Effectiveness of Conflict Resolution Strategies in a Public Secondary Schools' Management in Morogoro Municipality in Tanzania

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

This study intended to assess effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies in a public secondary schools' management in Morogoro Municipality. The study employed a descriptive research design based on mixed research approach. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used in selecting study area and 112 respondents from 7 public secondary schools in Morogoro municipality. Questionnaires and interviews were research instruments used to collect data. Also, the collected data were descriptively analyzed to generate the frequencies and percentages with the help of SPSS software version 25. The study results showed that conflict resolution strategies have positive impact on the effectiveness management by ensuring peace and harmony, high job performance, high academic performance, the spirit of teamwork, high retention of teachers and problem-solving. Based on the study findings, a researcher recommended that the school administrator should involve teachers in conflict management methods to allow for the creation of good and constructive relationships.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict as action leads to a breakdown of communication among members of the organization who were finally disintegrated and work separately due to jealousy associated with imbalanced promotion provided by the authorities like in-job training, annual increments and other remunerations. Based on these reasons, the conflict might occur more closely among people who are expected to work together and hinder some organizational activities which need cooperation across workers [1].

Both qualified and non-qualified institutional managers in sub-Saharan countries and Tanzania in particular face conflicts in their organizations due to several reasons including biasness, scarce resources and personal interests. The organizations in these countries view conflict as an action that occurred when an individual within the organization need to express their feelings, articulate their perceptions and need to meet their potential. The action was associated with an ability of a person to fight for his rights under the provided power, violence or destruction for the sake of basic needs as stipulated in the institution's directions and recommendations [2].

Also, conflict occurs when managers perform their daily activities intending to maintain management values and skills in designing, developing and allocation of resources towards the achievement of educational goals which, sometimes interferes with others' duties and performances or increase the number of unsatisfied members in the organization [3]. Unsatisfied members within the organization worked under less motivation which resulted in an inability to meet the expected organization goal [4].

Therefore, conflict as an integral part of any formal institution or social system has to be properly managed to create a healthy organizational climate that is so important for the effective performance of responsibilities [5]. However, numerous regulatory mechanisms have been developed such as; negotiation, collective bargaining, and mediation to resolve disputes in schools [4]. While this has been general, this study seeks to assess conflict resolution and its impacts on effective school management in performing teaching and learning processes in Morogoro municipality.

Conflict also consists of actions that we take to express our feelings articulate our perceptions and get our needs met in a way that has the potential for interfering with someone else able to get his or her needs met [2]. From his findings, conflict behaviour may involve a direct attempt to make something happen at someone else expense. It may be an exercise of power, violent or destructive.

Schools as among the formal institutions experiencing several conflicts Dady, [3]; Khan et al. [2] indicated the clear conflict between the head teacher and teachers in schools. The head teacher is involved in different conflicts and sometimes affects the academic achievement of the school. Also, the study by Omboko [6] on interpersonal conflict indicates that conflicts in schools may reduce strengths and resources such as social support and integration among teachers and all those involved in education which ultimately increases problems in schools among students.

The study by Newstrom and Davis [7] prolonged interpersonal conflicts lead to the deterioration of cooperation and teamwork, at a personal level some people may feel defeated while the self-image of others will decline and personal stress levels will rise. The findings of Okotoni [8] on conflict management in secondary schools showed that School administration has been adversely affected by a lack of knowledge of conflict management as most administrators handled conflict by trial-and-error approach because there were no specific procedures and methods of managing conflicts.

Even though some studies were done on the conflicts within different institutions but a majority of them were based on the sources and impacts of conflicts in a particular organization [7,8,4,6]. Even the study which was hardly found in Morogoro particularly in Mvomero by Matenga [9] had only been based on showing the outcome of a conflict that occurred at Mzumbe School in the year 2013. Hence, it is clear that there is less or no evidence of studies showing how managers used to manage conflicts in their institutions including secondary school organizations. This study, therefore, needs to investigate the existing gap by revealing the effectiveness of conflict resolution Strategies in a public secondary schools' management in Morogoro municipality.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design aimed at obtaining the information to

