Teachers' Perceptions on the Head Teachers' Conflict Management Strategies in Solving Teachers' Conflict at Workplace: A case of Iringa Municipality-Tanzania

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Abstract

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of the head teachers' conflict management strategies in solving teachers' conflict at the workplace in Iringa Municipality. The study employed a mixed-methods research approach with a convergent parallel design. A study sample involved six (6) head teachers and 60 teachers from six public primary schools who were selected by using a simple random sampling technique and purposive sampling technique respectively. Data were collected through interviews and questionnaires. Qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis, whereas quantitative data were analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. The study found that the head teachers used different conflict management strategies in solving teachers' conflicts including guidance and counselling, avoidance, participatory, warning letters and verbal warnings. In addition, participatory strategy, guidance counselling and collaboration were more effective in solving teachers' conflicts than warning letters, avoidance and verbal warnings because they bring about negative outcomes when they are applied in solving teachers' conflicts. Therefore, head teachers should find alternative ways to help teachers understand different conflict management strategies.

Keywords: Conflicts, Management Strategies, Public Primary Schools

1.0   Introduction

In any environment, institution or organization, conflict is inevitable due to differences among individuals' ideas, desires, perceptions and needs. Conflict situations are inevitable in one personal life, organizations or between nations because of many reasons including but not limited to the differences among individuals' ideas, desires, perceptions, and needs (Abiodun, 2014). Conflicts are an integral part of a human's life in all aspects; one cannot avoid conflicts at work or even when watching the news on television (Barmao, 2012). However, everyone wants to know what is conflict. Patzak (2012) defines conflict as an antagonistic state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more parties.

Although, conflict is an antagonist kind of relationship among individuals in the work place, in the end may lead to either positive or negative outcomes in the organization. Adhiambo and Enose (2011) denoted that conflict brings stress and discomfort due to the fear of the unknown; hence, it is a depressing and frustrating state of affairs between the parties involved. Conflict affects the smooth running of the teaching and learning process, but, if carefully examined and managed it leads to peaceful coexistence between teachers and their school leaders. Nebgen (1978) conducted a study on conflict management in educational administration in the USA the study found that for effective conflict management head teachers use rational approaches to conflict management.

Conflict in any organization including schools usually leads to poor communication. Poor communication is a hindrance to the organization moving as a result it affects production and finally leads to failure to meet the desired organizational outcome Morake, Monabe and Dingwe (2011) stressed that conflict is a disagreement form in the organization,

which might lead to poor communication in an organization. This results in compromise or further appreciation of opposite views.

According to Hoban (2004), the consequences of conflict can be described as positive. The reason behind this is that conflict is like a mirror that reflects our image to see how properly or improperly our outlook is. In general view, conflicts help determine the course of such conflicts and find out the solution. Daresh (2002) argued that conflicts can lead to the end of communication and personal animosity among members within the organization. In this case, the results of conflict bring about negative effects on the running of the organization.

Conflicts are of various forms as described by Hussein and Al-Mamary (2019) and, Kipruto and Kipkemboi (2013). They may occur within an individual (i.e., the situation of the dilemma of choice, caught on the horns of the dilemma, or brightly characterised by phrases such as "between the devil and the deep blue sea"). Also, they may occur between two individuals (i.e., the cases of superiors versus subordinates. They can happen between heads of departments, etc., in an organization. Within groups, conflicts may occur based on performance, importance to particular groups and, in general, union–management rivalries (Thuo, 2017).

Any form of conflict that occurs in an organization must have a course. No conflict can arise without any reason or factor that influenced such a situation to happen. Thuo and Shaka (2017) identified factors, which are believed to be the main source of conflict in schools: lack of provision of resources on time, unwise use and unfair allocation of resources, lack of adequate funding, poor infrastructure in the school compounds, inadequate reference books,un-conducive work environment and none existence of recreation centres, inadequate teaching and learning

materials and Misunderstanding, gossip being dishonest, and disrespect misinterpretation of rules and regulation.

