COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES UTILISED BY WOMEN PRINCIPALS IN MANAGING WORKPLACE CONFLICT IN THE KENYAN SCHOOL CONTEXT

CAROLYNE ADHIAMBO KOKEYO

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Department of Communication, Journalism and Media, Rongo University

2019

DECLARATION

Declaration by the Candidate:

I declare that this thesis is my own original work and has not been submitted for the award of any degree at any other university. No part of this thesis may be reproduced without the prior written permission from the author and /or Rongo University.

Carolyne Adhiambo Kokeyo………………………………Date…………………

ICMS/PhD/004/12

Declaration by Supervisors:

We declare that this thesis has been submitted to the School of Information Communication and Media Studies with our approval as university supervisors.

Dr. Fredrick Ogenga………………………….Date………………….

Senior Lecturer,

Department of Communication, Media and Journalism,

School of Information Communication and Media Studies,

Rongo University, Rongo, Kenya.

Dr. Charles O. Ong'ondo……………………..Date………………….

Senior Lecturer,

Department of Curriculum, Instruction and Educational Media,

School of Education,

Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya.

DEDICATION

To my family

ABSTRACT

Despite several conflicts experienced in secondary schools in Kenya, very minimal research has been conducted to investigate potential causes of unrests in schools related to inappropriate communication by school principals. Furthermore, it is normally assumed that women have better communication strategies and that their schools experience less conflict. However, a review of relevant literature shows that the manner in which women principals utilise communication to manage workplace conflicts has not been established through research, especially, in the Kenyan school context. Therefore, this study sought to explore how women principals utilised communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts at secondary school level. The specific research questions were: First, what is the nature of workplace conflicts in secondary schools headed by women principals? Second, what is the nature of communication strategies utilized in schools headed by women principals? Third, how do the women principals utilize communication strategies to manage workplace conflict at secondary school level? Fourth, what challenges do women principals face? This study was informed by relativist-interpretivist paradigm which is consistent with the qualitative approach. The study adopted a case study method in which semi- structured interviews, focused group discussions and document analysis were used to generate data which were then analysed thematically. Forty research participants who were sampled purposively to take part in the study included women principals, the deputy principals, HoDs, Guidance and counselling leaders, the senior teachers as well as prefects from the student council of each study school. All relevant ethical issues were addressed. Findings indicate that first, the nature of workplace conflicts such as need-based, interest-based, data-based and social-based conflicts were unpredictable. Secondly, the nature of communication strategies utilised in schools headed by women principals such as counselling, monologue, dialogue, aggression as well as grapevine-based communication were convoluted and fluid. Thirdly, the women principals' utilised unique communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts such as: Nurturing counselling, Mongrel and Machiavellian communication. Lastly, the major challenges faced by women principals included inadequate skills as well as insufficient and undocumented policy guidelines. The contribution this study makes is that communication strategies as utilized by the women principals in real life context has not featured anywhere in communication literature. Therefore, this study recommends that there is need for social science scholars to explore what interpretivist perspective has to offer in order to better understand people's unique experiences, their actual practices and needs. The study being multidisciplinary makes contribution to the body of knowledge in communication studies while offering a relevant analysis on the role of communication in managing workplace conflict within school leadership using a gendered approach.This is applicable in the twenty-first century in which effective communication is placed at the center of organizational learning. Hence, there is need for organizational leaders to desist from dichotomy thinking in managing workplace conflicts as the nature of conflicts is convoluted and unpredictable. Therefore, this study proposes a mixed-breed approach referred to as mongrel communication.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to all my research participants, especially the school leaders and the prefects I interviewed for giving me audience every time I approached them during this study.

Finally, may I acknowledge the efforts of those not mentioned here yet in one way or another contributed to the accomplishment of this thesis. All the support notwithstanding, this is my original work and I take responsibility for the content there in.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MoE: Ministry of Education

MoHEST: Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology

TSC: Teachers Service Commission

CS: Cabinet Secretary

PS: Principal Secretary

DG: Director General

CDE: County Director of Education

CD: County Director

NEB: National Education Board

CEB: County Education Board

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

CCROSS: Center for Conflict Resolution in Secondary Schools

KICD: Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development

KEMI: Kenya Educational Management Institute

GAD: Gender and Development

QASOs: Quality Assurance Standards Officers

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Workplace: occupational sites such as school where academic and non-academic staff spend time for paid employment (Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs in Kenya, 2010).

