# Conflicts and Conflict Management Styles in Secondary Schools in Tanzania: Perceptions of Employees

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigated conflict management styles in Tanzanian secondary schools. Three issues are addressed by this study. These are the types of conflicts that exist in secondary schools; the conflict management styles adopted, as well as the relationship between conflict management styles and secondary schools' performance. The study involved 161 respondents (36 heads of schools and 125 Teachers). The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach with a cross-sectional design. The data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software whereas qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. The research findings revealed that the schools face two types of conflicts which are process and task conflicts. Of the two, task conflicts are dominant as compared to process conflicts. The research findings show that conflicts in schools arise due to failure to fulfil one's responsibility, favouritism and professional inadequacy of personnel. Also, school authorities use the disciplinary committee as well as guidance and counselling as preliminary actions toward conflict management. When things get tough, professional conflict management styles are applied. The most applied styles are compromising, collaboration, and sometimes accommodating. These provide reasonable positive effects on performance. Finally, the study findings show that management styles used have impacts on the performance of secondary schools. Poorly managed conflicts negatively affect performance, but effective management of conflicts enhances performance. It is recommended, therefore, that schools should view conflicts as necessary to their operational life. However, they need to be aware of their origins (causes and types) so that a relevant management style is adopted for the best results. Also, the study recommends training for heads of schools and teachers so that their ability to deal with conflicts is optimized*

**Keywords:** Conflicts, conflicts type, conflict management, conflict managementstyles

**INTRODUCTION**

Recently, organizations are striving to achieve high performance to stay competitive in the market. In the process of meeting their customers' needs and preset goals, schools and many other business organizations, face many challenges including teacher turnover, lack of technologyand conflicts (Farooq*et al.*, 2015). Longe (2015) noted that fora healthy and vibrant organization, conflicts cannot be avoided. The conflicts arise in these organizations due to several reasons including scarcity of freedom, position and resources. Rum *et al*. (2013) argued that employees inorganizations have different agendas, values, perspectives and objectives. As such, this brings tension,as there is no way that their interests will be compatible. Such a condition calls foreffective mechanisms to manage conflicts if raised. The reason behind this is that conflicts, if not well managed, become time-consuming and limit the effectiveness of any institution, including secondary schools(Ojo&Abolade, 2008). Additionally,conflicts may result ina stressful, unhappy, distressing, depressing, annoying, and frustrating state of affairs, hence can affect an organization's performance. Thus,it is argued here that conflicts need to be carefully managed using proper conflict management styles.Conflict can occur when group or team members have either strong differences in values, beliefs, or goals; have high levels of task or lateral interdependence; are competing for scarce resources or rewards; or are under high levels of stress(Hughes *et al*. 2006).

This results in role ambiguity and role conflict, as well as a lack of communication between parties(Hughes *et al*. 2006;Luthans, 2005). These may result in negative impacts at the workplace, includingdistortion of organization goals and poor realization of achievements, misallocation of organizationswhich may be diverted to war face at the expense of development and peace.Sub-optimization of part of the system could occur when disputants push their positions to the extreme but neither with any positive result, only destruction and emotional stress often arise and many results inthe mental health of some combatants (Sagimo, 2002). Inspired bythe negativity of conflicts at working places, Hotepo*etal*.; (2010) reveal that organizational conflicts are inevitable;most organizations need more constructive conflicts. The presence of conflicts in any organization shows that the organization is vibrant, altering and permits views from different people to avail and it is asign of growth, diversity and self-actualization (Pondy, 1992). Luthans (2005) argued that conflicts have positive effects onthe organization;they increase efforts and a better understanding of others. Conflicts may result in better decision-making as key issues may surface and critical thinking stimulated. These positive aspects of conflicts are the key to the performance of the organization when conflicts are well