describe the effectiveness of conflict resolution Strategies in a public secondary schools' management in Morogoro municipality. Moreover, the researcher used a descriptive research design because it involves using a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect data that aids in accurately describing a research problem. Both purposive and random sampling techniques were used in selecting study area and respondents for this study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select seven (7) public secondary schools in Morogoro municipality namely Kilakala secondary school, Kihonda secondary school, Morogoro secondary school, Mafiga secondary school, Sua secondary school, Uluguru secondary school and Uwanja wa Taifa secondary school. Also, seven (7) head teachers were purposively selected while in each school 15 teachers were randomly selected to make a total of 105 teachers. Questionnaires and interviews were research instrument used to collect data. Also, the collected data were descriptively analyzed to generate the frequencies and percentages with the help of SPSS software version 25.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In assessing the conflict resolution strategies for effective public-school management, the study examined the effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies used by head teachers. Since the role of school leaders in conflict management and resolution is central to effective and efficient organization of school management. The study sought to know the effectiveness of the conflict resolution strategies used by head teachers in Morogoro municipality. The respondents were required to indicate the degree of improvement they know/perceive whether conflict resolution strategies contribute to peace and harmony, high job performance, high academic performance, the spirit of teamwork, high retention of teachers and problem-solving. Table 1 presents the study results.

Table 1. Effectiveness of conflicts resolution strategies

Variable(s)	Always		Often		Rarely		Never	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Harmony peace in school	43	43%	34	34%	23	23%	0	0
High job performance	55	55%	37	37%	8	8%	0	0
High academic performance	55	55%	32	32%	9	9%	4	4%
Spirit of team work	52	52%	30	30%	10	10%	8	8%
High retention of teachers	50	50%	30	30%	13	13%	7	7%
Problem solving	43	43%	33	33%	17	17%	7	7%

Source: Field Study, 2022
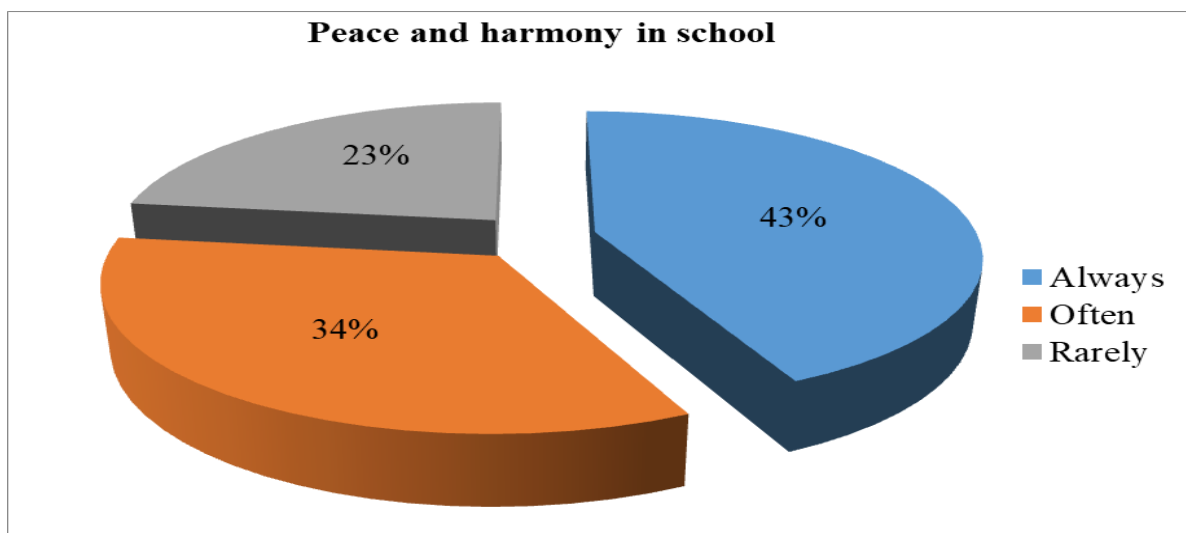
Fig. 1. Peace and harmony in school (n=100)
Source: Field Study, 2022