Workplace Conflict: an interactive process that reveals itself in the workplace as a result of a disagreement between people or a group of people in the school environment based on perceived incompatible ideas, principles, interests or needs (Mullins, 2010).

Conflict Management: A communicative process of "handling grievances" by first understanding the type and the cause [nature] of conflict with a view to addressing the problem, preventing it from spreading and complicating the problem by becoming dysfunctional to the point of wasting resources (Adapted from Black 1990:43; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2007; Rahim, 2017).

Communication Strategies: approaches of communication utilised by the principal in terms of response and behaviour in order to understand the type and the cause [nature] of conflict with a view to addressing the problem, preventing it from spreading and complicating the problem by becoming dysfunctional to the point of wasting resources (Spaho, 2013; Cloke and Goldsmith, 2011).

Women Principals: Female head teachers of public secondary schools.

Heads of Department: In charge of various departments in a secondary school.

Gender: a set of societal expectations for individuals' behaviour, attitudes and feelings as well as social structures created and recreated through human interactions (Connell, 2009; Taylor & Hardman 2004:3).

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1.   Introduction

This study is organised into six chapters. Chapter One gives a background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose, research questions, limitations, justification as well as significance of the study. Chapter Two reviews the relevant literature on communication and conflict management. Chapter Three presents the research methodology giving justification for choices made. Chapter Four presents the findings based on research questions. Chapter Five presents the discussions of findings while Chapter Six presents the summary, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research. The next sub-section explains the context of study.

1.2. Context of Study

The context of this study is explained in two main parts as academic as well as social context. The academic context discusses what exactly this study is about and how it fits within the terrain of existing research in the field of communication studies. The social context espouses the relevant geographical, social, economic, cultural and administrative characteristics that are necessary for a reader of this study to be aware of.

1.2.1. Academic Context

Conflict is understood in this study as inconsistency or incompatibility in relationships because the desire for a similar resource may be in short supply; or when people have selective behavioural preferences regarding their joint action; or when they have perceived differences regarding their needs, interests, attitudes, values, beliefs and skills (Rahim, 2017). Thus, workplace conflict is that interactive process that reveals itself in a place where people spend time for paid employment, such as school, based on

disagreements because of perceived incompatible ideas, principles, interests or needs (Mullins, 2010). Additionally, in this study, conflict management is understood as a communicative process of "handling grievances" by first understanding the type and the cause [nature] of conflict with a view to addressing the problem, preventing it from spreading and from becoming dysfunctional to the point of wasting resources (Rahim, 2017).

The study was based on the realization that workplace conflicts, arising from interactions among people working in the same environment, have become a major challenge in most organizations. A study conducted by Putman (2015) indicates that managers spend 60 % of their time in solving personal issues and problematic situations in the workplace. This is not different from research in the West which has shown that school principals spend 25% of their working hours resolving conflicts because of the dynamics and interdependence of various relationships that exist between the principal and the teachers; teachers and students; teachers and other teachers; the school management and the community (Di Paola & Hoy, 2001; Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011). Implying that workplace conflict in a place such as school is inevitable.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts are becoming more prevalent in educational institutions with schools taking center stage (Msila, 2013). In Kenya, with the emergent innovations and changes in the constitution as well as the education sector, stakeholders are aware of their rights, thus, advocate for voice and fairness in handling of grievances (ibid.). Therefore, there is need for school leaders, who are also mediators, to gain skills and competencies in identifying conflict cultures, take conflict audits and become conflict management coaches and leaders in the workplace (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011). However, scholars have noted that most school

principals, especially in Africa, rely on their intuition to calm disagreements while at the same time fail to employ interpersonal skills to avoid chaos in schools (Msila, 2012).

Furthermore, most educational institutions lack strategies and processes as well as formal training on communication and conflict management. Hence, due to inadequate strategies, most institutions resolve workplace conflicts casually. This is a view that is echoed by Blundel, Ippolito and Donnarumma, (2013) when they say that most workplace disagreements are handled superficially as most organizations resort to quick fixes, hence, causing a 'fight' [using force] or 'flight' [avoiding the problem] which ends up interfering with the achievement of organizational goals. Yet, responding to issues using a quick fix means is a 'symptom concealment strategy' while the use of coercion and manipulation to prevent conflict from erupting is a short term means that is unsustainable (Bickmore, 1997:14).

