INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPALS' CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES ON

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN

MAKUENI SUB-COUNTY, MAKUENI COUNTY

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this project report is my original work and has never been submitted to any university for Academic credit. Information obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged as required.

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DEDICATION

This project report is dedicated to my daughter, Miriam Nthambi for always believing in me and giving me the encouragement to move on.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

Conflict is a necessary and useful part of organizational life. It is a dispute that occurs when interests, goals or values of different individuals or groups are incompatible with each other. Success and failure in the school system depends on the principal's effectiveness that manifests in his ability to plan, organize, coordinate, direct and control the activities of the school system so as to achieve the goals and objectives of the school. The academic performance of secondary schools in Makueni sub-county has not been up to standard despite the high marks that those who are selected to join these schools scored in KCPE. Primary schools in this region perform far much better compared to their secondary school counterparts; which begs the question, could there be something that these students in secondary schools go through that distracts them hence poor performance? It is against this backdrop that this study sought to find out the influence of principals' conflict management styles on academic performance in secondary schools. The study therefore tried to find out the conflict management styles used by principals in the course of their administration and how this impacts on the school's academic performance. This study was guided by the following objectives: to establish the influence of compromising as a conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni Sub-county; to find out the impact of collaboration conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county; to establish the impact of accommodating conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county; and to find out the influence of competing as a conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county. The study was carried out as a descriptive survey design. This study employed the use of questionnaires to collect information. Data from the questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). This study found out that principals in Makueni District, Makueni County use all the four conflict management styles. A high percentage of teachers and principals agreed that there is use of competing style as a method of conflict management in their schools. There is also a high percentage of schools which their principals use both compromising and accommodating methods of conflict management. Most of those schools whose principals relied a lot on competitive, compromising and accommodating strategies in managing their school conflicts had a mean score of between 2 and 6 with those whose principals used them in moderation having a mean score of between 6 and 10. This study will be significant to principals in Makueni sub-county and the county at large as it will make them to know the appropriate conflict management styles which they need in managing conflicts in their schools.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

KCSE - Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education

T S C - Teacher-student conflict

BOM - Board of Managers

PTA - Parents Teachers' Association

KCPE - Kenya Certificate of Primary Education

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Conflict is inevitable and it is an integral part of the process of change. It grows from simple to complex, from non-violent to violent depending on the gravity. Conflict is a situation where there is disagreement between parties. It connotes a stressful, unhappy, distressing, depressing, annoying and frustrating state of affairs (Sagimo, 2002). Rue and Byarrs (1992) concur with Sagimo that conflict occur because individuals have different perceptions, beliefs and goals while Bateman and Zeithalml (1993) argue that conflict is inevitable when managers are making important decisions as they would face opposing pressures from different sources. Mills (2001) reported that on April 20, 1999 at Columbine High school in Littleton, Colorado, two heavily armed students killed twelve students, one teacher and seriously wounded nearly two dozen others before killing themselves. In May the same year in Conyers, Georgia, a 15 year old student wounded six other students while in December the same year, at Oklahoma Middle school, a student took a handgun to school and wounded five students. In March 2001, a Californian student killed two classmates and wounded thirteen others. The rate of conflicting Chicago high schools rose to an average of 90% per week by the year 2001.

 In Africa, the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 affected students in South Africa. Many students lost their lives due to the racial conflict over the apartheid regime. In 1976 the students protested against introduction of Afrikaans language as a medium of instruction in South African schools through the Black Consciousness Movement (Wanyande, 1990). In Nigeria 1972-1979 and in 1990 educational institutions were in

so much conflict that soldiers were deployed to schools to assist in control of students' behavior. Several conferences were equally held on the same without much ado (Ndu, 2000).

In Kenya student-student, student-teacher and student-administration conflict are common and have more often than not culminated into unrests. The conflicts have ranged from sit in to violent destruction of property and loss of lives. Ageng'a and Simatwa (2011) point out that, cases of student unrests became more rampant from 1991 when St. Kizito Mixed Secondary school, male students invaded the girls' dormitory and violently raped a number of them. In the process, 19 girls lost their lives. In spite of the government's effort to stem out the culture of student unrests in schools, the very nature of the unrests took a dramatic turn to the worse. Not only were they violent and destructive but were premeditated and planned to cause maximum harm to human life.

Between 1980 and 2008, the number of conflicts in public secondary schools alone increased from 22 (0.9%) to 254 (7.5%) (MOE, 2008). According to the Ministry of Education report, up to 254 (4.5%) of secondary schools in Kenya had been affected by student unrests. A total of 163 schools remained closed due to the severity of disruption (United Nations Organization Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2008). Standard Team (2008 July 24th) reported that for the period between June 2008 and September 2008, Kenya's print media was full of coverage of students on the rampage in public, private and seminary learning institutions. Various causes of unrests were highlighted as drug abuse, high handedness, post-election violence, cheating in National examinations and poor living conditions (Otieno, 2008, Adan, Mnyamwezi and Beja, 2008, Standard Team, 2008b). Other journalists continued to give the possible causes and effects of conflict (Matoke, 2008; Omanga, 2008;

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Mwajefa, 2008; Mwololo, 2008). However, there could have been schools that were not captured by the print media.

In the Kenyan education system, various legislations serve as guidelines for management and administration of educational institutions. However, it appears that most educational institutions have been less successful in management of conflicts MOE (2002). The Ministry of Education (2002) report indicated that in spite of the government policies put in place, Kenyan educational institutions have continued to report increased cases of conflict. When conflicts in schools are not managed appropriately, the consequences could be dire especially on students' performance in their final examinations. The academic achievement of many educational institutions is influenced by the leadership and conflict management styles of the administration and management team (Tetty-Enyo, 1997). It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that s/he uses the best methods and styles possible to resolve conflicts as soon as they arise.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The series of problems which the school system is facing lies in the hand of the leadership and conflict management style the school principal uses to carry out his or her day to day running of the system .If an individual is perceived to manage conflict in an appropriate and effective manner within an organizational setting, that individual is also perceived to be more competed in general (Gross and Guerrero, 2000).

The academic performance of secondary schools in Makueni sub-county has not been up to standard despite the high marks that those who are selected to join these schools scored in KCPE. Primary schools in this region perform far much better compared to

their secondary school counterparts which begs the question, could there be something that these students in secondary schools go through that distracts them hence poor performance, or could the principals in secondary schools in this sub-county be managing conflict differently from the way it is managed in primary schools? It is against this backdrop that this study is seeking to find out the influence of principals' conflict management styles on academic performance in secondary schools. The study therefore sought to find out the conflict management styles used by principals in the course of their administration and how this impacts on the school's academic performance.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of principals' conflict management styles on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni district, Makueni County.

i. **1.4 Research Objectives**

ii. To establish the influence of compromising as a conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County

iii. To explore the impact of collaboration conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County.

iv. To establish the impact of accommodating conflict management style on academic   performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County.

v.   To find the influence of competing as a conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County.

1.5 Research Questions

i.   What is the influence of compromising conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni District, Makueni County?

ii.   What impact does collaborating as a conflict management style have on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county?

iii.   How does accommodating conflict management style influence academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county?

iv.   What is the influence of competing as a conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will be significant to principals in Makueni district and the county at large as it will make them know the appropriate conflict management styles which they need, in their course of managing conflicts in their schools. This study will go a long way in highlighting the importance of having secondary school principal go through trainings on conflict management which is vital when dealing with schools' conflicts. The findings will help them know how best they can deal with conflicts as they arise without affecting the academic performance of the school.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to public schools in Makueni sub-county in Makueni County. This study was limited to principals and teachers in the public secondary schools and the findings may not represent all the schools in the county and so a similar study can be undertaken in other schools in the county.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The study confined itself to the following;

i.   It delimits itself to public secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

ii.   It focused itself on the conflict management styles used by principals in the sub-county

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

The study had the following assumptions;

i.   Effective conflict management styles lead to good academic performance.

ii.   Each school has laid down rules and regulations that guide in conflict management.

iii.   All respondents are qualified teachers.

1.10 Definitions of Terms

Principal- the chief executive officer in a school who has been given the mandate concerning the administration of the school by TSC (Teachers Service Commission)

Conflict - incompatibility or interference, as of one idea, desire, or activity with another.

Academic performance- how well one does in school, i.e. the outcome of education, the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their educational goals and in this case the KCSE results.

Administration- the organization of the internal arrangement of the school.

Teacher- someone who attempts to shape or mould the behavior of another person (student) through instructions and practical examples

Accommodating- allowing the other party satisfy their concerns while neglecting your own.

Compromising- attempting to resolve a conflict by identifying a solution that is partially satisfactory to both parties but completely satisfactory to neither.

Collaborating- cooperating with the other party to understand their concerns in an effort to find a mutually and completely satisfactory solution (win-win).

Competing- the intention to win at the expense of others.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter gives a detailed study of conflict management styles and their impact on the students' academic performance and summary of the literature.

2.1 Conflicts in Secondary Schools

Secondary schools play important role in providing knowledge for further education as well as contributing to the county by providing work force to the community, (Ghaffar, Amir, &Naz, 2012). "Conflict", has been viewed differently by different people, according to them it connotes negative impact as is viewed in war, destruction, aggression, violence, and competition. Human beings interact with each other for their mutual give and take and as such come in conflict with one another. According to Hencley (1961), evidences about interpersonal conflict show that it can be seen in the working relationship of the school principal and his subordinates, such types of conflicts can be found not only in theory but in practice as well.

The idea of any type of conflict and its management strategies is not only limited to the education institutions but it can always and often be found in other disciplines as well. Literature testifies that conflict management can be linked to the secondary school principal because of his administrative position in the school.

Bailey (1971) is of the view that no doubt rifts are always evident not only in theory but practically it can be seen as well. Therefore it is mandatory that while conflict management strategies are developed, field experiences should be taken into consideration. Now it becomes obligatory on the principals that they need to be

participating in field activities so that to make themselves familiar with the conflict management skills which need to be adopted in the institutions. He offers some ideas on managing conflict to the school administrator. First of all, the school administrator should be aware of the timely recognition of conflicts and that he should promptly respond to the misunderstandings among his subordinates, educators and the students too. Secondly he should utilize collective judgment in order to overcome his personal biases. Third and most importantly when one understands that conflicts are going to become out of control then the best and most suitable way is to judge his resources, see his enemy's strength and to handle the conflict, what plan of action needs to be adopted, how the decision would be implemented and how to prepare oneself for the possible attack. And at the final stage, the school administrator should be clear and very realistic about his merits and or demerits for managing conflict (Ghafar, Amir &Naz, 2012).

2.2 Conflict and academic performance in schools

Research exploring why some students achieve high academic performance than others has revealed four theoretically important determinants. They include; school plant, leadership and conflict management styles of the principal, teacher characteristics and student behavior. Eshiwani (1983), identified the following policy-related factors that may cause poor academic performance; school plant and resources (textbooks, library and laboratory facilities), leadership and conflict management styles of the principal (school administration and management), teacher characteristics (training, teacher certification, professional commitment, experience and transfer index) and students' behavior (early childhood education, primary education and social characteristics).

The data for India and Chile, for example, showed that a block of factors, which included textbook availability accounts for more of the variance in test scores than does a block, which includes circumstances and student's age and sex (Heinemann et al 1984). Among the most recent studies undertaken in Kenya regarding factors influencing academic performance are those carried out by Kathuri (1984), Malau (1988), Magori (1990), and Achola (1990).

A number of researchers have approached the question of performance from the pupils' socio-economic background and have barely touched on school quality factors such as the leadership and conflict management styles of the principal. This study will be an attempt to investigate the role of the leadership and conflict management styles of the head teacher on the students' academic performance.