At the public primary school level, teachers' conflicts are caused by inadequate education teachers' welfare and personalities mismatch (Okotoni & Okotoni, 2003). Also, other causes of conflicts are such as power struggles, scarcity of resources (Broni 2012), changes in teaching and learning processes, cultural differences and environmental changes (Gumusel & Ozge, 2009). The conflict if not solved effectively leads to a negative impact on schools such as hindering schools from achieving their goals, and creating suspicion, tension and stress among the teachers (Broni, 2012).

On the other hand, Bano et al. (2013) and Ramani and Zhimin (2010) stressed that if conflicts are properly handled, benefits may occur; contributing to solidarity within conflicting groups and reconciliation of legitimate interests where, in turn, relationships are strengthened, there is enhanced identification of problems and solutions, increased knowledge/skills and peace is safeguarded.

The school as a microcosm of society brings together different views of the world, and different ways of thinking and living, thus becoming a space for representing social differences and being a place where different conflicts occur daily Valente et al. (2020). According to Valente et al. (2020), the school builds a social interface favourable to involvement, where conflicts proliferate in the educational process complexity, being common and daily in schools. Thus, in primary schools, different types of conflict occur, and it is a challenge for most teachers to know how to face, manage, and resolve these conflicts.

Teachers often perceive conflicts as indiscipline, violence, disrespect, and like all situations threatening their authority, inexperienced and experienced teachers emphasize the teachers' conflict as a frequent situation in schools. The different approaches applied in solving conflicts by head teachers in schools were such as persuasion, compromising and confrontation. It is against this background that this study sought to determine teachers' perceptions of the head teachers' conflict management strategies in solving teachers' conflict at work place. The study was guided by two objectives:

a) To analyse the strategies head teachers apply in solving teachers' conflict.
b) To assess the effectiveness of the strategies that head teachers apply in solving teachers' conflicts at work place.

2.0   Theoretical Framework

This study adapted Group Conflict Theory by Robbins found in 2003. The central theme of this theory is that most organizational conflicts are managed through approaches to conflict management such as stimulation, negotiations and resolutions. The theory identifies cooperativeness and assertiveness as two main management strategies in which conflicts can be solved. From the two ways, the theory further identifies five ways of solving conflict competing, collaboration, accommodation, compromising and avoiding. The application of the guided the researcher in finding the management strategies head teachers have in solving teachers' conflicts in public primary schools. Also, the application of the mentioned approaches which are compromise, avoidance, collaboration guidance and counselling was helpful when determining teachers' perceptions of the head teachers' conflict management strategies in solving teachers' conflict at work place in

public primary schools for the effectiveness of school teacher job performance.

2.1   Strategies Head Teachers Apply in Solving Teachers' Conflict

Various literatures have pointed out various conflict management strategies applied by the head teachers in solving teacher conflict. Mwambungulu's (2015) study revealed that head teachers had no single strategy of solving conflict in schools: Such strategies include the use of school boards as conflict mediators, the use of regular staff meetings, guidance and counselling and altering human variables in managing conflict in schools. It was also clear that, such mentioned conflict management strategies employed by head teachers became functional according to the nature of the conflict. Hellriegel and Slocum (2000) denoted that head teachers used avoidance strategy to minimize the possibility of escalating conflict. However, employing an avoidance strategy often frustrate teacher. They added that teachers identified that the domination strategy was commonly used by head teachers in school because of their position or rank.

2.2   Effectiveness of the Strategies that Head Teachers Apply in Solving Teachers' Conflicts at Workplace

Head teachers apply various conflict management strategies to the schools they lead so that to create a peaceful working environment for the sake of making teaching environments conducive and effective for pupils learning. Wachira (2011) denoted that three conflict management strategies had a significant relationship with teachers' job satisfaction; compromising and accommodating were positively related to teachers' job satisfaction, while domination was significant and negatively related to teachers' job satisfaction.

Johnson and Johnson (2006) have listed some of the positive school conflict management strategies outcomes, such as focusing attention on problems to be solved, clarifying disputants' identity and values, revealing how disputants need to change, increasing higher-level cognitive and moral reasoning, increasing motivation to learn, providing insights into other perspectives and life experiences, strengthening relationships, adding fun and drama to life, increasing disputants' ability to cope with stress and be resilient in the face of adversity, and increasing general psychological health.