managed at the working place. Conflict management is a process that turns a conflict into a production means (Bateman & Snell 2007). Indeed, conflicts are a critical issue in organizations' performance. They are to be carefully and efficiently managed to reduce the negative effects. The role of the management team in any organization is to turn a conflict into productive and not into a limitation. Rahim and Magner (1995) present five conflict managementstyles widely used by educational practitioners.Such styles are integrating, obliging, dominating, avoidance and compromising. Jeremiah (2013) argued that conflicts in schools are caused by misunderstandings, not taking instruction, poor communication, lack of commitment, poor management and differences. Another study carriedout in Kinondoni District reveals that heads of schools had little knowledge and skills on how to manage conflicts (Ignace, 2014). All of the mentioned causes suggest the presence of conflicts in schools. The current study ascertainsthe causes of conflicts, types of conflicts in schools and the effectiveness of conflict management styles adopted by schools. The presence of conflicts in schools limits the effectiveness of a particular school in attaining its goal and performance (Ojo&Abolade, 2008). This suggests the necessity of investigating the cause and appropriate solution to a specific conflict in a school. According to Rum et al. (2013),organizations have employees who have different agendas, values, perspectives and objectives. Arguably, this applies to schools in Morogoro district as teachers, students and other employees have different backgrounds, perspectives and interests.

Therefore, conflicts reduce the performance of any organization. Thus, it is assumed that the poor performance of some schools in Morogoro district was probably led by the existence of conflicts. There has been notable evidence that shows poor performance of schools despite the strategic implementation of various programmes such as SEDP which is intended to enhance performance (Mkumbo, 2010). Kisinga (2012) suggests that there is a need to carefully find out the actual causes of conflicts and the strategies to mitigate them so as to enhance performance. This signifies the need fora critical study on conflict management styles and their roles on schools' performance in secondary schools Basedon the observation made, this study examinedconflicts and conflict management styles in Tanzanian secondary schools. Past empirical studies tried to espouse issues of conflict management styles in secondary schools. However, most of them did not associate conflict managementstyles (avoiding, integrating, obliging, dominating and compromising) with performance in secondary schools, especially in

Tanzania. The current study addressesthis knowledge gap.Particularly,the current study examinedthe common types of conflicts in schools and prominent conflict management styles.The specific objectives were to identify the types of conflicts experienced in Secondary Schools; to identify the conflict management styles adopted to address conflicts in schools,and to determine the relationship between conflict management styles and Secondary School performance.

**Conflicts Types**
Jehn (1995), John (1997) and JehnandMannix (2001) classified conflict into three types. These are relational, task and process conflicts. Jehn (1995) argued thatrelationship conflict exists when there are interpersonal incompatibilities among group members, including personality clashes, tension, animosity and annoyance. Murmninham and Conlon (1991) stated that relationship conflicts result in negative individual emotions such as anxiety, mistrust, resentment, frustration, tension and fear of being rejected by other team members. Task conflicts arise due to disagreements about the content of tasks and work goals such as the distribution of resources, procedures, and interpretation of facts (Jehn, *et al.,* 1999). Task conflicts result in differing viewpoints, ideas and opinions, and may coincide with animated discussions and personal excitement. The advantages of task conflict include improving the use of debate within a team which results in quality ideas and innovation, hence raisingthe organization's performance (Tjosvold*et al.,* 1992). However, task conflicts can cause negative impacts such as job dissatisfaction, lack of teamwork and increased anxiety (Kabanoff, 1991).According to Jehn and Mannix (2001), process conflicts refer to disagreement about how a task should be accomplished, individuals' responsibilities and delegation. Employees may disagree about whose responsibility it is to complete a specific duty. In this aspect, employees find themselves in a situation where they are not motivated to do their responsibilities at their maximum capacity, hence resultingin decreased productivity and poor team performance (Jehn, 1999). This study, therefore, adopts Jehn and colleagues' approaches toclassifying conflicts.

**Conflictsand Conflicts Management Styles**
Conflict, although perceived negatively, needs to be effectively managed rather than eliminated (Brahnam*etal.,* 2005). Managers should never think of eliminating all conflict but rather should try to keep conflict at a moderate and functional level to promote change efforts that are profitable to the organization (Jones & George,

2006). This can successfully be done when the types and sources of conflicts are well known and particular strategies for each type and source are devised for effective management that maximizes the goal attainment of the organization. Bateman and Snell (2007) believe that conflict management tries to make the conflict to be as productive as possible. This can be achieved when different parties in aparticular conflict believe that they have benefited, rather than lost from the conflict. For the disputants to believe that they have benefited from the conflict, two things are to be realized; these are; a new solution should be implemented, the problem solved and the likelihood to re-happen is not felt,and work relationships should be strengthened and employees believe they can work together productively in the future (Jones & George, 2006). Various styles have been devised to manage conflicts in organizations. Ford (2007)argued that conflict management will be effective if the integrated approach is applied. This is afour-way process thatincludes assessment and inquiry, design, implementation and evaluation aiming at achieving efficacious andobjective conflicting decisions in the workplace. The integrated approach creates better results and higher commitment in individuals; it broadens the understanding of the conflict problem and increases resolution (Vigil & King, 2000).

