, 51(14.0%) respondents were neutral on the statement and 42(11.6%) respondents disagreed with the statement while 21(5.8%) were strongly in disagreement with the statement. From the responses, a mean of 4.14 with a standard deviation of .691 was obtained on the statement showing that a majority (68.6%) of the teachers and principals in secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu County believed that in mediation, the parties are active participants in dispute resolution and are provided with the chance to listen to each other without confrontation and in a confidential setting. This implies that during the mediation process, the mediator plays an important role of listening to all the aggrieved parties before giving a resolution. This aids in reducing the escalation of conflicts in schools. According to the study by Villanueva, Usó & Adrián (2013), it can be said that mediation is presented as a preventive strategy to violent situations. These findings are also in line with those from other researches (Ibarrola-García & Iriarte, 2014; Moral & Pérez, 2010) which mediation enables two warring parties to come to an agreement in confidential setting where both parties come to an agreement over a conflict. This was in line with Ajike et al., (2015), who also described mediation as a practical conflict management technique that gives disputing parties a chance to be heard in a private context.

Further, 172(47.4%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement that mediation enhances staff productivity as there is potential to a speedy resolution of conflicts, saving various resources including time and money, 107(29.5%) respondents agreed with the statement, 50(13.8%) were undecided and 22(6.1%) were in disagreement while 12(3.3%) study participants were strongly in disagreement with the statement. From the responses, a mean of 4.09 with a standard deviation of .827 was obtained showing that a majority (76.9%) respondents agreed that mediation increases staff productivity since there is a chance for a swift resolution of disputes, saving time and money among other resources. Similar observations were reported by Lazarus (2014), who pointed out that mediation allows for the quick resolution of emerging conflicts, which helps avert lengthy contractual confrontations..

Similarly, 161(44.4%) respondents strongly agreed with the assertion that mediation provides the conflicting parties with a chance to test the strengths, weaknesses and theories of their case, 141(38.8%) respondents agreed with the statement, 46(12.7%) respondents were neutral on the statement and 8(2.2%) were in disagreement while 7(1.9%) were strongly in disagreement with the statement. A mean of 4.01 with a standard deviation of .760 was obtained on the statement showing that a majority (83.2%) of the teachers and principals in secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu county believed that mediation provides the conflicting parties with a chance to test the strengths, weaknesses and theories of their case. This implies that parties involved in conflicts can arrive in an agreement thus solving their conflicts. This is in line with the

conclusions of Olang (2017) and Mwikali (2016), who held the same opinion that mediation was a conflict resolution method with a high likelihood of resolving organizational problems in a way that produced favorable results.

In addition, 154(42.4%) study participants agreed with the statement that mediation enhances staff performance as it preserves or allows continuing relationships between parties in conflict, 112(30.9%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 50(13.8%) respondents were neutral on the statement and 34(9.4%) respondents disagreed with the assertion while only 13(3.6%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. A mean of 4.20 with a standard deviation of .650 was obtained on the statement showing that a majority (73.3%) of the teachers and principals in public secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu county were of the view that mediation enhances staff performance as it preserves or allows continuing relationships between parties in conflict. According to Kanyip, Ezeh and Chioma (2023), in order to settle conflict in schools, specific management measures which includes mediation must be implemented in order to encourage teaching, training, and peaceful cohabitation among those concerned. In order to meet the interests of both parties, the mediation conflict management method entails an open dialogue, identification of the conflict issues and its causes, and acknowledgment of the issue. This tactic also enables everyone to speak their minds, allowing them to focus on the issue rather than the people involved, and so on (Iravo, 2012).

Moreover, 204(56.2%) respondents agreed with the statement that mediation facilitates staff performance as it is the parties, rather than the mediator who makes the final decision, 97(26.7%) respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 45(12.4%) respondents were neutral on the statement and 12(3.3%) respondents strongly disagreed with the statement while only 5(1.4%) respondents disagreed with the statement. From the responses a mean of 4.27 with a standard deviation of .679 was obtained on the statement showing that a majority (82.9%) of the study participants acknowledged that mediation facilitates staff performance as it is the parties, rather than the mediator who makes the final decision. As Benoliel, (2020) puts it, the school principal is a mediator in conflict management and his/her efforts contribute to successful outcomes by improving disputants' trust in mediators' fairness. Abdul and Sehar, (2015) recommends mediation as a preferred alternative strategy in conflict management since the mediator allows the disputing parties to make the final decision. It is therefore important for the teachers and principals to go to mediation whenever and wherever conflicts arise.

Correlation between Mediation Conflict Management Strategy on Teachers' Productivity

The hypothesis of this study stated that;

$H0_1$: There is no significant relationship between mediation conflict management strategy and teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County

This hypothesis was tested using Pearson correlation analysis and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation Coefficient between Mediation Conflict Management Strategy and Teachers' Productivity

		Productivity
Mediation conflict management Strategy	Pearson Correlation	.627[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	363

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

Table 2 shows that there was a significant positive correlation between mediation conflict management strategy and teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu County (r = .627; p = .000). This means that at 95% confidence level the r value for mediation conflict management strategy was .627 showing a strong correlation with teachers' productivity. The r value was positive implying a positive correlation which means use of mediation conflict management strategy positively improves teacher productivity in public secondary schools. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate accepted showing that there was a significant relationship between mediation conflict management strategy and teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County. This is consistent with the findings of Muhatia (2022) who found that mediation style in dealing with conflicts enhances teachers' job performance. The respondents of the study believe the role of a mediator is to provide additional information and options without making the decision for the conflicting parties. This confirms study findings according to Gregory (2017) that a mediator assists in resolving the dispute by advising and providing information and options but leaves the final decision to the parties themselves since performance declines as the level of conflict increases. Consequently, the null hypothesis stated above is rejected implying that, there is a significant relationship between mediation conflict management strategy and teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Uasin Gishu County.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study concluded that there was a significant positive correlation between mediation conflict management strategy and teachers' productivity in secondary schools in Uasin-Gishu County showing that use of mediation conflict management strategy positively improves teacher productivity in public secondary schools. The paper recommends that to get the best results in the resolution of workplace disputes, the management or administrators of secondary schools may utilize a combination of several organizational conflict management approaches. This is done with an understanding that a single conflict management method could not result in the best resolution of the current organizational disputes.

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