2.3 Conflict Management

Schein, (2010) argues that a normal human condition is always present to some degree and students of organizations see unresolved conflict rather than conflict itself as a deterred to organizational outcomes. Leithwood and Louis (2012) in a land mark research established the link between conflict management in schools and the students' performance. They established that conflict management play a critical role in improving academic performance through four sets of conflict management strategies. First they comprise setting clear directions. The four specific conflict management strategies in this category are; building a shared vision, fostering the acceptance of group goals, creating high performance expectation, and communicating the direction. This is what is referred to as compromising one another in an organization. Secondly they develop staff by collaborating with the teachers and others in the system with the support and training needed to succeed. The specific

practices in this category are; building a consensus with one another, providing individualized support and consideration of each other's ideas offering intellectual dialogue and modeling appropriate values and practices. Third, effective leadership which applies accommodative style of conflict management make refine and align their organization work successful by building collaborative cultures, restructuring the organization to support collaboration, building reproductive relationship with teachers and the students and connecting the school to the wider community for a common goal of good academic performance. Lastly they improve the instructional performance through practices that focus on directly shaping the nature and quality of conflict management which may take form of competing strategy. These practices are; standing on one's ground, forcing others to accept the laid down decision, monitoring the implementation of what has been laid down and later buffering staff form distractions to their work.

Lambert (2012) affirms that the world models of conflict management by principals leaves the substantial talents of teachers largely untapped. Improvements in performance achieved under these models are not easily sustainable because when the principal leaves, many promising activities often lose momentum and fade away. The study recommends the development of leadership capacity of the whole school community to promote a new vision of conflict management practices that links mutual understanding and school performance. However, the functions of the principal as discussed above do not directly address the performance. It can only be assumed that conflict management skills in the critical areas are helpful in improving schools' academic performance. This makes it necessary to interrogate the conflict management practices by principals for the good performance of the school.

Salisbury and McGregor (2010), asserts that, conflict management practices in schools by principals has emerged as a school wide improvement approach for students with diverse abilities in general education classes. Effective conflict management in schools share characteristics of common understanding amongst the members, commitment to diversity and a sharing decision making power, leading to good performance. Hehir and Kartzman (2012) asserts that conflict management styles are dynamic in problem solving organizations. Strong conflict management strategies from principals of such schools create both a sense of common purpose and internal accountability as well as conditions for high quality teaching and learning which leads to good performance. Their stance is that complex and interrelated factors undergird the success of schools with effective conflict management strategies. Schools with good performance embrace comprehensive conflict management strategy including a vision of high expectation and universally designed instructional practices that address both academics and behavior.

2.4 Conflict Management in Schools

Schools are complex, dynamic organizations, and opportunities for conflict abound. With the main focus being placed on accountability and performance, there are chances of an increase in circumstances of conflict between either administrators and teachers or even teachers and students.

Poor management of conflict in school administration may result in deficiencies in the performance of the in terms of discipline and academic performance. The fact is that if teachers or students are able enough to understand the nature of conflict then it is very easy for them to manage any type of conflict in a constructive way (Ghaffar, Amir, &Naz, 2012). On the other hand Moran (2001) views that managing conflict is

a philosophy and a set of skills which is used by individuals and groups of people to understand conflict in a better way and to deal with any conflict situation in their respective lives. Regarding the positive or negative nature of effect of conflict, it is clear that this is a part and parcel of school life which always yields positive results. In the organizational life conflicts are competitive as well as cooperative in its nature depending on the situations in which it happens. It is evident that certain problems arise when conflicts are viewed whether in a competitive or cooperative situations.

Ghaffar, Amir, &Naz, (2012) in their paper conclude that; since conflicts always exist in a working environment, its total elimination from the organization can't be thought of. It's, therefore, required of the principal that these must be properly managed. It depends on the situation as well as the principal's personal preference which style/s they want to adopt to deal with conflict. The findings show that the principals adopt one or other type of conflict management style.

In a dispute, it's often easier to describe how others respond then to how we respond. Each of us has a predominant conflict handling style that we use to meet our own needs. By examining conflict styles and the consequences of those behaviors, we can gain a better understanding of the impact that our personal conflict style has on other people. With a better understanding, you then can make a conscious choice on how to respond to others in a conflict situation to help reduce work conflict and stress.

Behavioral scientists Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann, who developed the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, have identified five styles to responding to conflict—competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and accommodation. No conflict style is inherently right or wrong, but one or more styles could be

inappropriate for a given situation and the impact could result in a situation quickly spiraling out of control.

2.5 Compromising style of conflict management and its influence on Academic Performance

The Compromising Style is finding a middle ground or forgoing some of your concerns and committing to other's concerns. This style is moderately assertive and moderately cooperative; the goal is to find middle ground. The compromising style is used with issues of moderate importance, when both parties are equally powerful and equally committed to opposing views. Burrell (2001) notes that; this style produces temporary solutions and is appropriate when time is a concern, and as a backup for the competing and collaborating styles when they are unsuccessful in resolving the situation. Compromising skills include the ability to communicate and keep the dialogue open, the ability to find an answer that is fair to both parties, the ability to give up part of what you want, and the ability to assign value to all aspects of the issue. Overuse of the compromising style leads to loss of long-term goals, a lack of trust, creation of a cynical environment, and being viewed as having no firm values. Overuse of compromise can result in making concessions to keep people happy without resolving the original conflict. Baumgardner (2012) adds that compromise backfires because parties overlook important principles and long-term goals for the sake of the details. Moreover, it is not the best way to reach an optimal solution on important issues. The parties also risk engaging in excessive "horse-trading" while losing sight of the big picture. However according to Baumgardner, its underuse leads to unnecessary confrontations, frequent power struggles, and ineffective negotiating.

2.6 Collaborating style and its influence on Academic Performance

The collaborative style views conflicts as problems to be solved and finding creative solutions that satisfy all the parties' concerns. Collaboration takes time and if the relationship among the parties is not important, then it may not be worth the time and energy to create a win-win solution. However, collaboration fosters respect, trust, and builds relationships. To make an environment more collaborative, address the conflict directly and in a way that expresses willingness for all parties to get what they need. The Collaborating Style is when the concern is to satisfy both sides. It is highly assertive and highly cooperative; the goal is to find a "win/win" solution. Appropriate uses for the collaborating style include integrating solutions, learning, merging perspectives, gaining commitment, and improving relationships. According to Burrell (2001), using this style can support open discussion of issues, task proficiency, and equal distribution of work amongst the team members, better brainstorming, and development of creative problem solving. This style is appropriate to use frequently in a team environment and very ideal for good performance and therefore its underuse can result in using quick fix solutions, lack of commitment by other team members, disempowerment, and loss of innovation and morale hence poor performance. Baumgardner (2012) adds that Collaboration is the way to achieve the best outcome on important issues as well as build good relationships since it takes into account all of the parties' underlying interests.

2.7 The impact of Accommodating style of conflict management on Academic Performance

By accommodating you set aside your own personal needs because you want to please others in order to keep the peace. The emphasis is on preserving the relationship.

Smoothing or harmonizing can result in a false solution to a problem and can create feelings in a person that range from anger to pleasure. Accommodators are unassertive and cooperative and may play the role of a martyr, complainer, or saboteur. However, accommodation can be useful when one is wrong or when you want to minimize losses when you are going to lose anyway because it preserves relationships. If you use it all the time it can become competitive and may result in reduced creativity in conflict situations and increased power imbalances.

The Accommodating Style is foregoing your concerns in order to satisfy the concerns of others. This style is low assertiveness and high cooperativeness; the goal is to yield. The accommodating style is appropriate to use in situations when you want to show that you are reasonable, develop performance, create good will, keep peace, retreat, or for issues of low importance. Accommodating style of conflict management can be good when it comes to academic performance because the students will be comfortable hence dedicate most of their time to studying. Accommodating skills include the ability to sacrifice, the ability to be selfless, the ability to obey orders, and the ability to yield. (Burrell, 2001), however notes that managers who overuse the accommodating style exhibit a lack of desire to change and usually demonstrate anxiety over future uncertainties. One of their main desires may be to keep everything the same. When accommodating is overused certain behaviors emerge. Some of these emergent behaviors include giving up personal space, being overly helpful and then holding a grudge, and speaking in an extremely quiet almost unintelligible voice. Underuse of the accommodating style can result in lack of rapport, low morale, and an inability to yield.

Baumgardner, (2012) points out that; the focus of this style is on the relationship, as opposed to the outcome. The downside is that your ideas do not get sufficient

attention and may be neglected. This may cause poor performance in an institution especially in schools. This style has a negative side though since the student may think that the principal is too good and therefore relaxes hence poor performance.

2.8 Competing style of conflict management and its impact on Academic Performance

People who consistently use a competitive style come across as aggressive, autocratic, confrontational, and intimidating. A competitive style is an attempt to gain power and pressure to change at the other person's expense. A competitive style of managing conflict can be appropriate when you have to implement an unpopular decision, make a quick decision, the decision is vital in a crisis, or it is important to let others know how important an issue is to you – "standing up for your right." The biggest 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 met because conflict with these people are reduced to – "if you are not with me, you are against me." When this method is used by school principals, it is likely to cause hostility, unrest or even death in the school.

The Competing Style is when you stress your position without considering opposing points of view. According to Burrell (2001), this style is highly assertive with minimal cooperativeness; the goal is to win. The competing style is used when a person has to take quick action, make unpopular decisions, handle vital issues, or when one needs protection in a situation where noncompetitive behavior can be exploited. In this style the manager develops his/her ability to argue and debate, and also asserts his/her opinions and feelings. Overuse of this style can lead to lack of feedback, reduced learning, and low empowerment. This may have a negative impact

on the students' academic performance due to the chaos in the institution. It is exhibited through constant tension or anger and occasional outbursts of violent temper.

Under use of the competing style leads to a lowered level of influence, indecisiveness, slow action, and withheld contributions. When the competing style is underused some emergent behaviors people exhibit include justifying the behaviors, demanding concessions as a condition of working on the problem, threatening separation as a way of making others give in, and launching personal attacks. Bodine, & Crawford (1998), on the other hand notes that while competitive tactics are not necessarily dysfunctional, competition can easily slide into a destructive scenario. Understanding the tactics and strategies of others who use competitive styles can assist conflict managers in defusing the negative consequences of competition and working toward a mutual gains approach.

2.9 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on The Interaction theory of conflict. The Interaction Theory of conflict argues that the seeds of conflict lie in the process of interaction between parties. Opposing values, perceptions, attitudes and behavioural dispositions of parties are some of the factors that can cause people to come into conflict. (Cronk, 1987) discusses at length teacher power and control in student/teacher interaction. He proposes that teacher/ pupil conflict is a result of the failure of teachers and pupils to relate to each other as persons. According to Cronk, teacher/pupil relationships which are founded purely on the existence of formal power create conflict. The absence of an egalitarian system and lack of belief in the morality and trustworthiness of the

other party also result in conflict. Conflict is also caused by failure to address classroom problems squarely and to discuss them openly.

According to Pollard (1986), there is an inherent conflict of interests between teachers and pupils. Writing about what he calls "classroom interests-at-hand" of teachers and pupils, he argues that both these groups maintain a primary concern with the self, their personhood and sense of identity. This goal is undertaken in the midst of a threatening situation for both educators and students. The former are faced with problems such as high enrolments, inadequate facilities and support systems, and the task of educating the students. The latter face evaluation from their teachers will have simultaneously to contend with their own problems. Both teachers and students are confronted with a threat to their self-image as well as a demand to cope with the situation.