The constructive results depend on the competencies parties apply in managing their conflicts. The most productive conflict management strategies are those that tend to take into account the interests of both parties and also those avoidance strategies tend to be less productive. The integrative solution to interpersonal conflicts requires mutual facing of the problem and taking part in mutual problem-solving discussions to reach a rational agreement, which is also a mutual advantage for both sides of the conflict (Ciuladiene & Kairiene, 2017). Dogan (2016) has cautioned that preferring mostly the strategy of domination by teachers may be evaluated as clamping down on teachers. Wrong choices made by head teachers negatively affect teachers as well as the relation between those teachers and it does not contribute to a solution.

3.0 Materials and Methods

The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach with a contingent parallel design. This study was conducted in Iringa Municipality involving six public primary schools. The respondents of this study consisted of 6 head teachers and 60 teachers. The head teachers were purposively selected because of their virtue in their positions as managers that they have sufficient information on the outcomes of

conflict management strategies they apply when solving teachers' conflicts in their schools.

Teachers were randomly selected because of their character of possessing related information as regards the study objectives. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Data analysis involved coding, entry and analysing using descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics used for quantitative involved frequencies and percentages under the assistance of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20.0. While qualitative data were analysed thematically under research themes and sub-themes.

4.0   Findings

The study determined teachers' perceptions of the head teachers' conflict management strategies in solving teachers' conflict at work place in Iringa Municipality, Tanzania. The result section was guided by two research objectives.

4.1   Strategies Head Teachers Apply in Solving Teachers' Conflict

In attempting the question head teachers were asked to indicate various conflict management strategies they apply in solving teachers' conflicts. Of the six (6) head teachers interviewed, the view that the strategies they apply in solving teachers' conflicts were participatory strategies whereby teachers participate in solving and arranging school timetables and planning for school programmes avoidance which implies that head teachers use various strategies to make sure that any sign of conflict occurrence is avoided, warning letter which are given to teachers who are guilt of coursing a problem to let him or her know the fault made and change the behaviour, collaboration strategy, which entails that solving a problem in collaboration with teachers, verbal warning strategy whereby

head teachers reprimand orally the teacher who is verified to be the initiator of the conflict and the use of guidance and counselling strategy to individuals who are in conflicts. Confirming this, the Head Teacher from School F said:

> *I don't take teachers for granted on this matter, my experience as Head teacher, I have worked and I still working with some teachers who are more experienced than some of us, as they have been in the public service for so long and with such experience, they know about strategies applied in solving teachers' conflicts in schools. By saying so, I consult them for advice and sometimes engage them in handling disciplinary issues in my schools. Though my doubt is with junior teachers, who are less experienced, though with time I'm sure they are used to these things* (Interview with Head Teacher6, School F, 23rd March, 2022).

This implies that head teachers collaborate with experienced teachers in solving teachers' conflicts. They consider some ideas from others in solving school-based conflicts. This finding is in line with the Group Conflict Theory by Robbins found in 2003 which stressed that most organizational conflicts are managed through approaches to conflict management such as stimulation, negotiations and resolutions. The theory identifies cooperativeness and assertiveness as two main management strategies in which conflicts can be solved.

Another Head Teacher from School A had also confessed that teachers understand strategies applied in conflict management:

> *School management is not a man show; I engage teachers in several issues even issues of settling conflicts which*

emerge in the day-to-day operations of the school as an institution. By doing so, teachers get to know what measures are to be taken for any kind of misbehaviour or misconduct (Interview with Head Teacher₁, School A, 15ᵗʰ March 2022).

This is also signifying that head teachers do not relay on a single strategy when solving teacher's conflicts rather, they apply multiple strategies to ensure the situation is settled. This finding is also in line with the theory that guided this study which is the group conflict theory by Robbin (2003). This theory shows that cooperativeness is one of the main management strategies in which conflict can be solved. Concerning this argument, counselling guidance, and collaboration cannot be done without the involvement of other people, especially the skilled and knowledgeable ones in solving disputes.