3.1 Peace and Harmony in School

The study sought to know how conflict resolution strategies help teachers in maintaining peace, to achieve a particular set of goals and objectives and a school in general. The study results in Table 1 above show that 43(43%) of the sampled teachers reported that conflict resolution strategies always contribute to peace and harmony in the school followed by 34(34%) teachers who indicated that it contributes often while 23(23%) of teachers reported that rarely it contributes to peace and harmony. The study findings imply that conflict resolution strategies to some extent in sampled schools contribute to peace and harmony while on the other side creates enmity among teachers by agreeing on a resolution while inside themselves, they are not ready to accept the situation. The study result is in line with the findings of Robbins [10] who found that conflict resolution strategies could be done through smoothing to create harmony in the school environment. Fig. 1 presents the study results.
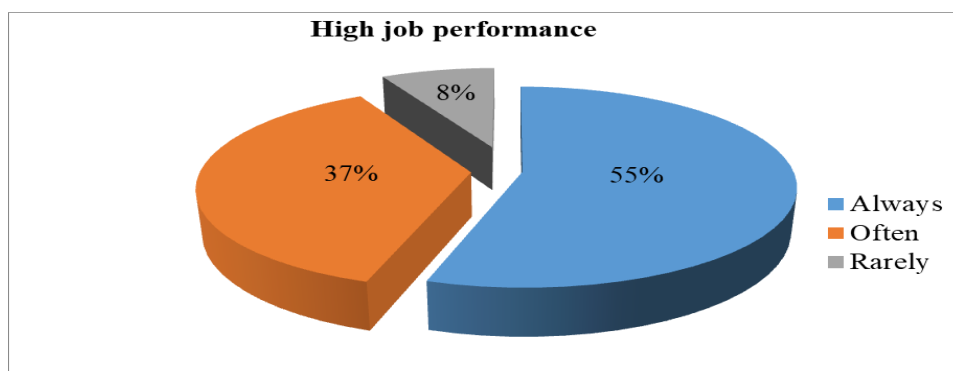
3.2 High Job Performance

Although high-performance results from appropriate behaviour, especially discretionary, and the effective use of the required knowledge, skills and competencies but the study sought to know the effect of conflict resolution strategies on job performance. The study results from Table 1 above reveal that 55(55%) of teachers indicated that conflict resolution strategies always contribute to high job performance followed by 37(37%) of teachers who indicated that often contribute, 8(8%) teachers indicated rarely contributes while conflict resolution strategies contribute towards high job performance in sampled schools. The study results indicate that conflict resolution strategies significantly affect teachers' job performance in public secondary schools in Morogoro municipality. The study result is consistent with the findings of various related studies [11-13] who found that conflict resolution strategies played a great role in strengthening the bond between school management and teachers hence resulting in high job performance.
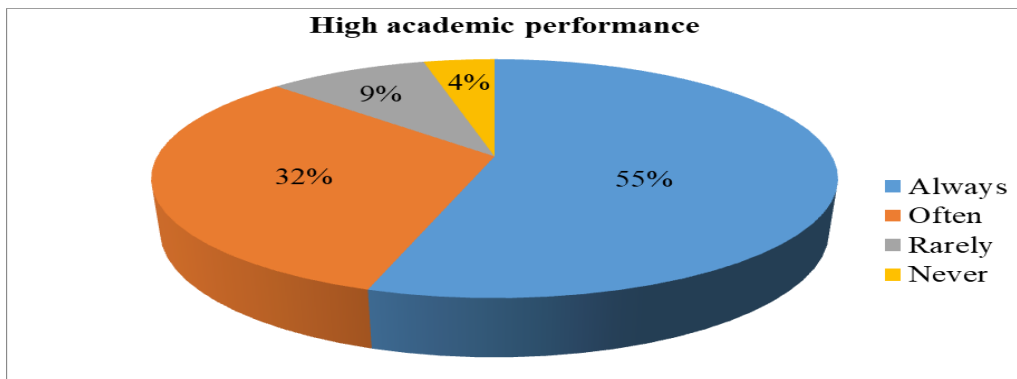
3.3 High Academic Performance