According to Pollard (1986), to maintain order in the teacher-student relationship two possibilities exist: a teacher can either impose order using his or her power or she or he can negotiate it with students, so that a set of social understandings which define order are constructed. Coercion would be characteristic of teachers who feel their interests are threatened and whose negotiation skills are lacking. Such force would tend to produce tension, anxiety and frustration in students. They are likely to see it as the imposition of teacher power founded on injustice. They may thus resist it and come into conflict with the teacher.

According to Bybee and Gee (1986), giving students a role in decision-making and offering fair treatment can increase their commitment and decrease the offences against the staff and school. De Flaminis (1976) argues that 75% of teachers respond to students with either authoritarian or coercive behavior, followed by manipulation and persuasion. These practices by teachers reduce self-esteem and increase

disruptive behavior by students. Teachers' excessive use of power tends to generate extra resistance from students. In Bybee and Gee's (1986) opinion, it forces students to overvalue their freedom, to become concerned about their rights, to counteract the teachers' control or to resign themselves to the teachers' authority.

All these responses and behavior precipitate conflict. Gordon (1974: 250-281) also makes pertinent observations regarding teacher/student interactions. He argues that the degree of teacher effectiveness in establishing a particular kind of relationship with students is crucial in obtaining their co-operation and in- securing mutual rewards. He views the role of teachers as mainly that of being supportive, non-critical facilitators, with a total commitment to the rational ability of a child to identify and solve his or her problems. In terms of this perspective, conflict would arise when teachers impose their authority and values and disregard the child's ability to negotiate and settle his or her problems.

Arguing in a similar vein, Glasser (1969:120) maintains that the problem of misbehavior of most students results from failure of schools to fulfil their needs. He argues that students want success, self-worth and they aspire to learning. However, the obstructions in the schools, such as being lectured to, being given unappealing classroom topics, having to learn by rote instead of experimentally or by discussion, are all factors which precipitate mis-behaviour and conflict. School principals therefore need to adopt conflict management styles which will cause less harm to the students' self-esteem and sense of identity.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual framework (Figure 1) postulates that there are various forms of conflict that may arise in public secondary schools such as: Intrapersonal Conflict

involving the individuals in the school such as students, teachers and administrators. Interpersonal Conflict involving different individuals with others such as student to student, student to teacher and student to administrator may occur. Inter-group Conflict involving different groups of people in the school may arise among students to students, students to teachers and students to administration.

Ageng'a and Simatwa (2011) note that the above forms of conflict may arise due to inadequate resources, ineffective communication, change, social prejudices, dissatisfaction of roles, territorial encroachment, difference in opinions, attitudes, values, interests and beliefs, managerial gap, incompetent administration, poor parenting and drug abuse. After determining the causes of conflict in public secondary schools, it would then be easier to establish effective conflict management strategies to resolve the conflicts. They (Ageng'a and Simatwa) further point out that, the management strategies that could be used to resolve conflict include: compromise, collaboration, accommodation and competing among others.

Different management strategies may lead to either desirable outcome or undesirable outcome depending on their effectiveness or ineffectiveness respectively. Effective management strategy may result in desirable outcome such as smooth management, enhanced discipline, and effective management of time, team spirit and effective use of resources, achievement of goals, good relationships and great value by stakeholders. However, when ineffective management strategy is used, undesirable outcome such as strikes, demonstrations, destruction of property, poor performance, emotional stress, misallocation of resources, absence and frustration may arise thus making the situation worse. It would therefore be necessary to adopt an alternative strategy until such a time that the conflict is absolutely managed and resolve.

Independent variables		Dependent variables
Conflict management styles		Academic Performance
• Compromising		
• Accommodating		
• Competing		
• Collaborating		

Intervening variables

- Difference in opinions, attitudes, values, interests & beliefs
- Social prejudices
- Dissatisfaction of roles
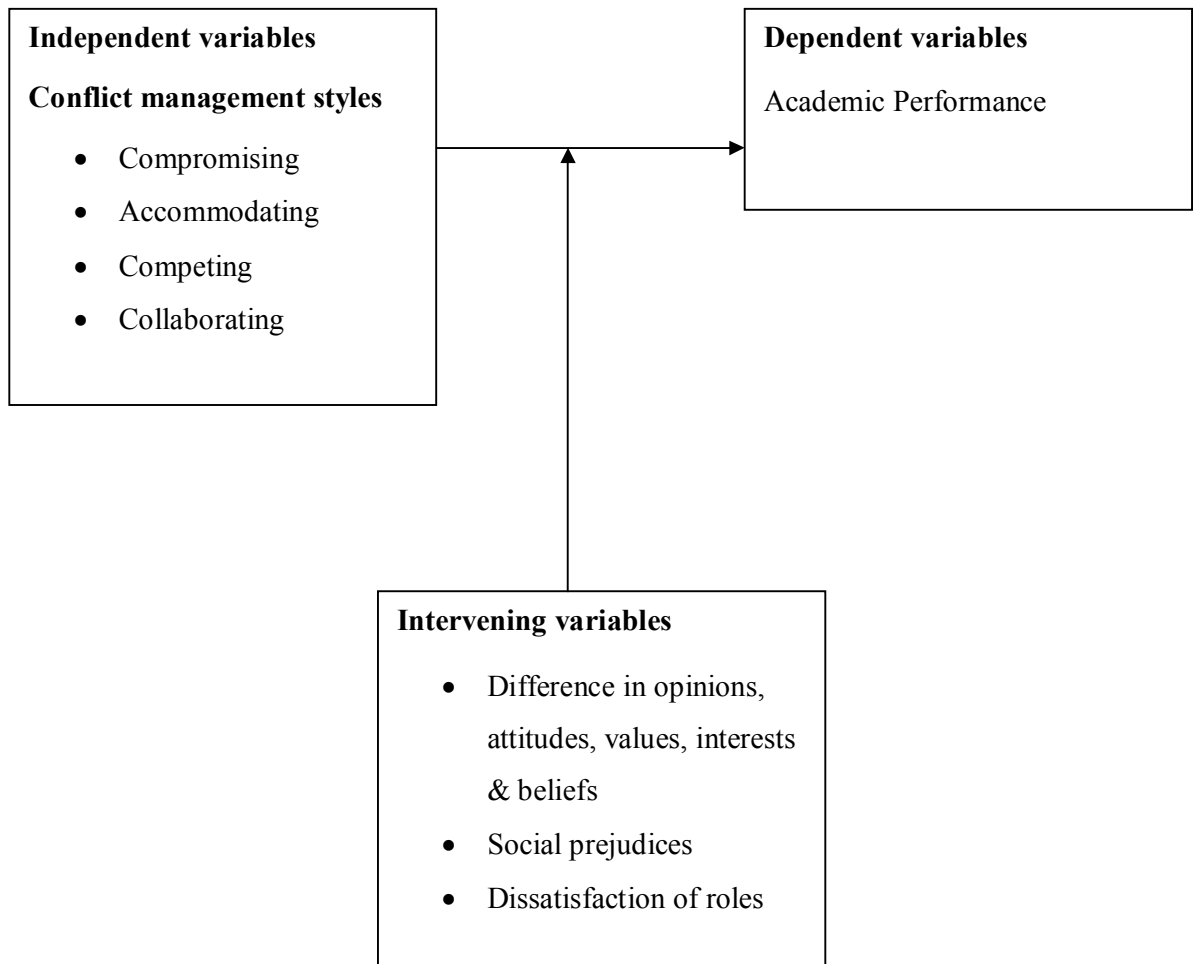
Source: Author

2.11 Summary of Literature Review

Various research studies have been carried out on leadership. Others see the leaders as possessing special personal styles that others do not have and which make them high academic performers. Other leaders feel it is the styles of the leadership, is it democratic or autocratic that leads to high academic performance. There are those who believe that for success in leadership it is the leadership style that determines students' academic performance.

Ghaffar, Amir, &Naz, (2012) in their study propose that the principals should adopt a style of conflict management which best suit them and the situation which is in need of ending the conflict. The styles depend on the situation as well as the principal's personal preference which style/s they want to adopt to deal with conflicts.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a description of how the researcher obtained data for the study and analyzed it. It consists of the study design, study area, target population, sampling procedure and sample size, data collection and procedure of data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study was carried out as an Ex post facto study. This is a category of research design in which the investigation starts after the fact has occurred without interference from the researcher. It is also often applied as a substitute for true experimental research to test hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationships. This is the ideal method for this study because it looks at the relationship between conflict management styles and academic performance in schools.

3.2 Study Population

The study was done in 18 secondary schools targeting18 principals and 3 teachers from each of the 18 sampled schools who were used as key respondents for the study.

3.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

Nwana (1982), commenting on sample size observed that there are certain non-definite practices among social research workers that the beginner can adopt. One such practice suggest that if the population is a few hundreds, a 40 percent or more sample will do, if many hundreds, a 20 percent will do, if a few thousands a 10 percent sample will do, and if several thousand a 5 percent or less sample will do.

This study adopted a 40% of the population of the 46 secondary schools in the whole district which is 18 schools. After the population was figured out, the researcher followed the probability sampling design where every school had an equal chance of being chosen. The researcher therefore randomly sampled the schools. Purposive sampling method was used in sampling the 18 principals and 54 teachers. This type of sampling is used in cases whereby the researcher would like to get information from specific individuals who he/she thinks has the required information. Schools were selected across categories and school types.

3.4 Instrumentation

This study employed the use of Questionnaires to collect information on the influence of principals' conflict management styles on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County.

3.4.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a form of data collection used in a survey design that participants in a study complete and return to the researcher. The participant chooses answers to questions and supplies basic, personal or demographic information (Creswell, 2012). The questionnaire process consists of developing a questionnaire, sending it out to a sample population, checking for potential bias in response and analyzing the data. In this case, the researcher administered questionnaires, with well-constructed questions to secondary school principals and teachers.

3.5 Validity

Validity is the degree to which the instrument measures what it is purporting to measure. There are two means of the term validity based on the historical and current

use, but both meanings should be taken into the account in educational scientific inquiry (Hite, 2001). Historically, validity was viewed as a characteristic of the instrument itself irrespective of how or why it was used. In this case validity will be considered to consist of three types: content, criterion related, and construct validity.

Changwony (2005) notes that, Content validity is the extent to which an instrument measures a representative sample of the subject matter, knowledge and behavioural skill from the course of study that is to be assessed. Criterion-related validity refers to the capacity of the test scores to predict future performances, or to estimate current performances on some valued measure other than the test itself. Construct validity is concerned with the extent to which test performance can be interpreted in terms of psychological constructs. Currently validity is considered to be the result of "the interaction of the test, the test administrator, the conditions under which the instrument is delivered and the ways the results of the instrument are applied" (Hite, 2001). This implies that the test was validated for a particular interpretation, specific use and particular group.

Validity of the instruments was examined by the researcher's academic advisors and other colleagues in the faculty of education where they examined the transcription of the questionnaires independently. They assessed the relevance of the content used in the questionnaire in relation to the field of study and objectives of the study. Feedback provided to the researcher was used to revise and review the questionnaire items to ensure they are adequately and properly structured.

3.6 Reliability of the Data collection instrument

This study employed the use of questionnaire as a data collection strategy which was used to ensure accuracy. Data collected was tabulated to build coherent justification for the themes. The researcher used 'bracketing' where the researcher attempted to suspend his/her experience, judgments and beliefs (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). To avoid bias, the researcher employed the respondent validation technique where the researcher shared interpretations of the research with the researcher who can check, amend and provide feedback as to whether the findings are consistent with their experiences (Bryman, 2001).