4.2 Effectiveness of the Strategies that Head Teachers Apply in Solving Teachers' Conflicts at the Workplace

In the second objective, the researcher sought to assess the effectiveness of the strategies that head teachers apply in solving teachers' conflicts at work place. The findings of this objective are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Teachers' Responses on Effectiveness of the Strategies that Head Teachers Apply in Solving Teachers' Conflicts at Workplace

S/N	Conflict Management strategy	Effectiveness Level				
		Very poor F (%)	Poor F (%)	Average F (%)	Good F (%)	Excellent F (%)
1	Use of guidance and counselling	0 (0%)	8 (13.3%)	6(10%)	20(33.3%)	26(43.3%)
2	Use of participatory strategy	0 (0%)	2(3.3%)	4(6.7%	26(43.3%)	28(46.7%)

3	Use of verbal warning strategy	8(13.3%)	10(16.7%)	12(20%)	18(30%)	12(20%)
4	Use of avoidance strategy	38(63.3%)	15(25%)	3(5.0%)	4(6.7%)	0(0%)
5	Use of warning letter strategy	36(60%)	12(20%)	8(13.3%)	3(5.0%)	1(1.7%)
6	Use of collaboration strategy	0(0%)	2(3.3%)	4(6.7%)	18(30%)	32(53.3%)

Source: Field Data

Findings are shown in Table 1 present different levels of effectiveness of different conflict management strategies applied by head teachers in solving teachers' conflicts in the work place.

4.2.1 Use of guidance and counselling

With regard to the application of guidance and counselling in solving teachers' conflicts finding as presented in Table 1 shows that 20(33.3%) and 26(43.3%) teachers rated in favour by indicating "good" and "Excellent" on the effectiveness of applying the strategy in solving teachers' conflicts in the work place. However, findings further show that 8(13.3%) teachers rated "poor" and none of them rated "very poor", although 6(10%) rated "average". This implies that the strategy is effective in solving teachers' conflict as a fact that 46(76.6%) teachers rated very well.

These findings from questionnaires match with findings from interviews held with Head Teachers, who also showed that the strategies had positive outcomes in solving teachers' conflicts in schools. Head teachers indicated that the strategy is effective as it incapacitates some sort of teaching on how someone can get rid of conflict and sometimes avoid the conflict from occurring. Confirming this, the Head teacher argued that:

> *Among the effective strategies in solving teachers' conflict is guidance and counselling. This strategy is appreciated by the majority of teachers as they recommend it as one which relies on humanistic and it is more valuable because it gives the counselee a lot of input that will make him or her regret and vow not to repeat such an action* (Interview with Head Teacher$_4$, School D, 16th March, 2022).

This entails that guidance and counselling was regarded as one of the effective strategies in solving teachers' conflicts. Therefore, findings from both questionnaires and interview sessions revealed that guidance and counselling is an effective strategy when applied in solving teachers' conflicts however, few respondents had a view that the strategies were less effective in some complex matters. These findings are in line with the study by Ciuladiene and Kairiene (2017) who noted that the most productive conflict management strategies are those that tend to take into account the interests of both parties. Integrative solution to interpersonal conflicts requires mutual facing of the problem and taking part in mutual problem-solving discussions to reach a rational agreement, which is also a mutual advantage for both sides of the conflict.

4.2.2 Use of participatory strategy

About outcomes associated with the use of participatory strategy in solving teachers' conflict in solving teachers' conflicts, findings as presented in Table 1 showed that: 26(43.3%) and 28(46.73%) teachers rated in favour by indicating "good" and "Excellent" respectively on the outcome of using the participatory strategy in solving conflicts in schools. However, findings further show that a few teachers 2(3.3%) rated "poor"; on the other hand, about 4(6.7%) rated "average". The fact that the majority of teachers supported the approach shows that the

strategy is effective when applied by the Head teachers in public primary schools.