The study findings from Table 1 on the contribution of conflict resolution strategies towards high academic performance in sampled schools indicates that 55(55%) of teachers reveal always conflict resolution strategies contribute to high academic performance followed by 32(32%) teachers who indicated that the strategies contribute to high academic performance often. 9(9%) teachers indicated rarely contribution while 4(4%) of teachers indicated never. The study result implies that when conflict resolution strategies are used students feel recognized, for example, accommodating strategy enhances better leadership in school and help to minimize the failures in academic performance. Furthermore, the conflict resolution strategies develop a sense of responsibility by both parties i.e., teachers, head teachers and other workers to involve in benefiting students. The study result is in line with the findings of Bankouskaya [14] who found that conflict resolution strategies increase the school performance specifically student's academic performance in this case. Moreover, this helps teachers to undertake their duties effectively and efficiently like attending classes, providing assistance to students who are in need and solving various disciplines hence improving the level of students' academic performance. Fig. 3 presents the study results.
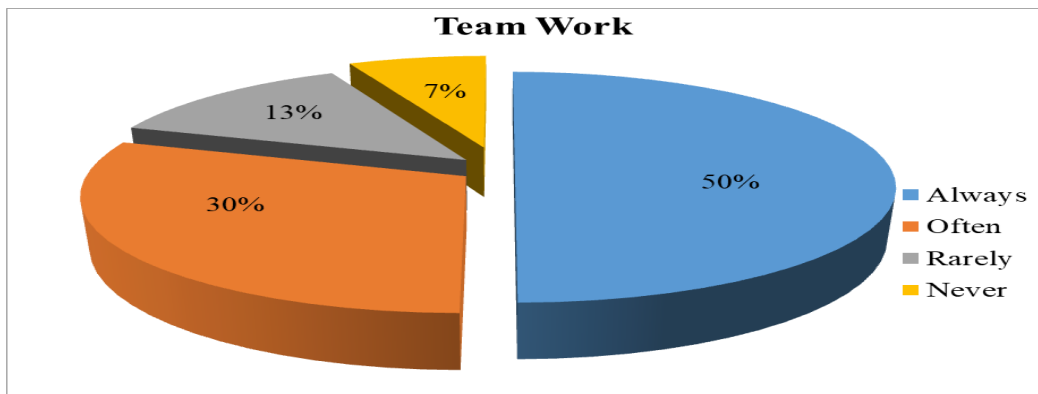

Fig. 2. High job performance (n=100)
Source: Field Study, 2022

Fig. 3. High academic performance (n=100)
Source: Field Study, 2022

Fig. 4. Team Work (n=100)
Source: Field Study, 2022

3.4 Teamwork

The conflict resolution strategies are active methods of team building in the school hence helping the school to realize the desired goals. The study results from Table 1 above show that 52 teachers accounted to 52% indicated that always conflict resolution strategies help in team building followed by 30(30%) teachers who indicated that often contribute, 10(10%) teachers indicated rarely contributing while 8(8%) teachers indicated that the conflict resolution strategies do not help in team building. This implies that conflict resolution strategies enable teachers and workers to create a teamwork spirit and cooperation toward focusing on students' academic performance. The study result is in line with the findings of various related studies [15-17] who found that adopting avoidance as a method of conflict resolution can be an active method of team building and will provide a common identity and a sense of unity amongst staff if handled properly by administrators of schools.
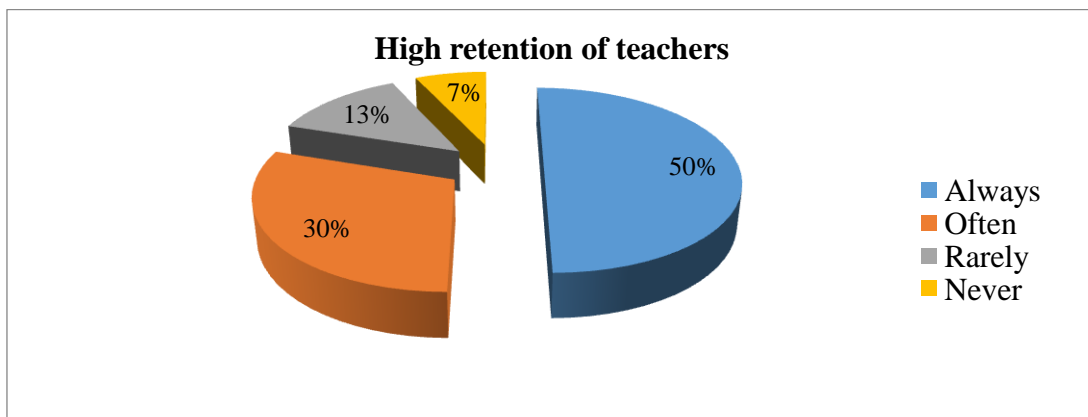
3.5 High Retention of Teachers

Conflict resolution strategies are more efficient to promote high retention for teachers and retain quality teachers by relating to the goal of keeping staff in the workplace, and reducing employee turnover. The study findings from Table 1 on the contribution of conflict resolution in strategies toward high retention of teachers in sampled schools found that 50 (50%) of sampled teachers reported that conflict resolution strategies always contribute to high retention in schools followed by 30(30%) teachers who revealed that it contributes often while 13(13%) of teachers reported that rarely and 7(7%) indicated that the conflict resolution strategies do not have any effect in high retention of teachers. The study results revealed that conflict resolution strategies contribute to high retention of teachers in public secondary schools' management in Morogoro Municipality. The study results are consistent with the findings related to Ford, [18] who found that the effects of conflict resolution strategies help to better goal human relationship between

management and staff, reduce absenteeism and poor attitude of teachers towards work. Thus, conflict resolution strategies address, and create opportunities for psychological needs to be satisfied, because teachers need help to use their talents.