Besides, the manner in which conflicts are handled in an organization will determine the productivity of individuals in that organization (Mayer, 2015). The premise is that poorly managed conflicts in the workplaces fuel the level and frequency of conflicts while damaging the image of an organization. Additionally, unmanaged conflicts may affect staff learning and performance; bruise the school culture, hurt relationships and sometimes cause high staff turnover (Hener, 2010).

In contrast, this study explicates that developing a culture of peace and democracy in the school environment will require that an open communication approach in managing conflicts. This is a view that is supported by Bickmore, (1997:14) while adding that "many important opportunities for long-term conflict management learning exist, not when people are hurt and angry (whether in wars or schoolyard scuffles), but in the everyday process of learning and living" in a school community. This explains why

many scholars advocate for school leaders to institute strategies and processes of professional learning in their schools because that will assist them to manage tensions, handle a crisis, harmonize misunderstandings and deal with difficult conversations in the school community (Hener, 2010; Saeed et al 2014).

Additionally, in order to influence successful interactions, organizational leaders need in-house effective and sustainable workplace conflict management policies and processes that will assist in understanding people's beliefs, attitudes and perceptions. This is congruent to what Keltner (1987) calls "managing struggles by rules (p.6)."

Another highlight in this study is that conventional approach to conflict management has viewed conflict as an uphill struggle, hence, the suggestion that it must be prevented. However, in the modern times, conflict is now understood as a normal occurrence. According to Ramani and Zhimin, (2010) when two or more social entities come in contact with one another to attain common objectives or desires, disagreements and misunderstandings are expected.

Moreover, incompatibility or dissonance is evident in relationships especially when resources are in short supply or when people have preferences regarding their shared action; or even when they have different attitudes, values, beliefs and skills (Putman & Poole, 1987; Dubrin, 1994; Achinstein, 2002; Rahim, 2002; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Mayer & Louw, 2012; Jiang and Buzzanel, 2013). Be it as it may, conflict has had a positive impact on the lives of people in many parts of the world. Today, functional conflict is viewed as an impetus that can help an organisation to find new solutions while giving people the opportunity to listen to and exchange different transformational views, hence, a learning organisation (Mitchel & Gamlem, 2015).

This study highlights that successful management of conflict will require effective communication strategies in the workplace. This is because conflict can arise from just a word spoken by someone and can spark destructive responses and behaviours. Mitchel and Gamlem, (2015) agree while adding that most workplace tensions and disagreements are as a result of poor and ineffective communication strategies which results in missed deadlines, missed opportunities and misunderstandings, boycotts, industrial actions or even resistance to change. However, effective communication can provide a means through which disagreements or differences are expressed and resolved.

Therefore, to prevent dysfunctional conflicts, this study proposes that school leaders should learn to communicate conflict management constructively as it can contribute to stronger and deeper relationships. The premise, as put forward by Jiang and Buzzanell (2013), is that functional conflict can help address or bring about new changes in an organisation. Accordingly, effective interpersonal communication skills play a pivotal role in successful conflict management in the workplace (Mayer, 2015).

Research in communication has shown that managing conflicts require creative, diverse, inventive and often innovative communication practices that will build a culture of dialogue rather than violence (Blundel, Ippolito & Donnarumma, 2013. The reason being, that flexible and adequate forms of action create open and effective communication that necessitate interactions and respect of opinion between conflicting parties (Spaho, 2013).

It has also been realised that school leaders who embrace effective socio-communication skills as well as emotional intelligence such as their capacity to motivate, influence, empathize, develop relationships, being honest and sensitive to

7

provide feedback, observer of functional and dysfunctional behaviours will have satisfied stakeholders, motivated staff with reduced tensions (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011). This is not different from Levine (2009), who argues that active listening forms the basic communication practice needed in conflict management.

This is to say that communicating effectively will require both parties to listen to each other and to focus on what is being said rather than listening to their own thoughts. Levine (2009) continues to argue that effective communication requires one to address real concerns and get to the core of conflict (ibid.). That is to say that active listening involves talking less and asking questions for clarity. Furthermore, understanding verbal and non-verbal communication contributes towards successful conflict management. Hence, the conclusion that those leaders who keep their communication channels open benefit more from greater chances of understanding people's beliefs, values, needs for self-esteem as well as their interests and affiliations. Thus, increased understanding poses chances of greater conflict management and open negotiations (Spaho, 2013).