In the same line, findings from interview sessions with Head Teachers revealed that the majority of them (4 out of 6) were of the view that the strategy is very effective as it is associated with positive outcomes when it is employed in solving conflicts in schools. However, fewer head teachers opined against participatory strategy by showing that not always the approach is effective because it is not applicable in solving all kinds of conflicts. Confirming positive outcomes of participatory strategy, one Head Teacher had this to say:

> *Among other effective strategies I apply in solving teachers' conflicts when they arise in my school is the use of participatory strategy. With this strategy, many teachers appreciate it as it makes them part of many decisions reached. For example, when arranging school daily routine and other schedules, we sit together with teachers and share ideas and opinions on how it should be done and who should be responsible* (Interview with Head Teacher$_2$, School B, 22nd March, 2022).

However, for the few Head Teachers who viewed that the approach is associated with negative outcomes to the extent of judging it as not effective, one had this to comment:

> *Participation of teachers in conflict management is worthy but it is not the only solution to solve teacher conflicts in the school. I have a notable example here I once was involved with some teachers in solving one conflict whereby one staff misbehaved. To my surprise, they teamed up against me. So as a head, I'm very selective in using a*

> *participatory strategy* (Interview with Head Teacher₅, School E, 21ˢᵗ March, 2022).

Generally, findings obtained during interview sessions and questionnaires, research participants responded that participatory strategy is very effective in managing conflicts in schools. On the other side, the strategy is less effective for issues which need only the head teachers' decisions. These findings are in line with the studies by Wachira (2011) which revealed that three conflict management strategies had a significant relationship with teachers' job satisfaction. Domination was significant and negatively related to teachers' job satisfaction while compromising and accommodation were positively related to teachers' job satisfaction. The fact that these teachers acknowledged such strategies implies that they effective conflict management strategies in solving teachers' conflicts.

4.2.3 Verbal warning strategy

Regarding outcomes of verbal warning as a strategy in solving Teacher conflicts in public primary schools, the research findings as presented in Table 1 revealed that 18(30.0%) and 12(20.0%) teachers rated in favour by indicating "good" and "Excellent" respectively on the outcome of using the verbal warning strategy in managing conflicts in schools. However, findings further show that a few teachers 10(16.7%) rated "poor"; on the other hand, about 12(20.0%) rated "average". The fact that the majority of teachers supported the approach by indicating good and excellent (equivalent to 50%) outcomes of the approach shows that the strategy is effective when used by Head teachers in public primary schools. However, it is also evident from the findings that there is a significant number (18 teachers equivalent to 30.0%) of teachers who showed pessimistic about the outcomes of verbal warnings as conflict management strategies.

On the other hand, during interview sessions with Head Teacher C, this category of respondents responded that verbal warning is fairly effective in most of the conflicts and less effective in some conflicts. Head teacher A had this to say:

> *A verbal warning is effective only in conflicts which arise as the effect of not fulfilling responsibilities. When a teacher for several times comes late to school or underperforms his or her duties, I usually call them into my office and discuss the matter to diagnose the causes of such faulty then at the end I warn the individual not to repeat such habit. This strategy has proven to be less effective for most teachers as they regard having a discussion with the head teacher as a kind of joke and not serious and makes them disobedient to the agreement* (Interview with Head Teacher$_1$, School A, 15th March, 2022).

Therefore, the findings from both the interview sessions and questionnaires revealed that verbal warning is fairly effective in some nature of conflicts such as conflict by the teachers not fully fulfilling their responsibility or underperforming their duties or the teacher having committed a mistake for the first time when it can be applied.

4.2.4 Avoidance strategy

On the other hand, regarding outcomes of the avoidance strategy in solving teachers' conflicts in public primary schools, the research findings as presented in Table 1 showed that the majority of teachers 15(25.0%) rated "poor"; on the other hand. about 38(63.3%) rated "average" 3(5.0%). It is evident from these findings that the majority of teachers are of the view that the use of avoidance strategy does not end-up in solving conflicts rather it leaves conflicts unsolved. However, very few teachers 4(6.7%) rated in favour of this strategy by indicating

"good" on the outcomes of using the avoidance strategy in managing conflicts in schools.

