

Workplace Conflict Management Strategies on Employee Performance at the Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

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ABSTRACT

In today's corporate world, the employees are from a diverse range and as they congregate in one working space, there has been an increase in conflicts at the workplace due to divergent views and personalities. It is important, therefore, for management to put out strategies to manage workplace conflicts to avoid poor performance and to be able to handle its mandates. This paper sought to assess the effect of workplace conflict management strategies on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya. The concept of workplace conflict explored by collaborative strategy, accommodating strategy, negotiation strategy, and confrontation strategy. The research adopted descriptive statistics in interpreting the findings. The study revealed that while collaborative strategy and accommodating strategy were significant, negotiation strategy and confrontation strategy were not significant in improving employee performance in the organization. The study concludes that collaborative strategy and accommodating strategy are strategies that can manage workplace conflict to enhance employee performance. The study recommends an improvement in collaborative strategy as doing so would significantly enhance employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

Key Words: Conflict, Strategies, Collaborative, Accommodating, Negotiation, confrontation.

INTRODUCTION

The changing workplace dynamics due to increased diversities have increased cases of conflicts among employees and employees and other stakeholders like suppliers and customers (Ayoko, 2016). Although employees are united by a shared business purpose and objectives, differences in relation to priorities, religion, cultures, social and economic status, tastes, and orientation background, there are chances of personality clashes, bullying, miscommunication and mismanagement. Workplace conflicts have the potential to disrupt workflows, increase the overall absenteeism among employees, termination and even employee turnover.

1.1. Conflict management

Conflict can disrupt the operations of an organization. This perspective is supported by Olukayode (2015) who noted constructive management of conflicts influences performance in a positive way as compared to destructive management that brings confusion at the workplace hence causing unnecessary relocations and polarization among staff. The net effect of this is a decline in productivity of employees and organizational performance. Similarly, Longe (2015) shared that conflict is a phenomenon that cannot be avoided in any organization and its implication to the firm can be favorable or unfavorable. It is based on these observations that Awan and Saeed (2015) acknowledged the need for management to adopt appropriate strategies that can help manage conflicts for enhanced performance in an organization. Additionally, this helps in ensuring a free flow of information from senior management to all cadres in the organization. It also promotes interpersonal relationship among employees for higher morale and productivity.

If conflict is not well managed has adverse effect in terms of lost productive hour, poor service delivery for government institutions, and unemployment among other challenges. Organizations need to acknowledge and

manage possible conflicts so that they do not act as hindrances to achievement of organizational goals. Indeed, Ester, Augustine and Osunsan (2020) observed that conflict resolution strategies positively influence employee performance and recommended that conflict resolution strategies should be made essential to employee performance. Some of the commonly applied strategies in settling conflicts include suppression, forcing, smoothing, compromise, avoidance, structural changes, collaboration, accommodating, compromise and smoothing, third-party intervention, cooperation, democratic process, job rotation and confrontation. Terason (2018) noted that the conflicts and managing tactics are categorized into three areas: integration where parties work together; distributive such that one party works against the others and avoidance where the people work away from the other parties. Yet, correct adoption of the either format can work to manage the conflicts and resolve it.

This study focused on four types of strategies adopted in organizations to manage workplace conflicts. They include collaborative strategy, accommodative strategy, negotiation and confrontation strategy. In their study, Adekunle, Abimbola and Ehimen (2019) shared that collaborating implies working together to find mutually satisfactory outcomes or a win-win solution that all parties agree to it. When discussing about accommodating strategy, Erdenk and Altuntaş (2017) shares that through a team of people, one of the parties gives in to the demands of the other, especially when one of the parties is found to be in the wrong.

The negotiation process includes the process of meeting the demands of individual group. The process includes stating the demands, offering counter demands, threats and bluffing until both parties reach an agreement (Ramirez - Marin, Olekalns & Adair, 2019).