Thorough literature review was done before data collection which provided guidelines for what is likely to be found in the field. The researcher used peers to review collected data. Before doing the actual data collection with the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a pilot testing of the questions in the questionnaire in one of the schools in Makueni sub-county which were randomly selected. The researcher got 20 teachers in the chosen school to attend to the questionnaire and then used the responses to weigh whether the questionnaire will help the research in terms of getting the required information. The questionnaires were given to the respondents to fill in the presence of the researcher in order to see if they were experiencing any problem in filling them. The researcher was able to probe the participants and give explanations and clarification where necessary as regards the problem under the study.

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

Once the instruments of data collection are ready, the researcher sought for an introductory letter from the School of Education at South Eastern Kenya University.

The letter was presented to the National Council for Science and Technology for them to allow the researcher to conduct the research in Makueni sub-county in Makueni County. The Permission letters were presented to the Vice Chancellor of South Eastern Kenya University and another one to the sub-county education officer, Makueni Sub County.

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

After the collection of data, data was appropriately coded and sorted and sifted (Siedel, 1998). A code assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldana, 2008). The portion of data to be coded during First Cycle coding processes will range in magnitude from a single word to a full sentence to an entire page of text. In Second Cycle coding processes, the portions coded will be the exact same units, longer passages of text, and even a reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed that far (Saldana, ibid:3).

3.8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Data from the questionnaires was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The statistical analysis was to establish whether a significant relationship exists between the mean scores of the schools and the principals' conflict management styles in the schools. Descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency were used concurrently in the analysis.

According to Seidel et al (1995), the process of QDA involves two things, writing and the identification of themes. Writing of some kind is found in almost all forms of QDA.

3.9 Piloting

The research instrument was piloted in one of the schools in the sub-county. Piloting helps in identifying any deficiencies in the questionnaire and dealing with them on time (Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Data was collected from secondary schools in Makueni Sub-county of Makueni County. The respondents to the questionnaires were not writing their names and this one made them to feel free when filling the questionnaire. The respondents were assured that the information that they gave was going to be used only for academic purposes and not to be given to the government or their employer for any reference.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF STUDY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis, presentation, interpretation of the data collected in the study. Findings are presented based on the objectives that the study sought to achieve. The chapter first presents the demographic data of the respondents and thereafter presents the analysis of items according to the objectives of the study.

4.2 Questionnaire return rate

Response rate for study was such that all the 72 questionnaires given out to the respondents were duly filled and returned; yielding a response rate of 100%. This was considered a very reliable response rate to put to use in making generalizations from the findings of the study.

4.3 Respondent's Demographic Characteristics

The respondents gave their demographic data in terms of age, gender, and educational background.

4.3.1 Principal's background information

The principals gave the performance of their schools , age, gender and their educational background.

4.3.1.1 Gender

The study established that majority of the respondents 61.1% (11) were male while 38.9% (7) of them were female. Figure 4.1 presents the findings of the study.
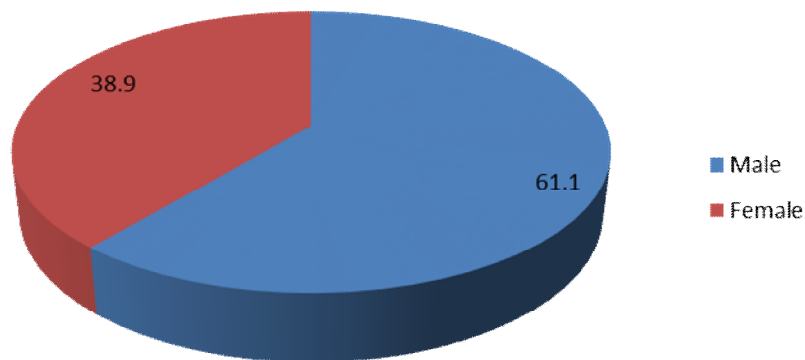
Figure 4. 1: Proportion of the gender of the school principals in Makueni County

4.3.1.2 Age group

The distribution of the ages of the respondents showed that majority of the respondents 38.9% (7) were between 51 and 55 years old, 27.8% (5) of them were between 41 and 45 years old, 16.7% (3) of them were between the ages of 46-50 years, 11.1% (2) of them were between 56 and 60 years old while only 5.6% (1) of them were between 36 and 40 years old. This indicates that the respondents were experienced teachers and so their responses are reliable to the study. Figure 4.2 illustrates the findings of the study.
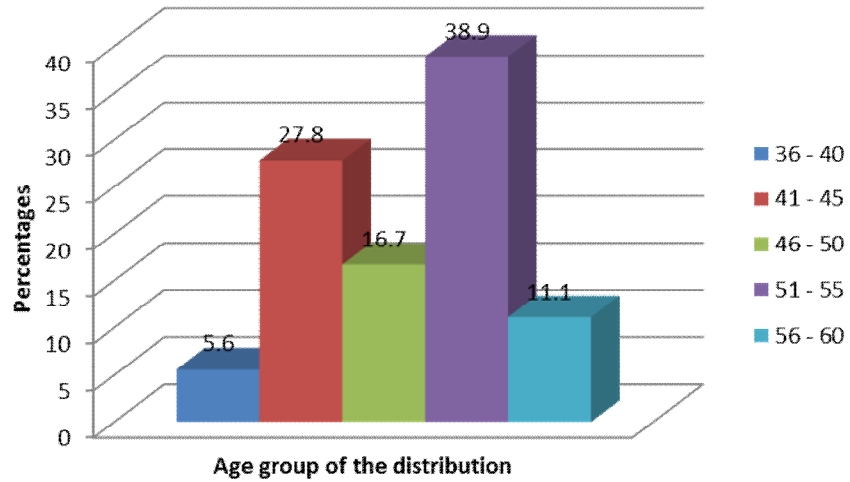
Figure 4.2: Distribution of the age group of the Principals in Makueni County

4.3.1.3 Education level

The distribution of the education level showed that majority of the respondents, 88.9% (16) had attained BED while only 11.1% (2) had Masters in education. Figure 4.3 shows the findings of the study.
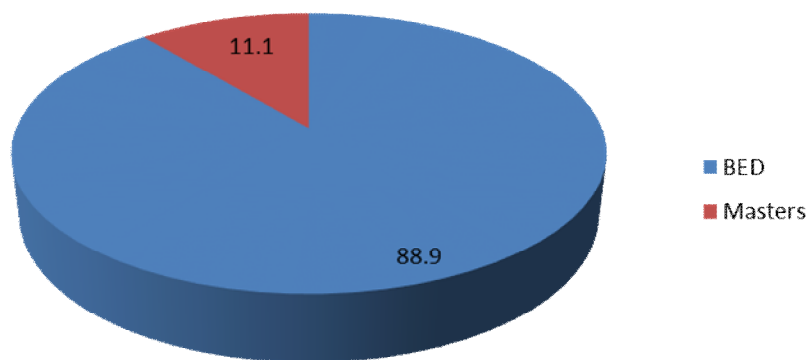
Figure 4. 3: Education level of the principals in Makueni County

4.3.2 Teacher's background information

4.3.2.1 Gender

The study established that majority of the respondents 51.9% (28) were male while 48.1% (26) of them were female. Figure 4.5 presents the findings of the study.
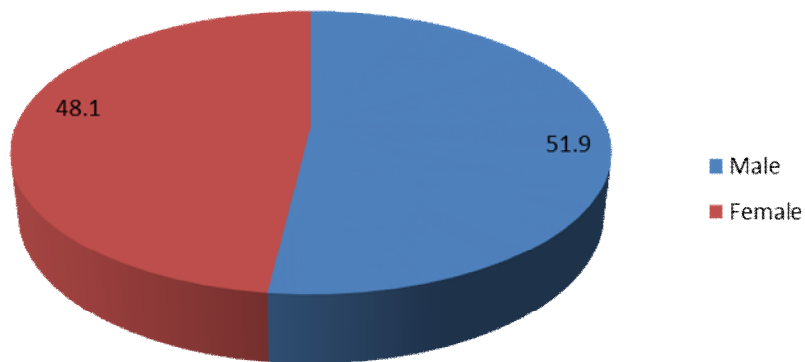
Figure 4. 4: Proportion of the gender of the teachers in Makueni County

4.3.2.2 Age group

The distribution of the ages of the respondents indicated that majority of the respondents 44.4% (24) were between 31 and 40 years old, 37.1% (20) of them were between 41 and 50 years old, 14.8% (8) of them were between the ages of 21 and 30 years while only 3.7% (2) of them were between 51 and 60 years old. Figure 4.6 illustrates the findings of the study.
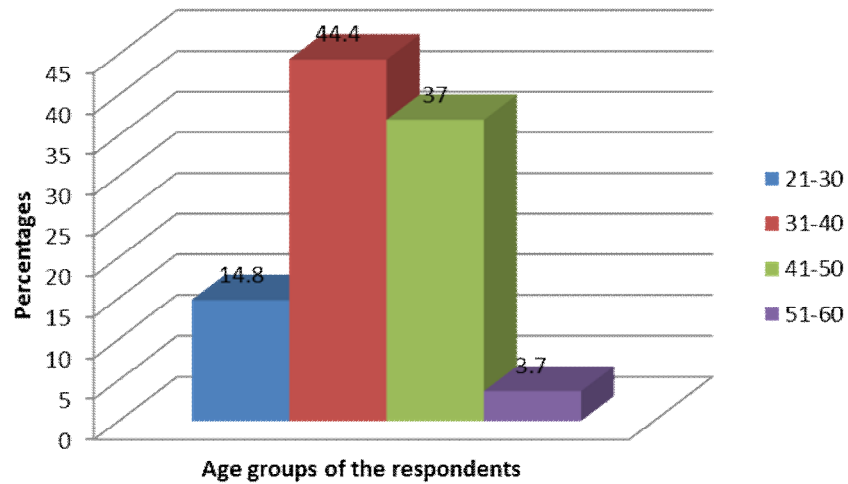
Figure 4.5: Distribution of the age group of the teachers in Makueni County

4.3.2.3 Education level

The study established that majority of the respondents 66.6% (36) had attained BED while only 13% (7) had Masters Degrees, 9.3% (5) had BA/BSc with PGDE and diplomas while only 1.8% (1) of them had SI. This shows that all the teachers involved in the study are qualified and so the information they gave was relevant to the study. Figure 4.7 shows the findings of the study.
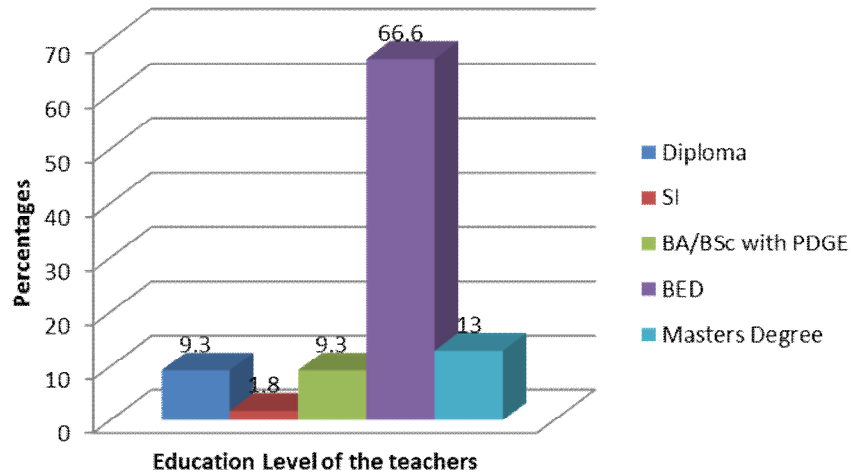
Figure 4.6: Teachers' education level in Makueni County