Equally, during interview sessions with head teachers, this group of respondents showed mixed feelings regarding the usefulness/outcomes of avoidance as a strategy for solving teachers' conflict among teachers. Some Head teachers said that the strategy is associated with good outcomes, although others reacted that the strategy had negative outcomes. Head teacher F had this to say:

> *Remaining silent when a conflict arises among teachers sometimes is effective. That is, I can see the situation and remain silent for a while then while thinking about the way forward to solve the conflict. Many teachers when they come to my office to seek assistance in their conflict resolution, see I am not taking fast actions see as if I am negligent and less concerned about their situations, and they go through the conflict they have* (Interview with Head teacher$_6$, School F,17th March 2022).

According to the findings from both interview sessions and questionnaires, respondents reacted that avoidance is effective only for issues or conflicts which need critical thinking before some measures are taken. For instance, fighting in work place might have been caused by their life style but to a great extent is fairly effective since it mostly makes the conflict rejuvenate into a complex conflict as teachers perceive differently when the head teacher remains silent without taking any action in solving the conflict. This finding is in line with the study findings by Ciuladiene and Kairiene (2012), who said avoidance strategies tend to be less productive in solving teacher conflicts as they tends to create more enmity between individuals at work place.

4.2.5 Warning letters

With regard to outcomes associated with the use of warning letters strategy in solving Teacher conflicts in public primary schools, the research findings as presented in Table 1 showed that 36(60.0%) teachers rated "poor", and about 12 (20.0%) rated "average" 8 (13.3%). It is evident from these findings that the majority of teachers are of the view that the use of the warning letters strategy does not end-up in solving conflicts rather it leaves conflicts unsolved but also incubates conflicts. However, very few teachers 3(5.0%) rated "good" and 1 (1.7%) rated "excellent" indicating "good" on the outcome of using of warning letters strategy in managing conflicts in schools.

Likewise, during interview sessions with head teachers, some head teachers had said that the application of warning letters as a strategy for solving teachers' conflict is an effective strategy and some had said is less effective as is associated with both positive and negative outcomes. Head teachers who were of the view that the use of warning letters is an effective measure in conflict solving had said that the teachers who are warned with letters are those who have been warned several times using other measures such as verbal warning. Therefore, if teachers were warned several times previously and repeat the same mistake several times, they use warning letters.

The findings revealed that the use of warning letters in solving teachers' conflict is powerful than any other means because there is a maximum limit of warning letters to be given to the teachers mostly it is three times, afterwards other actions such as salary reduction, redundant from work, or any other saviour measures will be taken against the conflict respondent. Therefore, teachers have fear of the outcomes of the maximum number of warning letters limit; they try to avoid conflict by

themselves. Confirming this, Head teacher from school A had this to say:

> *Giving warning letters to teachers who cause conflicts is a very active measure, especially for administrators but not for our subordinates. The effectiveness of this strategy is that teachers are afraid of being warned through warning letters because it is the last and the topmost punishment that can lead to someone even losing a job. Therefore, teachers are very sensitive when they hear that I am about to give a warning letter to some teachers, hence things start moving well without any act of conflict among the teachers* (Interview with Head Teacher$_1$, School A, 15th March, 2022).

On the other side, there are head teachers who said that the application of warning letters in solving teachers' conflicts is not effective. They gave the reasons that warning letters hasten conflicts as they make teachers more aggressive instead of changing their misbehaviours. They also said the use of warning letters demoralizes teachers working morale as most of the time they end up thinking of being fired or their salary being reduced. The Respondent's Head teacher from School C had this to say:

> *If I warn my teachers by writing them warning letters, they do not show signs of changing their behaviour. They sometimes say if I give them a warning letter there is no problem because writing a warning letter is the role of the head teacher. Moreover, a warning letter is not effective in the initial stages of the problem, but is useful when the problem is matured but the verbal warning is commonly used* (Interview with Head Teacher$_3$, School C, 17th March 2022).