Fairclough (1992) has coined the term "linguistic turn" to underscore the implication of communication in managing conflict. Effective communication and frameworks are not only seen as insightful "realm of understanding" (Fill, 2006: 42) but also as the reason for "shared meaning" (Manion, 1998: 58) as well as shared leadership (Nwagbara, 2010). This contention is in synchronizing with mutual trust and understanding consequent upon shared values and aspirations that are couched in integrative communication and dialogue (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Therefore, the need to employ effective communication skills in conflict management cannot be overemphasised.

1.2.2. Socio-economic Context

This sub-section highlights the socio-economic context while espousing the relevant geographical, social, economic, cultural and administrative characteristics that necessitates the need to study women principals' ways of utilizing communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts in the Kenyan school context.

1.2.2.1 The Educational Leadership Structure in Kenya

Generally, leadership and management of educational institutions in the Kenyan context, as stipulated in the Education Act and the constitution, is the responsibility of the government of Kenya (Constitution of Kenya, 2010; The Basic Education Act, 2013). The government provides leadership under: the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MoHEST) and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC).

The governance and management of basic education [primary and secondary] as well as training at middle level colleges is the responsibility of MoE (The Basic Education Act, 2013) while the universities are under the management of MoHEST. The TSC is charged with the responsibility of teacher management at basic level as well as middle level colleges. In line with the new constitution of Kenya (2010), the leadership structure in the education sector has since changed to include leadership at the national, county and institution level and this has affected both the TSC and the MoE functions.

At the national level, the MoE is now headed by the Cabinet Secretary (CS) while the TSC is headed by the chairperson to the commission. The CS is supported by the Principal Secretary (PS) as the chief accounting officer and the Director General (DG) as the professional head of the ministry. The National Education Board (NEB) in

consultation with the 47 County Education Boards (CEB) offers advice to the CS on matters concerning education at the national as well as county levels.

The management of basic education at the county level is headed by the County Director of Education (CDE) and the County Director (CD) teacher management. The CDE is the professional head of education services under the MoE while the CD is the person in charge of teacher management under TSC. The CDE and CD teacher management at the county level work in consultation with other officers at the county and sub-county level as well as the County Education Board (CEB). Management of education at the sub-county level is headed by the Sub-County Education Officer while the Board of Management spearheads the management of basic education at institutional level in consultation with the principal. The next section will explicate the critical role of secondary school principals in Kenya.

1.2.2.2. Role of the Secondary School Principals in Kenya

In the Kenyan context, the principal is the lead teacher, the manager and the administrator in charge at institutional level. Thus, the management role of the principal involves planning, organising, directing, supervising, coordinating and budgeting for the purpose of educational service delivery at the institutional level (Task Force Report, 2012). As the leader, the principal is expected to exert influence to achieve educational goals while as the administrator, the work of the principal is to oversee and provide strategic guidance on the management of resources as well as formulation and implementation of sound policies and regulations (ibid.).

Other than the roles aforementioned, the principal is also the agent on the ground to the TSC as well as the MoE both at county and national levels. As the agents and liaison persons on the ground, the principals are 'the first inspectors' (Republic of Kenya,

1988), 'leading teachers' and 'the first quality assurance officers' (Wanzare, 2002; Mobegi, Ondigi & Oburu, 2010; Kokeyo, 2011).What this means is that as heads of institutions and government agents, school principals are also the human resource managers as well as public relations officers at institutional level. Therefore, the responsibility of the principal in communicating with all the levels aforementioned as well as organising and coordinating all the school activities will require effective communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts.

Additionally, the need to study communication strategies utilised in conflict management was based on various concepts of public relations with a view to exploring the various management and organizational practices of the school principal. Specifically, explore the women principals as public relations personnel in the management of conflicts in an organization called school. Therefore the study analyzed communication functions in managing conflicts within the organization in order to understand why the organizational leaders behaved in different ways (Gruing & Grunig, 1992). Thus, the role of school principals and their utilisation of communication strategies in conflict management forms the backdrop of the study.