Confrontation strategy is more about open and direct communication about feelings, perceptions and issues that lead to conflicts. Mahvar, Farahani and Aryankhesal (2018) revealed that under confrontation all the details must be brought to the open and both parties admit to the presence of a problem and chart a pathway to finding a solution

In today's corporate world, the employees are drawn from a diverse range and as they congregate in one working space, there have been an increase in conflicts at the workplace due to divergent views and personalities (Terason, 2018). The management within an organization is charged with meeting the set targets and to achieve that, they need each employee to performance highly, conflicts bring a negative effect to that prospect. Thus, it is important for the management to put out strategies to manage workplace conflicts to avoid the poor performance (Kathimba & Anyieni, 2018). The Constitutional Commissions and Independent offices draw employees from within Kenya and across the continent who have different personalities and views, hence the need to ensure there is a strategy and a system to handle any workplace conflicts so as to increase employee performance.

This study therefore sought to study workplace conflict management strategies on employee performance at the Constitutional Commissions and Independent offices in Kenya. The study focused on collaborative strategy, accommodation strategy, negotiation strategy and confrontation strategy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is based on the Conflict resolution theory, which emphasizes that the successful conflict resolution process is by efficient mutual problem-solving process. This also equates the dispute resolution process with a competitive process involving the opposing parties in a competition to decide the one who wins and the one who loses. The outcome of the conflict is usually a defeat for both sides. Further, the study considered the theory Cooperation and Competition Theory Deutsch (1949) initially developed this theory and Johnson (1989) expanded it. This theory has two basic concepts. The first is the interdependence of the people involved in a conflict among their goals. The other is the kind of action that the two people involved are taking.

2.1. Collaborative Strategy and Employee Performance

Collaborative strategy is one of the strategies that can solve conflict. In their study Echaabari, Adim and Ihunda (2018) investigated on collaboration strategy and employee performance through a cross sectional survey. The

findings of the study revealed that collaboration strategy and employee performance positively relate to each other. The study recommended that collaboration is one of the veritable tools in dispute resolution and teamwork enhancement and collectiveness among employees. Moreover, in a related study Kumar, Subramanian and Arputham (2018) investigated on the missing link between sustainability collaborative strategy and supply chain performance. The results of the study reveal that both the misalignment of joint planning and resource sharing and collaborative culture influence all dimensions of triple bottom line through dynamic capabilities.

2.2 Accommodating Strategy and Employee Performance

Awan and Saeed (2015) used a case study of Askari Bank Limited to investigate conflict management and organizational performance. The study adopted descriptive analytical techniques such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and variance and factor analysis were applied to help in data analysis and interpretation. The results of the study reveal that education has no impact on respondents' view regarding conflict resolution strategies. The study suggested that the management team adopt the strategies of conflict management to help in improving organizational performance. Accommodating strategy entails a process where one party gives in to another's desires or demands. They are friendly but they are not assertive. More over in a related study by Nneka (2019) who investigated on management of conflict and performance of an organization. The study findings revealed that all the strategies of managing conflict significantly and positively related to the performance of an organization. The study recommended that managers adopt the strategies of managing conflict to help in conflict management in their organizations.

The impact of conflict management on patients care was examined by Abd-Elrhaman and Ghoneimy (2018). The study's aim was to assess how conflict management educational program affects quality of patient care. The study findings revealed that there was a very substantial statistically measurable increase in the awareness of staff nurses about a robust conflict plan. Additionally, there has been extremely statistically important progress in conflict resolution approaches and comprehensive system consistency of patient care. The study concluded that there was a strong, highly systematic, meaningful association between the overall conflict management score and the comprehensive program quality of patient care

Daniel (2015) investigated on how accommodating affects conscientiousness and courtesy in Oil and Gas Companies. The aim of the study was to investigate the extent to which accommodating as a conflict management strategy can create the much-needed conscientiousness and courtesy, which are part of the measures of the organizational citizenship behavior. The study's findings revealed that accommodating and conscientiousness significantly related to each other. Conflict management means the incorporation of all factors that can lead to or prevent conflict resolution. It is impossible to resolved automatically, but learning how to handle them will lower the risks of non-productive escalation

2.3 Negotiation Strategy and Employee Performance

Negotiation is another strategy that organizations can utilize to solve conflict. Researchers have attempted to study negotiation strategy. A study by Mbogo, Wario and Mike (2019) to ascertain how negotiation strategy affects the performance of Kenyan commercial banks. The findings of the study revealed that negotiation strategy is a direct and significant contributor towards performance. From this research, organizations should implement appropriate negotiation strategy to improve the performance of commercial banks. Additionally Kassim, Abdullah and Mansor, (2018) researched on styles adopted by organizations in brokering organizational justice in Malaysia. Through cross sectional design across universities, it was established that procedural and distributive justice bore significant effect followed by compromising and integrating. Further, Izham, Sahadila and Hanim (2017) investigated on the styles of managing conflict used by teachers and the satisfaction of teachers' jobs in Malaysian Primary Schools. The study's aim was to determine styles of managing conflicts among head teachers and how they relate with teacher's job satisfaction. The results of the study revealed that the head teachers used all the five styles including cooperating, adapting, compromising, bargaining and problem-solving style but most of them preferred the use of cooperating style as compared to bargaining style.