According to the findings obtained from both questionnaires and interview sessions, some of the respondents responded that the application of warning letters in solving teachers' conflict is effective especially when other strategies have not succeeded. On the other hand, some respondents have said that the strategy is less effective as it demoralizes teachers working morale. This finding is similar to the claim in the theory guiding this study which is group conflict theory pioneered by Robbins found in (2003). Head teachers ought to apply multiple strategies including waning letters is solve teachers' conflicts effectively. However, the clients perceive it as a negative one.

4.2.6 Collaboration strategy

Concerning outcomes associated with the use of collaboration strategy in solving teachers' conflict, findings as presented in Table 1 showed that, 18(30.0%) and 32(53.3%) teachers rated in favour by indicating "good" and "Excellent" respectively on the outcome of using the collaboration strategy in managing conflicts in schools. However, findings further show that few teachers 2(3.3%) rated "poor" and 4(6.7%) rated "average". The fact that the majority of teachers supported the approach shows that the strategy is effective when applied by Head teachers in public primary schools.

Similar findings were obtained from interviews with Head Teachers; almost all 6 Head teachers were of the view that collaboration is very effective in solving teachers' conflict. They further responded that for the conflict to be solved there is a need to have a team which contributes ideas on how to go about solving the conflict. The findings further revealed that the strategy is not biased it makes the one who caused the conflict accept the decisions and the agreement as the way to reform.

Collaboration strategy has positive outcomes in solving conflicts in schools. Head teacher D said that:

> *In my school, I normally apply a collaborative conflict-solving strategy when I see the nature of conflict and the effect of such conflict in the school atmosphere. For the teachers who normally do not respond positively to another conflict-solving strategy, the only cure to such conflicts is to involve various people so that we can come up with the right solution to a problem as a team. This supports a Swahili saying that a single finger cannot kill a lice or a single hand cannot carry a bee hive* (Interview with Head Teacher$_4$, School D, 16th March, 2022).

It was also found that, apart from positive outcomes associated with the use of collaboration. During interviews, head teachers are precaution that if the approach is not properly used it may lead to other new conflicts for example, one of the members who was involved in solving a conflict may not have the capability of retaining confidential deliberations he or she may start spreading information on the fault a teacher committed.

The findings from questionnaires and interview sessions, the majority of respondents have a positive view that the use of collaboration as a conflict solving strategy is more effective as it is associated with several good outcomes. The decisions reached are always not owned by a person. Although, some respondents argued that the strategy is less effective as it is time-consuming and may yield other conflicts. This finding is in line with the findings by Hargreaves (2003), Hellrieged and Slocum (2000) and Wachira (2011). For instance, a study by Hargreaves (2003) showed that no any head of school or department could manage conflict at his or her working place if he or she escaped involvement approach in settling disputes.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

From the study, it can be concluded that teachers have good knowledge and understanding of conflict management strategies their head teachers apply in solving teachers' conflicts; such strategies are guidance and counselling, participatory, collaboration, avoidance, verbal warnings and warning letters. However, teachers understand that among the mentioned conflict management strategies, there are some management strategies which are perceived positively and some negatively ones. On the other side, the research findings show that teachers have negative reactions because they were not satisfied by the application of warning letters, verbal warnings and avoidance strategies as they do not enrich the knowledge of the one who made a mistake rather than intensifying the conflict and setting him or her in more stressful side.

Likewise, the study shows that most teachers showed negative reactions to some of the conflict management strategies the head teachers apply in solving teachers' conflicts such strategies were avoidance and the use of warning letters, on the other hand, the findings show that the conflict management strategies which majority of teachers had positive reactions when applied by head teachers in solving teachers conflicts in public primary schools. Such strategies are participatory, collaboration, guidance and counselling.

Furthermore, the head teachers should find alternative ways to help teachers understand different conflict management strategies, their application and their importance in each strategy. Also, the Head teachers should prepare good working conditions for teachers to minimize stress to teachers who are always conflict creators. Furthermore, Conflict management strategies should be included as a topic in pre-service teachers' training courses to nurture teachers with relevant strategies and knowledge on managing conflicts. On the other

hand, Head teachers and teachers should be trained through job training and seminars on conflict management strategies. This will be helpful for them because everybody will know the relevant work regulations, limitations and responsibilities at school.

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