Rue and Byers (2003) provide five general styles to be used to resolve interpersonal conflicts. First,withdrawals of one or more conflict participants; the manager assumes no conflict exists. The second approach is compromising. In this aspect,y disputants agree to foregosome of what they want so as to reach an agreement. Third, forcingthe conflict to a conclusion.Fourth is mediating,which is achieved through a third-party intervention; a manager gets in between disputants and forces for resolution.The fifth one is confrontation.In a confrontation, the parties confront each other aboutwhat is really bothering them and eventually reach a consensus. This is considered effective to others while the third-party intervention is considered least effective. Hughes *et al.* (2006) give two independent dimensions for which conflict management strategies can be differentiated. These are cooperativeness versus uncooperativeness and assertiveness versus unassertiveness. This follows the concern that parties in conflict do vary in their commitment to satisfying the other's concern, but they also vary in the extent to which they assertively stand up for their concerns. Thus, conflict managementcan be understood in terms of how cooperative or uncooperative the parties are and how assertive or unassertive they are.

**The Role of Conflict Management Styles on Schools' Performance**

Conflict management styles may have different effects depending on the situation. For example,a compromising style is a conflict strategy aimed at finding a solution thatcan be accepted by the conflicting parties (Liston & Garrison, 2004). The solution obtained seeks the middle ground thereby foregoing some of one's concerns and committing to others concerns. Kinicki and Kretner (2008) argued thatthe compromising style is moderately assertive and moderately cooperative.Thus, itis used on issues of moderate importance when both parties are equally powerful and equally committed to opposing views. This style produces temporary solutions and is appropriate when time is a concern;it is a backup for the competing and collaborating styles when they are unsuccessful in resolving the situation (Burrell, 2001). According to Ahmed and Ahmed (2015), a compromising style enhances job satisfaction and organizational commitment among employees and hence can lead to improved work performance. The collaborative style is the strategy used to solve conflicts whereby people work together to find a solution thataddresses the problem at hand to satisfy all the parties' concerns (Magoulianitis, 2011).

The style is used when the relationship among the parties is not important, then it may not be worth the time and energy to create a win-win solution. Collaboration fosters respect, trust, and builds relationships;thus dealing with conflict directly and in a way that expresses willingness for all parties desirable (Chen *et al.,* 2019). The collaborating style is highly assertive and highly cooperative and aims at finding asolution which enhances the "win-win" atmosphere (Kinicki&Kretner, 2008). It includes integrating solutions, learning, merging perspectives, gaining commitment, and improving relationships. The adoption of an accommodating style can support open discussion of issues, task proficiency, equal distribution of work amongst the team members, better brainstorming and development of creative problem solving, hence raisingthe performance of the organization (Burrell, 2001). The accommodating style is used when one conflicting party is enthusiastic to sacrifice a slight with the hope of achieving the maximum from the other party (Farooq*et al.,* 2016). It is appropriate when one party deals witha weak position wishing to attain a reasonable and caring relationship withthe other party (Rahim, 2002). In an accommodating style, one set aside his/her personal needs as a means to please others to keep the peace. According to Ozkalp*et al.* (2009), a compromising style can result in a false solution to a problem and can create

feelings in a person that range from anger to pleasure. The management style is unassertive and cooperative and may play the role of a martyr, complainer, or saboteur (Kinick&Krtetner, 2008). However, accommodation is useful as it produces concord and organizational magnetism and can be useful when one is wrong or when one party wants to minimize losses as it preserves relationships (Ozkalp*et al.,* 2009). Rahim (2002) believes that an accommodating style may not produce the maximum results, especially when one party believes itself to be correct and the other party is faulty and corrupt. The dominating conflict management style refers to the style in which one conflicting party takes aggressive behaviour and regards his/her interest to gaining maximum goals and disregards the will or concerns of the other party (Farooq*et al.,* 2016). Kinick and Kretner (2008) argued that in dominating style, one party attempts to gain power and pressure to change at the other person's expense.