Negotiation is an ideal format in securing consensus from all employees of the firm and the groupings that have alternative and divergent views. It makes clear the reason why certain compromises were made and by large

extent determines if the organization will gain understanding and mutual agreements by the opponent party.

Tumwebaze, Wandiba, Olutayo and Kabasinguzi (2020) conducted a study on exploring how negotiations as a strategy for conflict resolution can affect performance of employees. The study conducted at Kampala Capital City Authority in Uganda. The study found out that there was a positive but weak correlation between negotiation strategy and employee performance. Additionally, the study also concluded that negotiation strategy helps to build and strengthen group cohesion and cooperation. The negotiation strategies are best options for contract negotiations between employer employee and conflict resolution for warring parties.

2.4 Confrontation Strategy and Employee Performance

In their attempt to find out how confrontation and avoidance coping affect workplace incivility, Hershcovis, Cameron, Gervais and Bozeman (2018) conducted a study of employees from various occupations in order to draw a series of uncivil interactions between a target and a perpetrator. The findings of the study revealed that confrontation and avoidance are ineffective in preventing recurrence of incivility.

Furthermore, avoidance can lead to increased emotional fatigue, higher incivility and a lower psychological forgiveness. Nevertheless, confrontation management has potential in terms of generating meaningful effects such as relational reconciliation that are beneficial to interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Considering the advantages and necessity of confrontation, for many people the term may evoke negative emotions, particularly employees who are under a training program. As a result, confrontational skills are considered to be the most effective tools used in approaching the technique.

In a related study, Chu (2017) focused on the target perceptions of prejudice confrontations specifically how the confronter group membership affects the perceptions of confrontation motive and target empowerment. While both goal and alliance confrontations are preferable to no confrontation, the results indicate that allies should be mindful of the possible disempowering impact of their confrontation on prejudice goals and the significance of their own motives when engaging in prejudice confrontation. Sometimes workers may find it difficult to fully comprehend the sense and need for successful confrontation due to their own unpleasant experiences of being criticized and challenged and the confrontation with negative feelings. This may lead to the fear of an employee being judged, offended, fear of being incorrect, and fear of failing to perform as planned. Likewise, the weak confrontational skills of managers can also be due to the inability to conceptualize the underlying problem of employees clearly and correctly, which prevents them from effectively using confrontation.

Cox and Devine (2019) conducted research on confrontation-based interventions that can be used to break the habit of prejudice. The confrontation approach is thought to be the best method for resolving unintentional biases, stereotypes, discrimination, implicit biases, and bad habits. Diversity trainings have been taught to reduce prejudice and break bad practices and group trainings works to make the people aware, concerned on the bias and prejudices and actively engage in measures to reduce its implications. The vulnerable and minority groups can feel appreciated and accepted in the workplace when biases and prejudices are eliminated. Confrontation approach allows the people to accept the presence of bad habits and set methods to manage and overcome these bad habits such that the workplace is good for every individual. The article revealed that through confrontation approach and group trainings people learn to recognize and overcome these bad habits. The people are trained and empowered to address biases, stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory attitudes both within them and in their surrounding environment for long-lasting effects.