1.2.2.3. The Need to Study Conflict in the Kenyan Secondary School Context

The need to study conflict and conflict management in the Kenyan secondary school context was based on the realization that school leadership preparedness for conflict management has been under scrutiny over the years (Republic of Kenya, 2008). Attention is drawn to unprecedented conflicts, loss of lives and protracted history of violence together with wanton destruction of property. This is blamed on inappropriate communication strategies. For instance, a report from the Ministry of Education indicate that between the year 1980 and 2008, the number of conflicts had increased from

22(0.9%) to 300(7.5%) in public secondary schools alone (Republic of Kenya (2008). Additionally, there are specific cases which will be exemplified in the ensuing paragraphs.

In the early 1990s in Kenya, about 19 female students of a secondary school lost their lives when male students of a co-educational school raided female students' dormitory and raped over 70 female students.

In 1995, four prefects were locked up in their cubicles and burnt to death. The worst among them was in 2001 when 68 students were burnt and several students injured after their dormitory was set ablaze by two male students. In 2006, in a co-educational school, 15 female students were raped at night (Institute for Security Studies, Republic of Kenya, 2008). Additionally, between the month of May and August 2008, over 300 secondary schools went on strike destroying property (Republic of Kenya, 2008).

Between the year 2008 to date there are a quite a bit of strikes which have been witnessed in secondary schools in different parts of the country. Begging the question: Can grievances be handled with a view to preventing conflict from causing destruction of property and human life? The concern is more on the changing nature and increased number of organisational conflicts that have affected secondary schools as well as institutions of higher learning (Republic of Kenya, 2001). The major cause of unrest is blamed on high handedness together with closed communication channels on the part of educational managers (Kibui, Bradshaw & Kibera, 2014). The ensuing paragraphs highlight the models of conflict management in secondary schools in Kenya.

1.2.2.4. Conflict Management in Kenyan Secondary School Context

In 2003, the government of Kenya held talks with stakeholders to form the Center for Conflict Resolution in Secondary Schools (CCROSS). The purpose of this centre was to

work with school administrators so as to come up with effective conflict resolution strategies in secondary schools. Following the formation of CCROSS, various strategies were formed such as: teacher involvement in management of schools; open day for parents and parental involvement through BoM and PA; formation of student councils, peace keeping programmes; suspension of ill-disciplined students among others. Even so, the aforesaid techniques have been employed with minimal success.

Furthermore, reports from the Ministry of Education indicate that in spite of the government policies as mentioned, educational institutions in Kenya have continued to report increased cases of conflict (Republic of Kenya, 2008). Furthermore, teachers, students and parents still complain of being ignored and sometimes suppressed by the school authority with threats of suspension or even expulsion - making it possible for more cases of unrest (Kibui, Bradshaw & Kibera, 2014).

The foregoing implications underscore the challenging responsibility of a school leader in steering leadership and giving direction to their staff with a view to ensuring that there is tolerance among members of the school community, hence, the 'smooth' running of the school. However, tolerance can only be realized if the principal prioritizes effective communication strategies in conflict management. The argument being that, it is not expected that people will hold similar views. For that reason conflicts arise out of divergent opinions on various issues (Rahim, 2017).

Be it as it may, failure to manage conflict arising from poor work relations among teachers as well as the Board of Management may greatly affect school performance (Omboko, 2010). This is because unmanaged interpersonal conflict may make one feel defeated and stressed and this may result in low self-esteem as well as intolerance. Msila (2012) concurs while adding that prolonged interpersonal conflicts may result in

deterioration of cooperation and team work. Furthermore, poorly managed conflict in the workplace may reduce the morale of personnel. Additionally, unmanaged conflict may result in misuse of resources, lack of collegiality and integration among teachers, and by extension, the school community, which may ultimately spill over to the students (ibid.).

Omboko (2010) has observed that conflict not only threatens school functions, but may trigger a chain of other problems which include among others: abuse of office, disagreements, quarrels, hostility and violent fights, hence, poor leadership and management. Therefore, effective communication in the management of workplace conflicts is probably one of the most sought after skills by school managers (Msila, 2012). In addition, it is expected that principals vary their communication strategies so as to fit different situations of conflict. The next section underscores the gender question in school leadership in the Kenyan context.