4.4 Academic performance of schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County
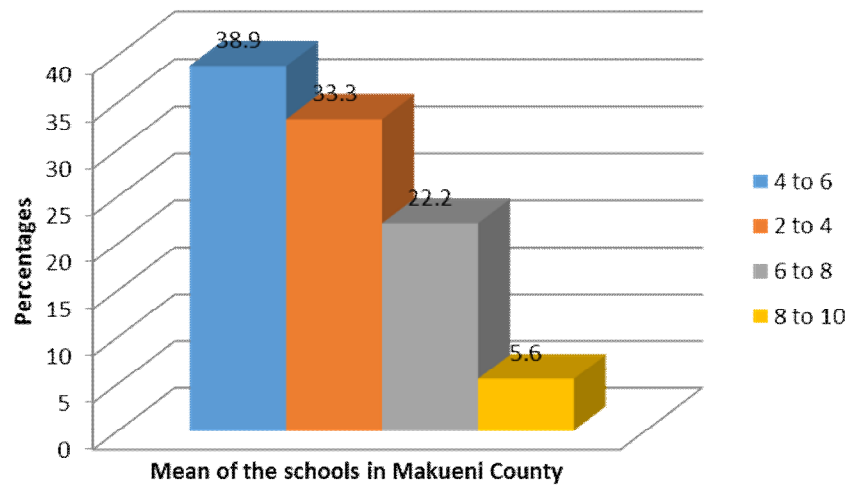
Figure 4.7 : Mean of the schools in Makueni County

The study sought to establish the mean score of the schools in Makueni County. Majority of the principals 38.9% (7) stated that their school mean score was between 4-6, 33.3% (6) of them stated that their school mean score was between 2-4 while 22.2% (4) of them stated that their school mean score was between 6-8 while only

5.6% (1) of them stated that their school mean score was between 8-10. Figure 4.4 presents the findings of the study. This means that a whole 72.2% of the sampled schools scores a mean of 2-6 with only 27.8 % of the sampled schools managing to score a mean of 6-10. This is a clear indication that the secondary schools in Makueni sub-county of Makueni county do not perform well in the KCSE exam.

4.5 Influence of compromising as a conflict management style on Academic Performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County

4.5.1 Teachers' Responses on compromising style

The study sought to determine the impact of compromising as a conflict management style in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County according to the teachers. The researcher did so by posing possible statements that relate to compromising style of conflict management. The findings of the study were presented in the five point likert scale with 1=never and 5=always. Table 4.1(a) illustrates the findings of the study.

Table 4.1 : Influence of compromising as a conflict management style in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County

Statements		A	OF	OC	R	N	T	M
Principal is usually firm in pursuing goals	F	18	16	20	0	0	54	3.96
	%	33.3	29.6	37.1	0	0	100	79.2
Principal explores differences ,not backing down but not imposing his view either	F	1	30	11	10	2	54	3.33
	%	1.8	55.6	20.4	18.5	3.7	100	66.6
Principal disagrees openly, then invites more discussions about differences	F	2	20	20	11	1	54	3.20
	%	3.7	37.0	37.0	20.4	1.9	100	64.0
Principal looks for a mutually satisfactory solution	F	17	14	10	12	1	54	3.63
	%	31.5	25.9	18.5	22.2	1.9	100	72.6
Principal sees to it that the work of staff members is coordinated	F	16	24	12	2	0	54	4.00
	%	29.7	44.4	22.2	3.7	0	100	80.0
Principal seeks to investigate issues with others in order to find solutions that are naturally acceptable	F	7	30	12	4	1	54	3.70
	%	13	55.6	22.2	7.4	1.8	100	74.0
Principal compromises in order to reach solutions	F	1	20	15	15	3	54	3.02
	%	1.8	37	27.8	27.8	5.6	100	60.4
Principal gives in as soon as the other party gets emotional about an issue	F	1	8	7	29	9	54	2.31
	%	1.8	14.8	13.0	53.7	16.7	100	46.2
Principal agrees to a middle ground rather than look for a completely satisfying solution	F	6	10	18	14	6	54	2.91
	%	11.1	18.5	33.3	25.9	11.1	100	58.2

Source: Field data, 2015

Scale

N= Never   R = Rarely   OC = Occasionally   OF = Often   A = Always

The findings of the study indicated that majority of the secondary teachers in Makueni County 80% stated that their principals often ensured that the work of the staff members is coordinated, 79.2% of the teachers were of the view that their principals were often firm in pursuing goals, 74% of them stated that their principals often seeks to investigate issues with others in order to find solutions that are naturally acceptable and 72.6% of them stated that their principals often look for a mutually satisfactory solution in conflict management.

A 66.6% of the teachers in Makueni County stated that their principals often explore differences, not backing down but not imposing my view either, 64%of the teachers were of the view that their principals often disagree openly then invites more discussions about differences, 60.7% of them stated that their principals often compromise in order to reach solutions while 58.2% of them stated that their principals often agree to middle ground rather than look for a completely satisfying solution and only 46.2% of the teachers were of the opinion that their principals often give in as soon as the other party gets emotional about an issue. In general, 66.8% of the teachers in Makueni County stated that their principals usually employ compromising as a conflict management strategy.

4.5.2 Principals' Response on compromising style

The study sought to determine whether the compromising strategy is used by the principals as a conflict management style in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County. The researcher did so by posing possible statements that relate to compromising style of conflict management. The findings of the study were presented in the five point likerts scale with 1=never and 5=always. Table 4.1(b) illustrates the findings of the study.

Table 4.2 : Compromising strategy as a conflict management style by the

principals in Makueni County

Statements		A	OF	OC	R	N	T	M
I am usually firm in pursuing goals	F	7	11	0	0	0	18	4.39
	%	38.9	61.1	0	0	0	100	87.8
I explore differences ,not backing down but not imposing my view either	F	4	14	0	0	0	18	4.22
	%	22.2	77.8	0	0	0	100	84.4
I disagree openly, then invites more discussions about differences	F	1	4	8	5	0	18	3.06
	%	5.6	22.2	44.4	27.8	0	100	61.2
I look for a mutually satisfactory solution	F	7	6	5	0	0	18	4.11
	%	38.9	33.3	7.8	0	0	100	82.2
I see to it that the work of staff members is coordinated	F	14	4	0	0	0	18	4.78
	%	77.8	22.2	0	0	0	100	95.6
I seek to investigate issues with others in order to find solutions that are naturally acceptable	F	11	7	0	0	0	18	4.61
	%	61.1	38.9	0	0	0	100	92.2
I compromise in order to reach solutions	F	1	3	6	6	2	18	2.72
	%	5.6	16.7	33.3	33.3	11.1	100	54.4
I give in as soon as the other party gets emotional about an issue	F	0	1	5	6	6	18	2.06
	%	0	5.6	27.8	33.3	33.3	100	41.2

Source: Field data, 2015

Scale   N= Never   R = Rarely   OC = Occasionally   OF = Often   A = Always

The findings of the study shows that 95.6% of the principals in Makueni sub county often ensured that the work of the staff members is coordinated, 92.2% of the principals often sought to investigate issues with others in order to find solutions that are naturally acceptable, 87.8% of them stated that they are often firm in pursuing goals and 84.4% of them stated that they often explore differences, not backing down but not imposing their view either.

A big percentage of 82.2% of the principals in Makueni sub-county often look for a mutually satisfactory solution, 61.2% of the principals stated that they often disagree openly then invites more discussions about differences. A 54.4% of the principals stated that they often compromise in order to reach solutions and only 41.2% of them were of the opinion that they often give in as soon as the other party gets emotional about an issue. In general, 74.9% of the principals in Makueni stated that they usually employ compromising as a conflict management strategy. All the principals whose schools perform between 2-4 and 4-6 agreed that the always and often used compromising style in managing conflicts in their schools. Although some of the principals whose schools performed between 6 and 10 agreed to often use this style, most of them said that they rarely and sometimes occasionally employ some of the aspects pertaining to compromising method of conflict management in their schools. Further analysis of the data shows that principals who use the compromising style register low mean scores as shown in the table below.

Table 4.3 : use of compromising style in comparison to KCSE performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

Principals use of compromising style	KCSE Performance	No. of school	%
66%	2-4	6	33.3%
42.85%	4-6	7	38.9%
41.66	6-8	4	22.2%
50%	8-10	1	5.6%

This study agrees with Burrell (2001) and Baumgardner (2012) who note that; overuse of the compromising style leads to loss of long-term goals, a lack of trust, creation of a cynical environment, and being viewed as having no firm values and can result in making concessions to keep people happy without resolving the original conflict. This style backfires because parties overlook important principles and long-term goals for the sake of the details. Moreover, it is not the best way to reach an optimal solution on important issues like academic performance since those principals who rely so much on this style do not achieve high mean scores.

From the table above, we can deduce that principals who use 66% of compromising style to solve conflicts in their schools register low mean scores while those who 50% and below of this style perform far much better.

This is an indication that the performance of most of the schools in Makueni sub-county is influenced negatively by the use of compromising as a conflict management style as the principals aim to keep the other parties happy and not concerned with the performance which is a long term goal. Another downside to compromising is that it can be an easy way out and reduces new creative options. Constant use of

compromising method as a way of settling disputes can lead to results which are less than ideal and hence the reason for most of the schools not performing well.

4.6 Impact of collaboration conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County

The study sought to determine whether principals use collaboration conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County according to the teachers. The findings of the study were presented in the five point likert scale with 1=never and 5=always. Table 4.2(a) presents the findings of the study.

4.6.1 Teachers' Responses on principals' use of collaboration style

Table 4.4 : Influence of collaboration as a conflict management style on academic Performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni county

Statements		A	OF	OC	R	N	T	M
Principal listens to others before making any conclusion about any conflict in the school	F	13	26	12	3	0	54	3.91
	%	24.1	48.1	22.2	5.6	0	100	78.2
Principal avoids hard feelings by keeping his/her disagreements with others to himself/herself	F	12	18	17	7	0	54	3.65
	%	22.2	33.3	31.5	13	0	100	73.0
Principal accepts the recommendations of other teachers	F	5	31	13	5	0	54	3.67
	%	9.5	57.4	24.0	9.3	0	100	73.4
Principal accommodates the wishes of other stake holders when handling conflict	F	9	20	21	4	0	54	3.65
	%	16.7	37.0	38.9	7.4	0	100	73.0
Principal gives up some points in	F	6	13	29	6	0	54	3.35

		N	R	OC	OF	A	Total	
exchange for others	%	11.1	24.1	53.7	11.1	0	100	67.0
Principal puts aside any controversial aspects of any issue	F	4	18	24	8	0	54	3.33
	%	7.4	33.3	44.4	14.8	0	100	66.6
Principal treats all staff members as his equals	F	5	11	6	17	15	54	2.52
	%	19.3	20.4	11.1	31.4	27.8	100	50.4
Principal is willing to make changes	F	7	23	13	10	1	54	3.46
	%	13.0	42.6	24.1	18.5	1.8	100	69.2
Principal makes all staff members to feel at ease when talking to them	F	12	21	8	10	3	54	3.53
	%	22.2	38.9	14.8	18.5	5.6	100	70.6
Principal is slow to accept new ideas	F	1	6	19	17	11	54	2.43
	%	1.8	11.1	35.2	31.5	20.4	100	48.6
Principal is free, supportive and have respect for differences	F	15	16	16	3	4	54	3.65
	%	27.8	29.6	29.6	5.6	7.4	100	73.0

Source: Field data, 2015

Scale   N= Never   R = Rarely   OC = Occasionally   OF = Often   A = Always

The study established that 78.2% of the teachers in Makueni sub-county stated that their principals often listen to others before making any conclusion about any conflicts in the school, 73.4% of the teachers stated that their principals often accept recommendations made from other teachers and 73.0% of them stated that often avoid hard feelings by keeping their disagreements to themselves, they often accommodate the wishes of other stakeholders when handling conflicts and they are free, supportive and have respect for differences.