After a thorough literature review, we developed the following hypotheses to guide the study:

H₀₁: Collaborative strategy has no significant effect on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

H₀₂: Accommodating strategy has no significant effect on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

H₀₃: Negotiation strategy has no significant effect on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

H₀₄: Confrontation strategy has no significant effect on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted descriptive design which is concerned with figuring out what, when, where, and how a phenomenon occurs. The researchers considered the design because of the ease with which the researcher may obtain the opinions of the respondents

The researchers targeted 150 respondents from the thirteen Constitutional Commissions and two independent offices in Kenya. The researchers considered ten heads of departments were picked from each of the thirteen Constitutional Commissions bringing a total of one hundred and thirty respondents and ten from each of the two independent offices adding up to twenty respondents hence the population of study was 150. The sample size was determined by the Kothari (2004) Which translated to 71 respondents The primary data collection instrument was a questionnaires To validate the instrument, a pilot test was done. Reliability was tested by Cronbach's Alpha for internal consistency. In order to establish how the study variables relate to each other, the researcher conducted inferential statistics. These entailed correlating and regressing of the study variables. The Multiple Regression Model followed this format:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where Y= Employee Performance

B₀=Constant

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3$, and β_4 are Coefficients

ε = Error term

X_1 = Collaborative Strategy

X_2 = Accommodating Strategy

X_3 = Negotiation Strategy

X_4 = Confrontation Strategy

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Response Rate

In total, 108 data questionnaires were administered to participants and 71 were dully filled and returned. This was equivalent to a 65.7% response rate.

After collecting the data, various tests were conducted. They included multicollinearity through variance impact factor (VIF). Multicollinearity was determined through Variance of Inflation Factor (VIF) that was 1.028. This value happens to be within the range 1-10. Usually, VIF values between 1-10 shows that there is no multicollinearity in the data set. Normality test indicated a normal distribution and suitable for regression modeling. Further linearity test was conduFcted to determine linier relationship the variables. The result showed a presence of linear relationship between the workplace conflict management strategies and employee performance.

4.2 Correlation Analysis

We conducted Correlation analysis to identify the association or the absence of a relationship between the variables and the results were as shown in the table below

Table 1. Correlation Matrix

		Employee Performance	Collaborative Strategy	Accommodation Strategy	Negotiation Strategy	Confrontation Strategy
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	1				
Collaborative Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0.776	100%			
Accommodation Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0.3	10%	1		
Negotiation Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0.025	5%	0.067	100%	
Confrontation Strategy	Pearson Correlation	0.022	10%	0.067	14%	1

Table 1 shows that while collaborative strategy ($r=.776$) had a strong and positive relationship with performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya, accommodation strategy ($r=.300$) had a moderate relationship while negotiation strategy ($r=.025$) and confrontation strategy ($r=.022$) had a weak and positive relationship. This meant that workplace conflict management strategies had positive relationship with employee performance.

4.3 Regression Results

To establish the effect of conflict management strategies on employee performance, a regression analysis was undertaken. The findings were as follows.

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	St. Error of the Estimate
1	.811 ^a	.657	.636	1.99622

From Table 2 the value of R is 0.811. This means that there existed strong and positive relationship between workplace conflict management strategies and employee performance. The value of R square is 0.657; this meant the overall regression model of the study was fit. The value of adjusted R square is 0.636, this meant that 63.6% change in employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya is by the workplace conflict management strategies that were in place. The residual effect of 36.4% account for factors that influence employee performance that were excluded from the scope of the study.

Table 3. Analysis of Variance

	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	504.293	4	126.073	31.638	.000 ^b
Residual	263.003	66	3.985		
Total	767.296	70			

Table 3 imply that on overall, the regressing model was significant ($F=31.638$, $p<0.05$). Table 4.14 summarizes the coefficients and significance.

Table 4. Coefficients and Significance

	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	11.095	4.311		2.574	.012
Collaborative Strategy	1.029	.098	.762	10.453	.000
Accommodation Strategy	.424	.134	.229	3.155	.002
Negotiation Strategy	.019	.036	.038	.514	.609
Confrontation Strategy	.077	.073	.078	1.061	.293

From table 4. An equation predicted between workplace conflict management strategies and employee performance is shown below

$$Y = 11.095 + 1.029X_1 + 0.424X_2$$

Where Y= Employee performance

X₁= Collaborative Strategy

X₂= Accommodating Strategy

From the findings in Table 4, collaborative strategy ($\beta=1.0298$) exerted the greatest effect on employee performance followed by accommodation strategy ($\beta=.424$), confrontation strategy ($\beta=.077$) and lastly negotiation strategy ($\beta=.019$) respectively. At 5%, only collaborative strategy and accommodating strategy had significant effect on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁: Collaborative strategy has no significant effect on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