The style can be appropriate in situations whereby one needs to fight for his/her own rights/opinion, resisting pressure or aggression (Karanikola*et al.,* 2018). The main disadvantage of using this style is that relationships can be harmed beyond repair and may encourage other parties to use covert methods to get their needs (Muhindi, 2016). Dominating style is highly assertive with minimal cooperativeness as it aims at winning the battle (Burrell, 2001). The use of this style may cause hostility, unrest or even death in the school. People who consistently use a competitive style become aggressive, autocratic, and confrontational and develop intimidating behaviour which in turn affects the performance of the organization. Avoidance conflict management style is the strategy used when a person does not succeed and hence avoids addressing a conflict, instead postponing, withdrawingor sidesteps (Laoulakou, 2017). The party, in most cases, avoids conflicts due to fear of getting involved in disputes or a lack of confidence in management skills. The administrators use this style when they do not want to help anyone to achieve his goals or impose his behaviour. The administrators who use an avoiding style neither satisfythemselves nor the other party (Farooq*et al.,* 2013). Moreover, Rahim (2002) adds that it is inappropriate to make hasty decisions through this style. This style is suitable in case of impossible victory. The administrator uses this style when s/he feels that someone else is in a good position to solve the problem. This study sought to find styles that are commonly used and suitable for managing conflicts in schools.

**Contingency Theory**

This study builds its empirical understanding of conflict management systems on the Contingency theory (Sagimo, 2002). The Contingency theory states that there is no single bestconflict management style for all circumstances. Each situation, on its own, needs to be approached differently. In support of this,Galabawa (2001) stressed that the central idea of Contingency theory is that management practices should keep the course of action basedon the nature of the task performed by an individual, the external environment and the compatible needs of the employee. Thus, the management function should be dynamic and challenging. Management should neither be static nor prescriptive but rather participative, democratic and liberal in style to cater toa wide range of situations to be managed (Sagimo, 2002). The manager, therefore, needs to be visionary, flexible, adaptable, creative, innovative, competitive and aggressive when addressing various issues in the organization (Galabawa, 2001).Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) argued that three realities dictate how organizational conflict should be managed:they are triggered by a wide variety of antecedents;too little conflict may be as counterproductive as too much. However, there is no single best way of managing conflicts. Thus, antecedents of conflict and the actual conflict need to be carefully analysed so that the proper management style is applied (Hugher*et al.,* 2006). The Contingency theory, therefore, is relevant to this study as it gives the framework for which the conflict in secondary schools should be managed. In this study, various types of conflicts have been identified, their management practices analyzed and their effects on academic performance determined.

**Methodology**

**Participants, Sample and Sampling Procedures**

This mixed-methods study was conducted in Morogoro district. The area was chosen due to the presence of a good number of public secondary schools and has been one of the SEDP implementation areas since its introduction. The study employed a cross-sectional design to examine the effects of conflict management styles on secondary schools' performance. The study employed purposive and stratified random sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. The study involved 161 respondents from 36 schools (out of 79 schools). All 79 schools in the District were listed and picked one school after the interval of three schools to obtain the required total of 36 schools, whose teachers were involved in the study.Out of 161 respondents, 125 were teachers and 36 were heads of schools.Out of 125 teachers, 40 (32.0%) were females and 85 (68.0%) were

males.Out of 36 heads of schools, only 05(13.9%) were female heads and 31 (86.1%) were maleheads of schools. Among 125 teachers, 16 (12.8%) were aged between 20 and 30 years, 41 (32.8%) were aged between 31 and 40 years, while 33(26.4%) were aged between 41-50 years and 35 (28.0%) were above 50 years. In the case of heads of schools, 24 (66.7%) were aged between 41 and 50 years and12 (33.3%) were above 50 years. This shows that heads of schools are adults who are aware of the concept of conflicts and probably their management. For the case of educational background and work experience, findings indicate that 48 (38.4%) teachers had diplomas, 60 (48.0%) teachers had Bachelor's degrees and 17 (13.6%) of them held Master's degrees. In the case of heads of schools, 32 (88.9%) of them had Bachelor's degrees, while 04 (11.1%) of heads of schools held master's degrees. The majority of teachers – 40(32.0%) – had work experience rangingbetween 0 to 5 years, 33(26.4%) of them had work experience between 6 and 10 years, 18(14.4%) teachers had work experience of 11-15 years and 34(27.2%) had work experience above 15 years. Arguably, 85(68.0%) of all teachers had worked in Schools for six years and above.