The study also shows that 70.6% of the teachers were of the view that their principals often make all their staff members feel comfortable while talking to them, 69.2% of

the teachers stated that their principals are often willing to make changes where necessary, 67% of them stated that their principals often give up some points in exchange for others, 66.6% of them stated that their principals often put aside any controversial aspects of any issues while 50.4% of the teachers were of the view that their principals treat all members of the staff equal and only 48.6% of them stated that their principals are slow to accept new ideas.

In general, 67.5% of the teachers stated that their principals in Makueni County practiced collaborating strategy in conflict resolution.

4.6.2 Principal's Responses on collaborating style

The researcher also sought to determine whether principals use collaboration strategy as a conflict management style in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County. The findings of the study were presented in the five point likerts scale with 1=never and 5=always. Table 4.2(b) presents the findings of the study.

Table 4.5 : Principals use collaboration strategy as a conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

Statements		A	OF	OC	R	N	T	M
I listen to others before making any conclusion about any conflict in the school	F	8	8	1	1	0	18	4.28
	%	44.4	44.4	5.6	5.6	0	100	85.6
I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreements with others to myself	F	2	4	8	4	0	18	3.22
	%	11.1	22.2	44.4	22.2	0	100	64.4
I accept the recommendations of other teachers	F	3	11	4	0	0	18	3.94
	%	16.7	61.1	22.2	0	0	100	78.8
I accommodate the wishes of other stake holders when handling conflict	F	2	11	5	0	0	18	3.83
	%	11.1	61.1	27.8	0	0	100	76.6
I give up some points in exchange for others	F	0	8	9	1	0	18	2.39
	%	0	44.4	50.0	5.6	0	100	47.8
I put aside any controversial aspects of any issue	F	1	5	9	3	0	18	3.22
	%	5.6	27.8	50.0	16.7	0	100	64.4
I treat all staff members as equals	F	13	4	1	0	0	18	4.67
	%	72.2	22.2	5.6	0	0	100	93.4
I am willing to make changes	F	7	9	2	0	0	18	4.28
	%	38.9	50.0	11.1	0	0	100	85.6
I make all staff members to feel at ease when talking to them	F	13	5	0	0	0	18	4.72
	%	72.2	27.8	0	0	0	100	94.4
I accept other parties new ideas	F	5	11	2	0	0	18	4.17
	%	27.8	61.1	11.1	0	0	100	83.4
I am free, supportive and have respect for differences	F	13	4	1	0	0	18	4.67
	%	72.2	22.2	5.6	0	0	100	93.4

Source: Field data, 2015

Scale   N= Never   R = Rarely   OC = Occasionally   OF = Often   A = Always

The findings of the study indicate that 94.4%of the principals in Makueni sub-county often make all their staff members feel comfortable while talking to them, 93.4% of them often treat their staff members as equal and they are free, supportive and they have respect for differences while 85.65 of them often listen to others before making any conclusion about any conflicts in the school as well as being willing to make changes where necessary.

A 83.4% of the principals in Makueni County stated that they often accept new ideas from other parties, 78.8% of them often accept recommendations made from other teachers, 76.6% of them of them stated that they often accommodate the wishes of other stakeholders when handling conflicts while 64.4% of them were of the view that they often put aside any controversial aspects of any issues and often avoid hard feelings by keeping their disagreements to themselves while only 47.8% of the principals stated that they often give up some points in exchange for others.

 In general, 73.4% of the principals in Makueni sub-county often employ collaboration strategy in conflict resolution. The principals whose schools perform between 2 and 6 occasionally used collaboration as a style of managing conflicts with 20% of them stating that they rarely use it. The 20% fell under those who perform between 2 and 4 for their mean score. On the other hand the principals whose schools performed between 6 and 10 stated they either often or always used collaboration as a style in managing conflicts in their schools. This is shown in the table below.

Table 4.6 : use of collaborating style in comparison to KCSE performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

Principals use of collaborating style	KCSE performance	No. of school	%
38%	2-4	6	33.3%
42.85%	4-6	7	38.9%
81.82%	6-8	4	22.2%
84%	8-10	1	5.6%

The findings on the table above indicate that the principals in Makueni sub-county who under use collaboration as a conflict resolution method have their schools score below average in their mean scores i.e. between 2-4 and between 4-6.the schools whose principals apply the use of this style always have their mean between 6-10 which is indicated by 81.82% and 84 % consecutively.

This study agrees with Burrell (2001) and Baumgardner (2012) who note that; this style is appropriate to use frequently in a team environment and very ideal for good performance and therefore its under use can result in using quick fix solutions, lack of commitment by other team members, disempowerment, and loss of innovation and morale hence poor performance. According to (Burrell and Baumgardner), Collaboration is the way to achieve the best outcome on important issues, like academic performance, as well as build good relationships since it takes into account all of the parties' underlying interests.

4.7 Impact of accommodating conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County

The study sought to determine the impact of accommodating conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni Count. The findings of the study were presented in the five point likert scale with 1=never and 5=always. Table 4.3 (a): presents the findings of the study.

4.7.1 Teachers' Responses on Accommodating conflict management style

Table 4.7 : Impact of accommodating conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County

Statements		A	OF	OC	R	N	T	M
Principal lets staff members know what is expected of them	F	33	16	5	0	0	54	4.52
	%	61.1	29.6	9.3	0	0	100	90.4
Principal invites other stake holders when dealing with any form of conflict	F	6	31	16	1	0	54	3.78
	%	11.1	57.4	29.6	1.9	0	100	75.6
Principal makes sure that all members understand his/her intentions	F	18	18	12	6	0	54	3.89
	%	33.3	33.3	22.2	11.1	0	100	77.8
Principal gets staff approval in important matters before implementing them	F	3	20	16	12	3	54	3.15
	%	5.6	37.0	29.6	22.2	5.6	100	63.0
Principal puts suggestions made by the staff into operations	F	10	11	23	7	3	54	3.33
	%	18.5	20.4	42.6	13.0	5.6	100	66.6
Principal does not ignore any opinion from the other parties	F	3	22	17	7	5	54	3.20
	%	5.6	40.7	31.4	13.0	9.3	100	64.0
Principal gives encouragement, support and appreciation to group members	F	17	22	13	1	1	54	3.98
	%	31.5	40.7	24.1	1.8	1.8	100	79.6

		N	R	OC	OF	A		
Principal makes every member enjoy working with the others in the group	F	8	28	7	10	1	54	3.59
	%	14.8	51.9	24.1	18.5	1.8	100	71.8
Principal mobilizes and utilize the potential resources and creativity of members for accomplishing group goals	F	13	17	14	10	0	54	3.61
	%	24.1	31.5	25.9	18.5	0	100	72.2

Source: Field data, 2015

Scale N= Never R = Rarely OC = Occasionally OF = Often A = Always

The study established that 90.4% of the teachers in Makueni Sub-county stated that their principals often let them know what is expected of them, 79.6% of the teachers were of the view that their principals often encourage, support and appreciate them before other staff members, 77.8% of them stated that their principals often communicate their intentions clearly to all the teachers, 75.6% of them were of the view that their principals often invite other stakeholders when dealing with any form of conflict while 72.2% of them stated that their principals often mobilize and utilize the potential resources and creativity of staff members to accomplish groups' goal.

A 71.8% of the teachers in Makueni County stated that their principals often make every member of the staff enjoy working in the team, 66.6% of them were of the opinion that their principals often put their suggestions into operations while 64.0% of them stated that their principals often do not ignore any opinions from the other parties and only 63.0% of the teachers stated that their principals often get staff approval in important matters before implementing them. On average, 73.4% of the teachers in Makueni County were of the view that their principals often employ accommodating strategy in conflict management.

4.7.2 Principals' Responses on Accommodating Style

The researcher also sought to determine whether principals use accommodating strategy as a conflict management style in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County. The findings of the study were presented in the five point likert scale with 1=never and 5=always. Table 4.3(b) presents the findings of the study.

Table 4.8 : Principals use of accommodating strategy as a conflict management style in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

Statements		A	OF	OC	R	N	T	M
I let staff members know what is expected of them	F	18	0	0	0	0	18	5.0
	%	100	0	0	0	0	100	100
I assign staff members particular tasks	F	17	1	0	0	0	18	4.94
	%	94.4	5.6	0	0	0	100	98.8
I make sure that all members understand my intentions	F	11	7	0	0	0	18	4.61
	%	61.1	39.9	0	0	0	100	92.2
I get staff approval in important matters before implementing them	F	7	11	0	0	0	18	4.39
	%	39.9	61.1	0	0	0	100	87.8
I put suggestions made by the staff into operations	F	2	16	0	0	0	18	4.11
	%	11.1	88.9	0	0	0	100	82.2
I let group members diagnose group problems	F	5	7	6	0	0	18	3.94
	%	27.8	38.9	33.3	0	0	100	78.8
I give encouragement, support and appreciation to group members	F	16	1	1	0	0	18	4.83
	%	88.8	5.6	5.6	0	0	100	96.6
I make every member enjoy working with the others in the group	F	13	5	0	0	0	18	4.72

	%	72.2	27.8	0	0	0	100	94.4
I mobilize and utilize the potential resources and creativity of members for accomplishing group goals	F	13	5	0	0	0	18	4.72
	%	72.2	27.8	0	0	0	100	94.4

Source: Field data, 2015

Scale   N= Never   R = Rarely   OC = Occasionally   OF = Often   A = Always

The study established that 100% of the principals in Makueni County always let their staff members know what is expected of them, 98.8% of them always assign staff members particular tasks, 96.6% of them often encourage, support and appreciate their staff members, 94.4% of the principals in Makueni County often made every member of their staff enjoy working with others in the group as well as mobilizing and utilizing the potential resources and creativity of the members for accomplishing groups' goals.

Ninety two percent of the principals in Makueni County often made sure that their staff members understood their intentions, 87.8% of them stated that they often get staff approval in important matters before implementing them while 82.2% of them stated that they often put suggestions made by their staff members into operations while 78.8% of them stated that they often let group members diagnose group problems.

On average, 81.4% of the principals often employ accommodating strategy in conflict management. This average agrees with Burrell, (2001), who notes that managers who overuse the accommodating style exhibit a lack of desire to change and usually demonstrate anxiety over future uncertainties. One of their main desires may be to

keep everything the same. When the accommodating style is overused certain behaviors emerge. Some of these emergent behaviors include giving up personal space, and speaking in an extremely quiet almost unintelligible voice. Its underuse on the other hand can result in lack of rapport, low morale, and an inability to yield. The table below shows the principals' rate of using the accommodating style.

Table 4.9 : Use of accommodating style in comparison to KCSE performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

Principals use of accommodating style	KCSE performance	No. of school	%
75%	2-4	6	33.3%
73.01%	4-6	7	38.9%
69.44%	6-8	4	22.2%
67. 77%	8-10	1	5.6%

This study agrees with Baumgardner (2012) who points out that; the focus of this style is on the relationship, as opposed to the outcome. The downside is that your ideas do not get sufficient attention and may be neglected. This causes poor performance in an institution especially in schools. This style has a negative side since the student may think that the principal is too good and therefore relaxes hence poor performance. The same may apply to the teachers who may be reluctant in their teaching because they know that the principal will accommodate them even if they are wrong or lazy because he/she doesn't want to be in conflict with them.