1.2.2.5. The Gender and School leadership Question in the Kenyan Context

In the Kenyan context, just like other patriarchal societies, "leadership is associated with masculinity and rationality (Rarieya, 2011:10)." The reason being that, it is rare to find a female head managing an urban mixed school and if it so happens, this is considered as a privilege rather than a usual practice. This is supported by Bradley (1999) who argues that mostly, male teachers tend to rise to dominant management positions based on societal expectations that men are "natural leaders".

Other scholars have also found that some male teachers consider certain aspects of their teaching careers, such as leadership and management, to be compatible with "proper masculinity" (Connell 1985; Francis & Skeleton, 2001). That explains Kariuki (2006: 13) notion that "male leadership is validated at all levels as the only legitimate

leadership." Hence, the un-validated assumption that due to constant conflict in educational institutions, certain levels of management would only be effective if headed by men. Wambui (2010) has observed that male principals are believed to work better with boys [fellow men], education boards and political influence.

This stereotype is perpetuated further by male dominance in the political world and so, Board of Management [BoM] and Parents Associations [PA]. Hence, the conclusion that hiring of women in some organisations is a set up in the male-dominated environment (Mumby, 2013). This explains why being a woman principal is considered as a rare post in most parts of the world, Kenya included (Coleman, 2002; Oplatka, 2006 in Rarieya, 2011). The stereotype arises from cultural perceptions about gender roles, which favour the male principals, especially with regard to matters concerning conflict management. This is evident, more especially, at higher institutions of learning, such as colleges and universities.

A statistical report by Herriot et al (2002) indicates that by 2002, 93% of all primary schools were headed by male head teachers. However, the third gender rule may have changed the statistics since more female head teachers have been promoted. Another report shows that by 2000 women constituted 7.7 % of top level management positions (job group P-T) in the ministry of education, 15.8 % as middle level managers (Job group J-L) and 42.9 % of the female teachers occupied lower level job groups. This statistics may have also changed as movement to higher job groups is dependent on academic qualifications. However, a study by Gichuchi and Njeri (2016) on women's decision making in leadership in Kenya has shown that 80% of women live in rural areas and play invisible leadership and social roles while their male counterparts still dominate critical leadership decision-making at all levels.

Yet, little is known about women who occupy managerial positions at grass root level as well as their experiences in utilizing communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts in the Kenyan school context. Hence, the need to explore women principals' actual practices and the challenges they experience necessitated this study. The ensuing paragraph will underscore the gender gap in Migori County.

1.2.2.6 The Need to Study Gender and School Leadership in Migori County

This study is situated in Migori County. At the time of this study, there were 185 public secondary schools with 50 female principals against 135 male principals. However, among the 50 female principals, most of them headed girls' schools. Furthermore, there were 46 secondary schools in the urban setting of Migori County where 40 schools were co-educational schools while six of them were single sex schools. Additionally, among the 40 co-educational schools, 34 of them were headed by male principals trailed by six women principals. This trend is constant with Coleman, (2002) who had earlier observed that women lag behind in educational management. Furthermore, most of the female principals who headed co-educational schools in Migori County were mostly found in un-established schools in the rural areas. Through informal discussions with the female principals during a pilot study, it was found that they had been posted at the time the co-educational schools were being established.

The urban factor is important in this study because schools in the urban areas are well established with adequate resources. In addition, while conducting a pilot study, it became apparent that urban schools have a larger student population, hence, receive more grants from the government. Thus, it is assumed, without empirical evidence through research, that urban co-educational schools will experience more conflicts and would only be effective if headed by male principals as they would work better with

boys in the mixed schools as well as education boards and political influence (Staffing officer, Migori County, 2014).

The recent 2018 recruitment of secondary school principals indicate that out of 105 applicants only 30 were women. Additionally, of the 50 applicants for the position of deputy principals, only 10 were women (Human Resource Migori County, 2018). This implies that women are reluctant to apply for managerial positions in schools. The women's reluctance is attributed to, among others, various managerial issues (Pont, Nusche & Moorman 2008:2) such as: overburdened roles, insufficient preparation and inadequate 'emotional support' (Priola & Graves 2009:386) to perform their roles. The implication is that when women believe they are disadvantaged they tend to shy off from applying for vacant top managerial positions than their male counterparts (ibid). Therefore, the need to explore women principals' experiences in Migori County in order to understand their actual practices, their challenges as well as ways of mitigating such challenges, forms the back drop for this study. The ensuing sub-sections explicate the problem that necessitated the study.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The problem that necessitated this study is explicated in three ways: academic, social as well as contextual problem as discussed in the ensuing sub-sections.