For the case of the interviews, the researcher trained three research assistants, who were Bachelor's degree holders, to interview the heads of schools. The interviews were administered by research assistants by first placing an appointment; thereafter, they visited the respective participants.Theinterviews continued till data saturation was reached.The maximum time for each interview session was about half an hour.For the case of quantitative data, the questionnaires were distributed to teachers through academic teachers who also assistedthe research assistants to collect them. The quantitative data were categorized, coded and analysed according to the research-specific objectives and research questions so that the frequencies and percentages could be tabulated and calculated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 software for easy interpretation. For the case of qualitative data, thematicanalysis was used to analyse the data. First, the researcher transcribed the data from verbatim to text. Second, the researcher read through the document to identify major themes and subthemes. Third, the themes were grouped and recategorized to remove and merge some of the themes. The more recurring ideas were taken as major themes. The weak themes were mergedwith the most recurring themes which had a similar meaning. Finally, the researcher gave the analyzed themes and subthemes

to the second independent coder to evaluate the themes and subthemes.After the final agreement of the analysis, the writing started.

**Results and Discussion**

This study examinedconflicts and conflictmanagement styles in secondary schools in Tanzania. The study had three specific objectives.

**Types of Conflict in Secondary Schools**

The first objective of this study was to identifythe types of conflict existing in secondary schools in Tanzania.The findingsfrom teachers indicate that, in all visited schools, task conflicts exist, and aremore prominent. Of 125 teacher-respondents, 92 (73.6%) agreed that the most prominent conflict type is task conflict, whereas 33 (26.4%) teachers indicated that process conflict also exists.The same question was asked to heads of schools during the interview. The responsesfrom heads of schools were not far from the findings from teachers;the majority of them (almost 24 heads of schools) mentioned task conflicts as the most prominent conflicts in schools Other good portion of heads of schools (almost 12 heads of schools) process conflicts as the common conflicts in secondary schools.

For instance, one head of the school commented:

> *In my opinion, many conflictsoccur in my schools. However, the most prominent are task and process conflicts. Particularly, when they don't agree on how to accomplish a certain task. For example, there was a time when a few teachers had a stiff argument on how teaching extra subjects in evening hours could be done. (Head of school, B)*

Another head of the school commented:

> *In my school, process conflicts are common.Normally, teachers prefer to use the scheduled time to teach. It happened that in one of the weeks, they discussed and failed to come to terms withwho should teach in the morning and who should teach in the evening. As we had the double sessions, some wanted to come in the morning only, and not in the afternoon. (Head of school, F)*

On the same line, another head of the school commented:

> *In my school, I once had a meeting with two teachers. It was a time when one of them was supposed to go for training. The other teacher was supposed to bring the file of her fellow to my office, but she didn't bring it to me for almost a month. Consequently, the teacher who asked for permission left the office for training, and I thought she didn't follow the procedure.  I decided to call her and asked why she*

*left without my knowledge.To my surprise, she said that she left the letter and the file in X's office. It was really hard for me to make them come to terms; the other teacher was so angry and furious.(Head of school, K)*

It is argued here that the comment from the head of the school "K" is an indication of the existence of process conflict. In the same objective, the researcher wanted to know the group of people who were engaged in conflicts in schools. The data suggest that 27% of teachers mentioned conflicts involved heads of schools versus teachers; 24% ofteachers mentionedthe conflicts among teachers themselves; and 30% of them indicated that it was between teachersand students. These three groups of conflictswere highly ranked compared to other groupinvolved in conflicts. Other groups of people were mentioned to engage in conflicts but to a small extent. These include student versus student, department versus department as well as management versusteachers. It has been observed that task-oriented conflicts mayappear when teachers do not fulfil their duties and responsibilities; it is possible to enter into conflict with heads of schools over responsibilities. Also, when heads of schools do not discharge their responsibilities fairly, they may end up entering into conflicts with employees.