The table above indicates that principals in Makueni sub-county often use accommodating style to solve conflict in their schools. Those who rely on it so much end up getting poor results as indicated by 75% and 73.01% against 2-4 and 4-6 mean scores respectively.

This implies that the principals' use of accommodating as a conflict management style influences the students' academic achievement negatively especially when they rely on it oftenly

4.8 Influence of competing as a conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County

The researcher sought the opinion of the teachers on the frequency at which their principals used competing strategy to solve conflicts in their schools. The findings of the study was presented in a five point likert scale with 1=never and 5=always. Table 4.4(a) presents the findings of the study

4.8.1 Teacher's responses

Table 4.10 : Competing style as a conflict management strategy in Secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County

Statements		A	OF	OC	R	N	T	M
Principal asserts his/her wishes	F	17	24	11	2	0	54	4.04
	%	31.5	44.4	20.4	3.7	0	100	80.8
Principal makes some effort to get his way	F	9	29	16	0	0	54	3.87
	%	16.7	53.7	29.6	0	0	100	77.4
Principal tries to convince the	F	16	18	12	7	1	54	3.76

		N	R	OC	OF	A	Total	
others of the merits of his position	%	29.6	33.3	22.2	13.0	1.9	100	75.2
Principal does not listen to others opinions before making decisions	F	0	6	14	27	7	54	2.35
	%	0	11.1	25.9	50.0	13.0	100	47.0
Principal puts pressure on others to abide by what he/she has said	F	3	8	16	17	10	54	2.57
	%	5.6	14.8	29.6	31.5	18.5	100	51.4
Principal is hostile to the teachers if they go against his/her decisions	F	1	6	16	10	21	54	2.19
	%	1.9	11.1	29.6	18.5	38.9	100	43.8

Source: Field data, 2015

Scale   N= Never   R = Rarely   OC = Occasionally   OF = Often   A = Always

Based on the findings of the study above, 80.8% of the teachers felt that their principals often asserts their wishes, 77.4% of the teachers were of the opinion that their school principals often make some efforts to get their ways while 75.2% of them were of the view that their principals often try to convince them of the merits of their own opinions. 51.4% of the teachers stated that their principals often put pressure on others to abide by what they say, 47% of them stated that their principals often do not listen to other peoples' opinions before they make decisions while only 43.8% of the teachers stated that their principals were hostile to teachers if they go against their decisions. On average, 62.6% of the teachers in Makueni County were of the opinion that their principals employ competing strategy in conflict management.

4.8.2 Principals' Responses on competing style

The researcher also sought to determine whether principals use competing strategy as a conflict management style in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County. The findings of the study were presented in the five point likerts scale with 1=never and 5=always. Table 4.4 (b) presents the findings of the stud

Table 4.11 : Principals use of competitive strategy as a conflict management style in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

Statements		A	OF	OC	R	N	T	M
I assert my wishes	F	2	7	5	1	3	18	3.22
	%	11.1	38.9	27.8	5.6	16.7	100	64.4
I make some effort to get my way	F	2	6	3	5	2	18	3.06
	%	11.1	33.3	16.7	27.8	11.1	100	61.2
I try to convince the others of the merits of my opinion	F	5	9	2	2	0	18	3.94
	%	27.8	50.0	11.1	11.1	0	100	78.8
I make decisions without consulting other teachers to hear their opinions	F	0	0	0	14	4	18	1.78
	%	0	0	0	77.8	22.2	100	35.6
As the manager of the school I press others to abide by what is laid down	F	3	5	3	0	7	18	2.83
	%	16.7	27.8	16.7	0	38.9	100	56.6
Am hard on those who go against my decisions	F	0	0	5	5	8	18	2.83
	%	0	0	27.8	27.8	44.4	100	56.6

Source: Field data, 2015

Scale　　N= Never　　R = Rarely　　OC = Occasionally　　OF = Often　　A = Always

The study indicated that majority of the respondents 78.8% of the principals in Makueni County often tried to convince others of the merits of their opinion, 64.4% of them often asserted their wishes, 61.2% of them often made some efforts to get their way while 56.6% of the principals often pressed others hard to abide by the laid down rules and regulations and are also hard on those who go against their decisions while only 35.6% of them often made decisions without consulting other teachers to hear their opinions. On average 58.9% of the principals in Makueni County employ competing strategy as a means of managing conflicts. A 66.7% of the principals whose schools performed between 2 and 4 agreed to be using competing style of conflict management. All the principals whose mean score was between 4 and 6 agreed to be using competitive style of conflict although not entirely relying on it. The table below shows this

Table 4.12 : Use of competing style in comparison to KCSE performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

Principals use of competing style	KCSE performance	No. of school	%
31%	2-4	6	33.3%
42%	4-6	7	38.9%
12.25%	6-8	4	22.2%
16%	8-10	1	5.6%

The table above shows that the principals of the schools which perform between 2-6 occasionally use competing in conflict management in their schools. This implies .that this style affects academic performance in a negative way and so if the principals were to achieve good academic performance, this style should be avoided or used in rare occasions. People who consistently use a competitive style are aggressive,

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autocratic, confrontational, and intimidating. A competitive style is an attempt to gain power and pressure to change at the other person's expense. When this method is used by school principals, it is likely to cause hostility, unrest or even death in the school. This may have a negative impact on the students' academic performance due to the chaos in the institution. Students in such a school live in fear hence there will be no conducive environment for relaxed learning. In such a school, teachers will teach not because they should teach but because if they don't do it they will be in trouble with the principal. This may have serious implication on the academic performance.

This study agrees with Burrell (2001) who notes that; use of this style can lead to lack of feedback, reduced learning, and low performance. The study also agrees with Bodine and Crawford (1998) who noted that a manager who understands the tactics and strategies of others who use competitive styles can assist him/her in defusing the negative consequences of competition and working toward a mutual gains approach. In this study the researcher found out that even the principals whose schools performed between 8 and 10 still used competition as a mode of conflict management but rarely which is indicated by the 16% of competing style which means that the other percentage is taken by other conflict management styles Thus competing conflict management style is rendered inadequate which reflects a fundamental weakness in the leadership development infrastructure that leaves the students ill prepared to provide effective academic performance in their schools. This clearly indicates that competing as a conflict management style influences academic performance of schools in Makueni sub-county negatively and that is why the schools in the sub-county perform dismally.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The general objective of this study was to find out the influence of Principals' Conflict Management Styles on Academic Performance in secondary schools in Makueni District, Makueni County. The factors evaluated were: influence of compromising as a conflict management style in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County; impact of collaboration conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County; influence of accommodating conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County; and the influence of competing as a conflict management style on academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The information below gives a summary of the findings of the study.

5.2.1 Influence of compromising as a conflict management style on Academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

In view of the foregoing, compromising strategies should be career-staged to provide for continuum from pre-service preparation and throughout a principals' career. The career-staged approach individuals and personalizes learning to meet participants' learning needs, interests and learning styles (Speck and Knipe, 2010) and improves the quality of experience in the workplace and the organizational climate (Joyce &

Cakhoun,2010), which are critical in conflict management in secondary schools. Considering the data on principals' age distribution, educational background and leadership experience, their leadership development must take cognizance of the theory of adult learning. According to Speck and Knipe (2010:74), adults come to the learning process with a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, interests and competencies. They assert that this diversity must be accommodated in the planning and implementation of professional development. The demographic data also reveals that principals' have at some point used compromising strategy as a way of managing conflicts in their schools. This is consistent with the findings by Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppy and Leibert (2006) that compromising strategy affects the sustainability of students' performance. This implies that while such strategy of conflict management may be inevitable, it has an implication on sustainability of students' academic performance in secondary schools. This Louis (2012) assert that coordinated compromising conflict management has the potential to mitigate some negative consequences arising from principals' turnover. The implication for this study is that compromising conflict management is critical to effective leadership change that positively influences academic performance in secondary schools.

The use of compromising style demonstrates that you are willing to sacrifice some of your goals while persuading others to give up part of theirs – give a little, get a little. In general, 66.8% of the teachers in Makueni County stated that their principals usually employ compromising as a conflict management strategy while 74.9% of the principals in Makueni stated that they usually employ compromising as a conflict management strategy. All the principals whose schools perform between 2-4 and 4-6 agreed that they always and often used compromising style in managing conflicts in their schools. Although some of the principals whose schools performed between 6

and 10 agreed to often use this style, most of them said that they rarely and sometimes occasionally employ some of the aspects pertaining to compromising method of conflict management in their schools. The downside to compromising is that it can be an easy way out and reduces new creative options. Constant use of compromising method as a way of settling disputes can lead to results which are less than ideal and so the style affects academic performance negatively.

5.2.2 Impact of collaborating conflict management style on Academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

In general, 67.5% of the teachers stated that their principals in Makueni County practiced collaborating strategy in conflict resolution while 73.4% of the principals in Makueni County often employ collaboration strategy in conflict resolution. Majority of the principals whose schools perform between 2 and 6 occasionally used collaboration as a style of managing conflicts with 20% of them stating that they rarely use it. The 20% fell under those who perform between 2 and 4 for their mean score. On the other hand the principals whose schools performed between 6 and 10 stated they either often or always used collaboration as a style in managing conflicts in their schools. Collaboration takes time and if the relationship among the parties is not important, then it may not be worth the time and energy to create a win-win solution.

All the principals indicated that they advance their conflict management strategy by collaborating with others to make the performance a success. The principal conflict management style and academic performance relate directly to student learning and achievement. In a landmark research study, Leithwood et al. (2012) established that collaborative conflict management by principals exerts good academic performance.

This strategy helps them in reviewing the syllabus coverage by each subject teaching. All the principals indicated that they advance their conflict management strategy by collaborating with others to make the performance a success. The principal conflict management style and academic performance relate directly to student learning and achievement. In a landmark research study, Leithwood et al. (2012) established that collaborative conflict management by principals exerts the greatest influence on student learning among school related factors.

This implies that collaborative conflict management and principals' leadership experiences have the potential to promote good performance in secondary schools. These conflicts management skills are critical given that conflict management by principals and quality education are reciprocal (UNESCO, 2014).

5.2.3 Influence of Accommodating conflict management style on Academic performance in secondary schools in Makueni sub-county

By accommodating you set aside your own personal needs because you want to please others in order to keep the peace. The emphasis is on preserving the relationship. Smoothing or harmonizing can result in a false solution to a problem and can create feelings in a person that range from anger to pleasure. On average, 73.4% of the teachers in Makueni County were of the view that their principals often employ accommodating strategy in conflict management while 81.4% of the principals often employ accommodating strategy in conflict management. This style has a negative side though since the student may think that the principal is too good and therefore relaxes hence the average performance of between 4-6 in most of the schools in the sub-county.

Within shared leadership and accommodation of each other, team leaders require ongoing training in conflict management skills such as leading consensus, facilitating dialogue, collaborative problem-solving conducting effective meetings and resolving conflicts (Linden, 2013). By developing teacher leaders the principals effectively distributes leadership, common commitment and common responsibility, which are essential to sustaining a professional learning community initiative and improved performance (Dufuor & Marzano, 2011). Consistent with the stance by Speck and Knipe (2010), the above responsibilities imply that impact of accommodating strategy of conflict management by principals provide opportunities to participate in a collaborative leadership process with structured opportunities to participate in vision making; this leaves the potential to build ownership and the commitment in the school improvement process. The under use of this can result to poor performance

5.2.4 Impact of competing on Academic performance in schools in Makueni sub-county

People who consistently use a competitive style come across as aggressive, autocratic, confrontational, and intimidating. A competitive style is an attempt to gain power and pressure to change at the other person's expense. On average, 62.6% of the teachers in Makueni County were of the opinion that their principals employ competing strategy in conflict management while 58.9% of the principals in Makueni County employ competing strategy as a means of managing conflicts. A 66.7% of the principals whose schools performed between 2 and 4 agreed to be using competing style of conflict management. All the principals whose mean score was between 4 and 6 agreed to be using competitive style of managing conflict although not entirely relying on it.