1.3.1 Academic Problem

The academic problem that necessitates this study is that while models of conflict have made immense contribution in organisational conflict literature, most of the existing research have based their assumptions on the linear perspective where conflict is understood as a fixed form that awaits the application of conflict management models

(Nicotera & Dorsey, 2006), hence, fail to account for workplace conflict management practices appropriately.

Furthermore, there are very few publications that have departed from the positivist-realists' view of communication and conflict management. Siira, (2013) adds that the dominance of positivist- realist approach in examining the nature of organisational conflicts provide few alternatives to this effect. This is congruent to Lewicki, Weiss and Levin's (1992) earlier observation that organisations have been treated as harmonious and static with bounded processes where negotiation table provides all the solutions to conflicts. Hence, this study answered to the call for an interpretivist approach to study the role of communication in conflict management.

The understanding from an interpretivist view point is that organisations can be fluid and sometimes chaotic and unpredictable. With this understanding, conflict is viewed as the organisation itself while ineffective communication forms the basis of workplace conflicts (Otzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006). Hence, the study of organisational conflict and its management from an interpretative view of organizational communication emanates from the need to facilitate a better understanding of people's experiences and practices in creation and negotiation of meaning in managing of workplace conflicts (Aual & Siira, 2010). This is a view that is supported by Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) who have observed that while social sciences deal with people's experiences and practice, there are very few publications in developing countries and especially in Kenya that seek to understand Social Sciences and Humanities from a qualitative dimension.

Therefore, this study, being in the social sciences domain, explores the possibilities of an alternative approach in understanding the role of communication in organisational conflicts with a view to underscore what a relativist-interpretivist perspective has to

offer. Particularly, the study benefits from understanding the meanings of utilisation of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts as co-developed by members of an organisation and as created and maintained through communicative acts. This explains why relativist-interpretivist paradigm was deemed suitable as it gave voice to the women leaders who participated in the study while contributing to the existing body of knowledge in communication literature.

In particular, the researcher sought to explore the possibilities of understanding the role of communication in workplace conflict management from a gender perspective at the grass root level while focusing on secondary schools. The premise is that while studies on workplace conflicts have been in the corporate world, little is known about the nature and management of workplace conflicts in educational institutions in Kenya - particularly from a gender perspective. A review of relevant literature shows that despite the problem, the studies known to me in Kenya, the East Africa region or indeed Africa, have not explicitly empirically explored women leaders in educational institutions, specifically at secondary school level, in order to understand their experiences in utilization of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts with a view to ascertaining actual practice and inherent challenges at the grass root level. Ascertaining actual practices from a qualitative dimension will enable educational context to reflect and learn from actual practice. Hence, this study has contributed to the body of knowledge in organisational communication with an aspect of educational leadership communication.

1.3.2 Social Problem

The social problem that prompts this study is that besides government policy in place such as: parental involvement through Board of Management (BoM) and Parents'

Association (PA); formation of student councils as well as peace keeping programmes, reports from the Ministry of Education indicate that secondary schools in Kenya have continued to report increased cases of conflict including those schools managed by female principals (Republic of Kenya, 2008; Kibui, Bradshaw & Kibera, 2014). Furthermore, while one of the causes of increased cases of conflict is pegged on lack of sound strategies in managing conflict, there is no clear documentation and empirical research on the communication strategies utilized by school principals in the Kenyan context, hence the need for this study.

Additionally, the study focused on women principals because it is normally assumed that women have better communication strategies and that their schools experience less conflict. However, a review of relevant literature shows this issue has not been established through research, especially in the Kenyan context hence, the need to fill the identified gap.

1.3.3 Contextual Problem

This study was conducted in Migori County. Thus, this sub-section raises the problem in this context that also partly influenced the need for study of this issue in this County. To begin with, as it has been mentioned in the context section, .at the time of this study, out of the 185 public secondary schools in Migori County, 50 of them were headed by female principals. However, most of the female principals headed girls' schools while those that headed mixed schools were found in un-established schools in the rural areas. For instance, of the six mixed public secondary schools located in the urban areas of Migori County, there was only one female principal heading this kind of school.