Teachers against each other may enter into conflicts if there is a conflict of interest in some aspects such as how should examinations be set and administered (process conflict) and who should be considered in teaching special academic programmes for candidate classes (task conflicts). The findings show that teachers who teach the same subject are likely to enter into conflict if one of them is seen to master a subject and is mostly liked by students; hence, becomes a threat to the other. In some cases, teaching examination classes like Form II, IV and Form VI is accompanied by special academic programmes which allow a teacher to get extra pay, thus everyone would like to get such an opportunity. On this aspect, one of the heads of schools said:

*There is a case when two teachers in Mathematics fall into conflict simply because one of the teachers was more expert than the other.Students mostly liked to be taught by him. Consequently, the other teacher felt inferior; hence a conflict rose between them. (Head of School, A)*

Another teacher suggested that sometimes conflicts do not occur among teachers only;they sometimes involve students and teachers. He had this to say:

*Conflicts between students and teachers occur because theteacher interacts with students frequently for various reasons such as in academics and administrative affairs. As a result, less disciplined studentsare more likely to enter into conflict*

*with teachers at a time when they fail to obey and be submissive to teachers.(Head of School, C)*

Accordingly, the findings show that favouritism is one of the reasons that causeconflicts to escalate in schools. When responding to the question which required knowing the extent to which one agrees that favouritism is one of the reasons for conflict in schools, 24 (19.2%) teachers strongly agreed, 57 (45.6%) of them just agreed while 18 (14.4%) teachers were not sure. Also, 19 (15.2%) teachers disagreed whereas only 7 (5.6%) strongly disagreed. In sum, findings indicate that three types of conflicts are prevalent in schools. This is in connection with Dreu and Weingart(2003) and Jehn (1995, 1997) who found the three types of conflicts.However,in this study, task and process conflicts are more prominent than relationship conflicts. Failure to conform to school responsibilities and favouritism were found to be the causes of conflicts in schools. Arguably, the identified conflicts may be connected to negative effects on school performance(De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995; 1997). It is clear in this study that failure to fulfil one's responsibilities in schools is among the causes of conflicts. For example, teachers who do not submit academic documents such as schemes of work and lesson plans are likely to enter into conflict with their Heads of Schools. This finding is in connection with Namwila (2016). Again, as suggested by other scholars (Ayoma, 2015; Omboko, 2010), this study has also found thatfavouritism usually leads to conflictsbetween heads of schools and teachers.

**Conflict Management Styles in Secondary Schools**
The second objective of this study assessed the conflict Management styles used in the studied secondary schools. The findings revealed that different management styles and systems were adopted in secondary schools to bring the conflicts at bay. However, it was found that when conflicts arise in schools they are considered first and foremost as human resources challenges - teachers consider conflict asa discipline issue. Thus, the use of disciplinary committees was identified as the first step employed by their schools to deal with it, before management of a particular conflict takes place; hence falls under the indiscipline case. This requires disciplinary actions to take place through a disciplinary committee The research findings show that both teachers and heads of schools opined on the use of disciplinary committeesto address human resources challenges. In this study, the majority of heads of schools (almost 11 heads of schools) advocated the use of the

disciplinary committee. It was also noted that the majority of heads of schools, before applying any conflict management style, preferred to use guidance and counselling in addressing indiscipline matters. The other measure mentioned to deal with conflicts in schools is expulsion. Thiswas mentioned by a few heads of schools. Although heads of schools mentioned guidance and counselling as one of the measurestaken to address conflicts and other employees' challenges,findings from Table 4 indicate thatteachers did not emphasize this measure.Only 4(3.20%) of them mentioned it as a measure taken by schools to respond to conflicts.Othermentioned measures by teachers include use of expert 5(4%)expulsion42(33.6%), disciplinary committee 30(24%) and suspension 22(17.6%), and corporal punishment 22(17.6%).