In this study the researcher found out that even the principals whose schools performed between 8 and 10 still applied 16% of competition as a mode of conflict management though they use it together with other styles. When this method is entirely used by school principals, it is likely to cause hostility, unrest or even death in the school. This may have a negative impact on the students' academic performance due to the chaos in the institution. This shows that use of competing as a conflict management style alone impacts negatively on academic performance hence the reason for below average performance in most of the schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County.

5.3 Conclusions

While the conflict management strategies discussed above are critical to the academic performance in secondary schools, they imply that if they are to be effective in facilitating academic performance, they must be exercised within an accommodative educational framework. The accommodative education framework entails compromising a vision, accommodating implementation model and indicators, and collaborative frame works. Teacher leadership positions by themselves do not automatically translate into effective conflict management strategy. As Salisbury and McGregor (2012) observes, conflict management is affected by the leader personal qualities, attitudes and practices of the significant others. Further, Greenlee (2007) asserts that conflict management is not about empowering principals by centralizing decision making authority but rather to increase the participation of others in decision making, free access to resources and information and expertise in order to influence school change geared towards good performance. Therefore a further implication is that effective principals conflict management style should focus on empowering the

principal leader as a way of mediating their impact on leadership and improving the quality of education in their schools hence good performance.

Bush and Oduro (2006) emphasize that principals in Africa face a daunting challenge in conflict management and suggest that conflict management education is essential to guarantee schools good academic performance under the umbrella of mutual understanding amongst key players. Availing effective program on conflict management constitutes a great starting point in the leadership development system. In order to address the situation, Onyango (2011) recommends that the government should professionalize conflict management in schools by enacting comprehensive policies that make the principals acquire training in conflict management a mandatory for aspiring and serving principals.

School-based conflict can be ignited by a number of aspects, yet school principals as managers, are expected to be able to creatively address conflicts in their schools. The series of problems which the school system faces lies in the hand of the leadership and conflict management style the school principal uses to carry out his or her day to day running of the system. Success and failure in the school system depends on the principal's effectiveness that manifests in his/her ability to plan, organize, coordinate, direct and control the activities of the school system so as to achieve the goals and objectives of the school.

Majority of the principals 38.9% (7) stated that their school mean score was between 4-6, 33.3% (6) of them stated that their school mean score was between 2-4 while 22.2% (4) of them stated that their school mean score was between 6-8 while only 5.6% (1) of them stated that their school mean score was between 8-10. Figure 4.4 presents the findings of the study. This means that a whole 72.2% of the sampled

schools score a mean of 2-6 with only 27.8 % of the sampled schools managing to score a mean of 6-10.

This study concludes that principals in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County use all the four conflict management styles. The teachers and the principals agreed that all the methods are used and that there is no principal who uses a specific/single conflict management style in the administration of their schools. However a high percentage of teachers (62.6%) and principals (58.9%) agreed that there is use of competing style as a method of conflict management. Most of those schools whose principals relied a lot on competitive, compromising and accommodating strategies in managing their school conflicts had a mean score of between 2 and 6 while those whose principals used them in moderation having a mean score of between 6 and 10. This may have a lot to do with the poor performance of the secondary schools in Makueni County. There is also a high percentage of schools which their principals use both compromising and accommodating methods of conflict management. These methods if not carefully used may have adverse influence on the academic performance of the students in these schools .This came out as the reason why most of the schools in the sub-county perform dismally.

5. 4 Recommendations

From the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following;
Principals in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County should embrace collaboration as a method of solving conflicts in their schools. Competing method of solving conflicts should be avoided if secondary schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County are to improve in academic performance and if it must be used, then it should be used sparingly.

Principals should be careful when using accommodating method of solving conflicts to avoid being misunderstood as being too lenient in their administration which later may influence the academic performance negatively

Constant use of compromising method as a way of settling disputes can lead to poor results and so principals in Makueni sub-county should not rely so much on this conflict management style but use also the other styles to strike a balance so as to improve in the school performance.

5.5 Suggestions for further Research

The following recommendations were made for further research following the findings;

A similar study needs to be taken in public secondary schools in the other sub-counties in the county for a generalization of the findings.

Same study needs to be carried out in the private schools in the sub-county to establish whether the conflict management styles influence academic performance.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Introductory letter

Makueni Girls' Sec School,

P.O. Box 72-90300,

Makueni.

24/10/2015

Dear Respondent,

I am a student of South Eastern Kenya University taking a Masters of Education degree in Educational Administration. I am undertaking a research on, **"Influence of Principals' Conflict Management Styles on Academic Performance in Secondary Schools in Makueni sub-county, Makueni County"** in partial fulfillment of my studies. In order to collect relevant data, I have designed this questionnaire, which I am kindly requesting you to complete. Be sure that the information you give will be treated with ultimate CONFIDENTIALITY. The questionnaire has been field-tested and takes on a few minutes to complete. Please respond to ALL questions as truthfully as you can.

Yours Sincerely,

ELIZABETH N. MUINDI

General Information

Read the following questions and tick the appropriate responses for each question.

Please tick (√) in the appropriate bracket

PART 1: Demographic Data.

1. Gender   Male (   )   Female (   )

2. Age   ………………….Years

3. Academic Qualification

    (a) Diploma   (   )

    (b) SI   (   )

    (c) BA/ BSc with PGDE   (   )

    (d) BED   (   )

    (e) Masters   (   )

    (f) Any other (specify)…………………………………

PART 2: I Principals Compromising Strategy as a Conflict Management Style)

Please tick (√) where appropriate

No.	Compromising strategy by Principals in conflict management	Always 5	Often 4	Occasionally 3	Rarely 2	Never 1
1	Principal is usually firm in pursuing goals					
2	Principal explores differences ,not backing down but not imposing his view either					
3	Principal disagrees openly, then invites more discussions about differences					
4	Principal looks for a mutually satisfactory solution					
5	Principal sees to it that the work of staff members is coordinated					
6	Principal seeks to investigate issues with others in order to find solutions that are naturally acceptable					
7	Principal compromises in order to reach solutions					
8	Principal gives in as soon as the other party gets emotional about an issue					
9	Principal agrees to a middle ground rather than look for a completely satisfying solution					

PART 3 Collaboration Strategy as a means of conflict management by principals

in secondary schools

Please tick (√) where appropriate

No.	Principals collaboration styles in conflict management in secondary schools	Always 5	Often 4	Occasionally 3	Rarely 2	Never 1
1	Principal listens to others before making any conclusion about any conflict in the school					
2	Principal avoids hard feelings by					

	keeping his/her disagreements with others to himself/herself					
3	Principal accepts the recommendations of other teachers					
4	Principal accommodates the wishes of other stake holders when handling conflict					
5	Principal gives up some points in exchange for others					
6	Principal puts aside any controversial aspects of any issue.					
7	Principal treats all staff members as his equals					
8	Principal is willing to make changes					
9	Principal makes all staff members to feel at ease when talking to them					
10	Principal is slow to accept new ideas					
11	Principal is free, supportive and have respect for differences					

PART 4: Accommodation strategy used by principals in conflict management in secondary schools

Please tick (√) where appropriate

No.	Principals accommodation as a conflict management style	Always 5	Often 4	Occasionally 3	Rarely 2	Never 1
1	Principal lets staff members know what is expected of them					
2	Principal invites other stake holders when dealing with any form of conflict					
3	Principal makes sure that all members understand his/her intentions					
4	Principal gets staff approval in important matters before implementing them					
5	Principal puts suggestions made by the staff into operations					
6	Principal does not ignore any opinion from the other parties					
7	Principal gives encouragement, support and appreciation to group members					
8	Principal makes every member enjoy working with the others in the group					
9	Principal mobilizes and utilize the potential resources and creativity of members for accomplishing group goals					

PART FIVE: Principal's competing strategy as a conflict management style in secondary schools

No	Competing style as a conflict management strategy by principals	Always 5	Often 4	Occasionally 3	Rarely 2	Never 1
1	Principal asserts his/her wishes.					
2	Principal makes some effort to get his way.					
3	Principal tries to convince the others of the merits of his position					
4	Principal does not listen to others opinions before making decisions					
5	Principal puts pressure on others to abide by what he/she has said					
6	Principal is hostile to the teachers if they go against his/her decisions					

End

APPENDIX 3: PRINCIPAL'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Read the following questions and tick the appropriate responses for each question.

Please tick (√) in the appropriate bracket

PART 1: General Information

1. Gender   Male (   )   Female (   )

2. Age   …………………Years

3. Academic Qualification

   (g) Diploma   (   )

   (h) SI   (   )

   (i) BA/ BSc with PGDE   (   )

   (j) BED   (   )

   (k) Masters   (   )

   (l) Any other (specify)………………………………

4. The mean of my school
   a. Above 10   (   )
   b.   Between 8-10   (   )
   c. Between 6-8   (   )
   d.   Between 4-6   (   )
   e. Between 2-4   (   )

PART 2: Compromising strategy by the principals

Please tick (√) where appropriate

No.	Compromising strategies used by the principal to avoid conflicts in the school	Always 5	Often 4	Occasionally 3	Rarely 2	Never 1
1	I am usually firm in pursuing goals					
2	I explore differences ,not backing down but not imposing my view either					
3	I disagree openly, then invites more discussions about differences					
4	I look for a mutually satisfactory solution					
5	I see to it that the work of staff members is coordinated					
6	I seek to investigate issues with others in order to find solutions that are naturally acceptable					
7	I compromise in order to reach solutions					
8	I give in as soon as the other party gets emotional about an issue					

PART 3: Collaboration means used by principals in conflict management in the school

Please tick (√) where appropriate

No.	Collaboration means used by the principals	Always 5	Often 4	Occasionally 3	Rarely 2	Never 1
1	I listen to others before making any conclusion about any conflict in the school					
2	I avoid hard feelings by keeping my disagreements with others to myself					
3	I accept the recommendations of other teachers					
4	I accommodate the wishes of other stake holders when handling conflict					
5	I give up some points in exchange for others					
6	I put aside any controversial aspects of any issue.					
7	I treat all staff members as equals					
8	I am willing to make changes					
9	I make all staff members to feel at ease when talking to them					
10	I accept other parties new ideas					
11	I am free, supportive and have respect for differences					

PART 4: How principals accommodate others as a means of conflict management in the school

Please tick (√) where appropriate

No.	How principals accommodate others as a means of conflict management in the school	Always 5	Often 4	Occasionally 3	Rarely 2	Never 1
1	I let staff members know what is expected of them					
2	I assign staff members particular tasks					
3	I make sure that all members understand my intentions					
4	I get staff approval in important matters before implementing them					
5	I put suggestions made by the staff into operations					
6	I let group members diagnose group problems					
7	I give encouragement, support and appreciation to group members					
8	I make every member enjoy working with the others in the group					
9	I mobilize and utilize the potential creativity of members for accomplishing group goals					

Part 5: Competing style as a conflict management strategy in Secondary schools

No	Competing style as a conflict management strategy by principals	Always 5	Often 4	Occasionally 3	Rarely 2	Never 1
1	I assert my wishes					
2	I make some effort to get my way					
3	I try to convince the others of the merits of my opinion					
4	I make decisions without consulting other teachers to hear their opinions					
5	As the manager of the school I press others to abide by what is laid down					
6	Am hard on those who go against my decisions					

End

Thanks for your cooperation.