From Table 4.5, the p-value of collaborative strategy was .000, which is less than 0.05. Thus, the study rejected hypothesis H₀₁ and inferred that there is sufficient evidence to support the collaborative strategy's effect on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

H₀₂: Accommodating strategy has no significant effect on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

The results in Table 4.5 show the $p < 0.05$. Thus, the study rejected hypothesis H₀₂ and deduced that and inferred that there is sufficient evidence to support the claim that accommodating strategy has an effect on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

H₀₃: Negotiation strategy has no significant effect on employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

The results in Table 4.5 show $p > 0.05$ on negotiation strategy, thus, the study failed to reject hypothesis H₀₃. There is not sufficient evidence to support the claim that negotiation strategy has an effect on employee performance

H₀₄: Confrontation strategy has no significant effect on employee performance of Constitutional

Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya.

Table 4.5 indicate $p > 0.05$ on confrontation strategy. Thus, the study failed to reject hypothesis H_{04} . There is not sufficient evidence to support the claim that confrontation strategy does not have a significant effect on performance

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Collaborative strategy

Correlation Results showed that collaborative strategy ($r = .776$) had a strong and positive relationship with performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya. These findings is in agreement with the work of by Echaabari, Adim and Ihunda (2018) who revealed that collaboration strategy and employee performance positively related to each other. Hidayanto and Setyady (2014) noted that the use of collaborative tools showed a positive impact on team performance. Furher, Assbeihat (2016) also revealed that collaboration positively related to team performance and among the members of the organization.

5.2 Accommodation Strategy and Employee Performance

The Correlation results were that accommodation strategy ($r = .300$) had a moderate relationship with employee performance. The results of regression showed the p-value of accommodating strategy as 0.002, which is less than 0.05. El-Dahshan and Keshk (2014) revealed that the turnover intension and the three conflict management styles (collaboration, compromise and avoiding) significantly and positively related to each other while the turnover intension and the competing style significantly and negatively related to each other. Daniel (2015) revealed that accommodating and conscientiousness significantly related to each other.

5.3. Negotiation Strategy and Employee Performance

The value of average is 3.68, which inferred that negotiation strategy had been adopted in the studied organization as a strategy of managing conflicts. Correlation results showed that negotiation strategy ($r = .025$) had a weak and positive relationship. bargaining style and problem-solving style) were used by the head teachers but most of them preferred the use of cooperating style as compared to bargaining style.

From regression results, the p-value of negotiation strategy is 0.609, which is greater than 0.05. Thus, the study failed to reject hypothesis H_{03} : Mbogo, Wario and Mike (2019) revealed that negotiation strategy significantly and positively influenced the performance of Kenyan commercial banks.

5.4 Confrontation Strategy and Employee Performance

Based on correlation results, confrontation strategy ($r = .022$) had a weak and positive relationship. This means that workplace conflict management strategies have positive relationship with employee performance. Momanyi and Juma (2016) observed that organizations are faced with various challenges including variation in ways of dealing with conflicts and the growing level of competition in limited resources.

Regression results, the p-value of confrontation strategy was given as 0.293, which is greater than 0.05. Thus, the study failed to reject hypothesis H_{04} . The finding was inconsistent with Hershcovis, Cameron, Gervais and Bozeman (2018) who revealed that confrontation and avoidance are ineffective in preventing reoccurrence of incivility. Alsomali, Osman and Alzahrani (2016) revealed that confrontation is considered to be one of the main methods used to support the employees' wellbeing. Longe (2015) revealed that the strategies of conflict management which included collective bargaining, compromise, and accommodation positively and significantly related to the performance of an organization.

5.5 Recommendations of the Study

Based on regression results, the study recommends for an improvement in collaborative strategy as doing so would significantly enhance employee performance of Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in

Kenya.

The Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya should improve on effectiveness of accommodation strategies in place for enhancing employee performance.

There is need to overhaul the negotiation strategies and practices at Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya. In order to ensure they significantly enhance employee performance.

Further enhancement and improvement is required to the existing confrontation strategies and practices at Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya so as to significantly enhance employee performance.

5.6 Areas for Further Research

Strategies for managing conflicts at the place of work and their interplay with performance of employees was the central theme in the present study, future studies should focus on other variables like employee motivation or employee engagement. The present study was done at Constitutional Commissions and Independent Offices in Kenya, future studies can be conducted in State Corporations in Kenya.

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