**Table 4: Measures Taken to Disputants**

| Measures taken | Teachers | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | *n* | *%* |
| Suspension | | 22 | 17.6% |
| Expulsion or sack | | 42 | 33.6% |
| Guidance and Counselling | | 4 | 3.20% |
| Disciplinary committee used | | 30 | 24% |
| Use expert | | 5 | 4% |
| Use corporal punishment | | 22 | 17.6% |
| **Total** | | 125 | 100 |

The researcher also sought information on whether teachers who were involved in conflicts were involved in the conflict management process or not. The study found that the majority of teachers involved in conflicts were not involved in the conflict management process.The data indicate that 92(73.6%) teachersnoted that they were not involved in the conflict management process; 33(26.4%) teachers noted that they were involved. Moreover, teachers were asked abouttheir opinion on the effective conflict management style. Findings show that thirty-nine teachers(31%) mentioned compromising and 35(28%) indicated collaborative conflict management styles;18(14.4%) mentioned accommodating, while 17(13.6%) teachers mentioned avoidance and 16(13%) mentioned forcing style.Findings suggest that compromising and collaborating,forthe majority are the most effective in managing conflicts.

**Table 5: Conflict Management Style**

| Strategies | School teachers | |
|---|---|---|
| | N | % |
| Compromising | 39 | 31 |
| Accommodating | 18 | 14.4 |
| Avoiding | 17 | 13.6 |
| Dominating | 16 | 13 |
| Collaborating | 35 | 28 |
| Total | 125 | 100 |

During the interviews, the same question was asked to heads of schools.The findings indicate that heads of schools had relatively similar opinions to those of teachers. The majority of heads of schools mentioned compromising and collaboration as strategies they prefer best when dealing with conflicts. They did not prefer sacking or transferringemployeeswhose attitudes, values and backgroundsdifferedfromother teachers. Only a few heads of schools noted that sometimes they sackedor transferred some teachers. One would argue that heads of schools who transferred employees based on conflict managementlackedthe knowledge to address such cases.

In the sameline, heads of schools emphasized that conflict management styles were used depending on the conflict type and knowledge at hand on how to solve conflicts. One of them had this to say:

> *As a head of school, I might say that I used different styles in managing conflict according to what I see as a source of that particular conflict, or where we can group the conflicts. For example the issue of disciplinary conflict, definitely we must use the disciplinary committee to manage the conflict. (Head of School J)*

Another head of school added that:

> *Apart from treating cases differently, I also noted that sometimes compromising and collaborating styles are the common conflict management styles which work better for me. However, I would not like to get involved in the conflict. Thus, I usually stay away from conflicts, especially when they are stiff. (Head of School G)*

He further noted that:

> In my school, I rarely use dominating style.The reason is that sometimes you find a minor issue but people just waste time whenthe issue needs urgent attention. So, I force them to take on board my decision. Here I

> decide to let it go in that way to save time and resources. (Head of school, G)

In sum, findings indicate that several measures are used in schools to manage conflicts. These include disciplinary actions such as the use of school committees, guidance and counselling and to a lesser extent expulsion. These are used depending on the conflict type, particularly when it is not a task, process or relationship conflict. Some of the conflicts do not require the five mentioned conflict management styles (compromising, accommodating, avoiding, forcing, and collaborating), but call for a different strategy to be addressed. In this study, it was observed that compromising and collaborationare the most commonlyused, though in some cases, forceis used. The results concur with Hostepo et al. (2015) who found negotiation, collaboration and compromise as the most used conflict management styles.  The findings of this study contradict with Wall andCallister(1992) who found that forcing or dominating conflict management style, in which autocratic principles are applied, is commonly used. The style is applied without giving disputants a chance to defend themselves. If expulsion at schools is decided without disputants given a chance to defend themselves, it is typically forcing behaviour.

It is recommended thatan effective conflict management stylemust take into consideration factors such as the causes as well as origins of the conflict, and the nature of the conflict itself. This is expected to help minimization of the occurrence or completely eliminate the conflict (if possible) so that the same cannot be repeated in the future (Farooq*et al.*, 2015). The causes and origins of the particular conflict can be easily found if disputants are given a chance to give their views. If the decision to manage a particular conflict ignores the disputants, it may not be effective as the parties involved may end up unsatisfied with the measures taken against them.The current study also concurs with Makaye's (2012) study which argues that compromising is one of the styles used by secondary schools when managing conflicts. This style is applied when disputants are ready to face each other peacefully. It involves intercession bargaining, negotiation, mediation, attribution, and application of the integrative decision.