Also, Barmao, [19] added that conflict could be managed properly by providing good working conditions like availability of teaching and learning materials, supervisory service and opportunities to innovate as well as in-service training to update the teachers and head teachers' skills which used them to solve different challenges. These create high retention for teachers and mitigate turnover risks hence retaining the human resources and building a school climate that enhances the teachers' job security, high interaction opportunity and institutional support. Fig. 5 presents the High Retention of Teachers.

3.6 Problem Solving

this involves face to face meetings of the conflicting parties to identify the problem and resolve it through open discussion [20]. Therefore, the study sought to know whether the conflict resolution strategies influence solving problems or not. The study results from Table 1 above show that 43 teachers accounted to 43% indicated that always the conflict resolution strategies used by head teachers were used to solve different problems in the school followed by 33(33%) of teachers who indicated that it is often used, 17(17%) teachers indicated rarely contribution while 7(7%) teachers indicated that the conflict resolution strategies used do not have any influence in solving the school problems. Fig. 6 presents the study results of Problem Solving.

Fig. 5. High retention of teachers
Source: Field Study, 2022
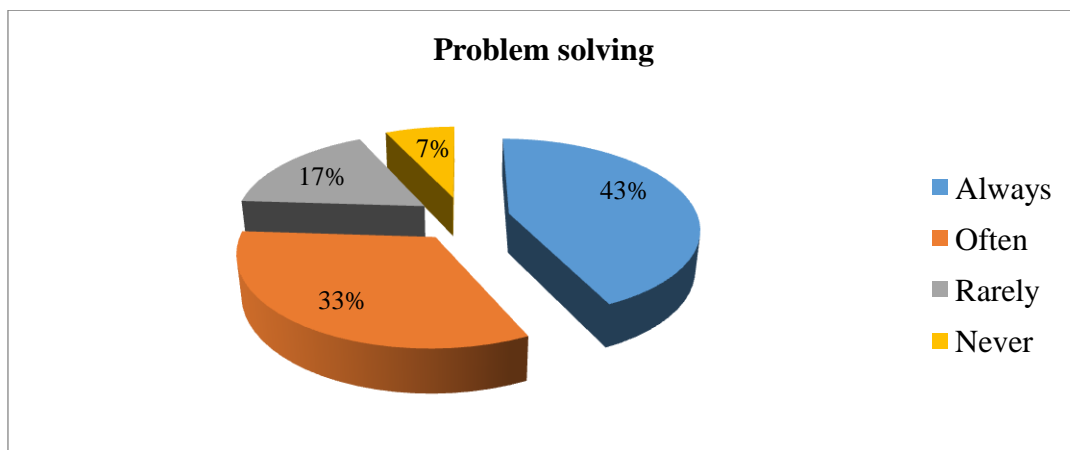
Fig. 6. Problem solving (n=100)
Source: Field Study, 2022

4. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that; conflicts as an action lead to break down of communication among teachers and staff in the respectively school. Basing on this, the occurrence of conflicts to more closely people who work together within and between schools affects the job performance and students' academic performance in general. The conflict resolutions should be used based on specific strategies since the root causes are unique. These strategies i.e., competition, collaboration, compromising, accommodating, avoiding, warning letters and meetings depend on varieties variables choices in dealing with conflicts in secondary schools. The major causes of conflicts experienced in the selected public secondary schools were poor leadership, problem in communication, scarcity of resources, poor decision making, unequal distribution of workload and lack of transparency/openness. However, lack of motivation due to unpleasant situation like low salaries, school infrastructure and funding were also, found to be the factor influencing conflicts.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Based on the study findings, the following are the recommendations;

i) The school administration should try to find out the root cause of conflicts in public secondary schools and involve all the education stakeholders in the school in order to enhance discipline for effective conflict management strategies to be put in place.
ii) There is need to have trainings on conflict resolution strategies in public secondary schools to assist in management of conflicts.
iii) The school administration should involve the students in conflict management methods in public secondary schools to allow for the creation of good and positive relationships.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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