**The Relationship between Conflict Management Styles and Schools' Performance**

Objective three determined the relationship between conflict management styles and secondary schools' performance. It was found that conflict management styles

have effects on performance depending on how a particular style was applied. The findings, further, show that three conflict management styles namely compromising, collaborating and accommodating are the proper conflict management styles to be adopted by schools. In this, 61(48.8%) teachers stated that schoolsthat adopted compromising conflict management styles realizeda low rate of labour turnover for both students and staff;it enhances employees' job satisfaction,hence raisingacademic performance.Other 42(33.6%) teachers stated that schoolsthat employ a collaborative conflict management style enhance performance in all schools' activities and attain a reasonable pass in National Examinations.A total of 22(17.6%)teachers opined that schoolsthat practice accommodating conflict management style stand a chance to perform above average in academic activities;it may enhance the good relationship among employees. Heads of schools had similar opinions as that of their teachers. The majority of headsof schools opened that schools which do not experience employee conflict and those that conflict are effectively managed tend to perform well in all school activities.Effective conflict management styles improve teachers' engagement in academic activities, improvetime managementamong teachers, work extra hours, improve willingness to assist each other and hence improved performance. One head of school noted:

> *In my place, I bargain a lot with my teachers. This has become the most beneficial approach at my school, especially when we want to work as a team to accomplish a given goal together. This enables employees to perform better their tasks and hence improves performance at the school.(Head of school, K)*

Another head of school added:
> *Normally, I combine compromising and accommodating others' views, especially when I feel like we can't reach an agreement.  I just accept one's idea without wasting time. As a result, we agree on some of the things and others I just take their suggestions. This had improved their performance as they feel that they are valued (Head of school, H).*

The findings of this study concur with Nwabueze and Bernard (2017) who revealed that conflictmanagement styles have impacts on academic institutions' performance. It is argued here that when conflict is effectively managed, it will positively influence performance;when it is poorlymanaged, it negatively affects performance. Thus, school heads should strive hard to use an effective conflict management style which, inthe end, will unite people in the organization. This will help teachersto put their hands together, have a shared vision ofthe

organization's goals and hence, as one team, strive to achieve the intended goal.Additionally, Makaye's (2012) study has shown that managing conflicts also have positive results, especially when disputants are ready to face each other peacefully. That is intercession,bargaining, negotiation, mediation, attribution, and application of the integrative decision. This in turn improves performance.

**Conclusion**

This study investigated conflict management styles inTanzaniansecondary schools. Specifically,the study focused on the types of conflicts, the conflict management styles adopted, as well as the relationship between conflict management styles and secondary schools' performance. It is concluded here that themost prominent conflicts in the selected schools are process and task conflicts. Of the two, task conflicts are dominant as compared to process conflicts. It was also noted that the most applied conflict management styles are compromising, collaboration, and sometimes accommodating. These conflict management styles provide reasonable positive effects on performance. Thus, it is argued that if conflicts are effectively managed in schools it enhances performance.

**Recommendations**

Recommendationsare made to address conflicts so that secondary schools' performance and other related organizations can be improved. It is recommended here that secondary school authorities should always view conflicts as part and parcel of their organizational life. Thus, there is a need to constantlykeep on learningthe causes of conflicts in their schools and if possible immediately deal with the causes. This in turn may lead to minimal conflicts. This can be achieved through the enhancement of communication channelsso that employees can be able to speak out in an open discussion on various issues. Heads of schools need to encourage teamwork among teachers in their respective departments by allowing regular meetings. There are many conflict management styles available. They include compromising, avoiding, dominating, accommodating, and collaborating. Each of these methods addresses a specific conflict situation. It is, therefore, recommended that the heads of schoolstake time to study the conflicts and apply relevant styles so that the expected outcomes are obtained. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, in collaboration with local authorities conduct on-the-job training forthe heads of schools and teachers so that the concept of conflicts and their management is well understood. Also, the Ministry should make sure that all teachers have a course on the same so as to equip student teachers with knowledge before getting into the teaching profession.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The study examined conflicts and conflict management styles in secondary schools in Tanzania. The study suggests a relationship between conflict management styles and secondary schools' performance in all aspects. The current study was conducted in Morogoro district using heads of schools and teachers.It is recommended that a similar study be conducted in other districts ofMorogoro region and other regions to include students and school managers in their sample so that their views are taken into account.A study of the role of schools' environment in conflict management and schools' performance is proposed to becarried out. Also, a similar study can be conducted by using regression methods to find more details for policy formulation. This will be better if some other variables such as empowerment, trust and empathy are added.

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