From the aforementioned, the researcher was prompted to conduct a pilot study. It was established that there are cases where female principals, posted by the TSC to head

mixed schools, are rejected because of the societal perception that women do not make good leaders. In the same vein, it is assumed without empirical evidence that established mixed schools located in the urban areas may experience major conflicts. Thus, male presence is preferred probably because they are able to employ proper masculinity and can deal better with fellow men in the BoM as well as the political class. Additionally, most female educators dread conflict management more especially where they need to deal with men in conflicting situations, hence, reluctant and unenthusiastic to take up leadership roles (Human Resource Migori County, 2018). This probably explains why the 2/3^{rds} gender rule has not been realised in most workplaces. For instance in the legislative assembly at both national and county levels, regardless of nomination slots and the women representatives' cadre being introduced, as a way of meeting this constitutional requirement, the 2/3^{rds} gender rule is still a struggle. Hence, the need to establish this through research also partly prompted the study.

It is therefore hoped that by telling these women principals' stories through their own eyes, the success stories may influence those women who aspire to be leaders but are jittery a result of conflicts. This is congruent to Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo (2013) view that lack of mentorship by women leaders force women to rely on male role models. Furthermore, Foss, Foss and Griffin (1999) concur while adding that "Until women themselves name their experiences and the phenomena of the world, many of their experiences will remain invisible and thus difficult to think about, even for women" (p.59). Hence, this study sought to contribute to this gap.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective for this study was to find out how the women principals utilised communication strategies in managing workplace conflict at secondary school level. The specific objectives were:

1. To explore the nature of workplace conflict experienced in secondary schools headed by women principals.

2. To explore the nature of communication strategies utilised in schools headed by women principals.

3. To explore how the women principals utilised communication strategies to manage workplace conflict at school level.

4. To explore the challenges faced by women principals in utilising communication strategies to manage workplace conflict.

1.4.1 Research Questions

The main research question was: *How do women principals utilise communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts at secondary school level?* The specific research questions were:

1. What is the nature of workplace conflict experienced in secondary schools headed by women principals?

2. What is the nature of communication strategies utilised in schools headed by women principal?

3. How do women principals utilise communication strategies to manage workplace conflict at secondary school level?

4. What challenges are faced by women principals in utilising communication strategies to manage workplace conflict?

1.5. Scope of the Study

Adams (2007) has defined scope as the boundary of research in terms of the length and breadth of the content, the methodological approach taken together with the geographical spread where the study is taken. This is similar to Simon and Goes (2013) who have viewed scope of research as the domain under which the study operates. The explanation is that the scope helps the researcher to be clear on the content of study and the factors that are acceptable within the range of research. The ensuing sub-sections explicate the content, geographical, methodological and time scope of this study as:

1.5.1 Content Scope

In terms of content scope, it is important to note that while school leaders, who are also public relations practitioners, engage in various functions within the organisation. This study was more interested in the women principals' ways of utilizing communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts at secondary school level. Therefore other managerial functions were excluded as they were not directly relevant to the study. Thus, the first research question on the nature of workplace conflicts experienced by women leaders of secondary schools purposed to look at the type of conflicts such as intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts; the frequency of conflicts and the magnitude of conflicts; whether conflicts are functional or dysfunctional; substantive or emotional; the basis of conflicts in terms of whether the incompatibility is as a result of needs or interests.

The second research question explored the communication strategies utilised by women leaders in terms of channels of communication whether they are open or closed, whether

they are upward, downward, horizontal or diagonal and the purpose such strategies served.

The third research question explored how communication strategies are utilised to manage workplace conflicts. To respond to this question the researcher studied the perceptions of conflicts by women leaders in terms of whether they are viewed positively or negatively, their leadership predispositions, responses and behaviour in the management of workplace conflicts in terms of whether conflicts are suppressed, punished or handled with a view to preventing conflicts from becoming dysfunctional. Additionally, the researcher explored whether the school leader utilised monologue or dialogue means of communication to manage workplace conflicts. Also, the researcher explored whether the situations of conflicts would influence ways in which the women leaders utilised communication strategies in conflict management.

Lastly, the research question four explored the challenges faced by women leaders in utilising communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts and how they are mitigated. The challenges explored included the communication skills needed to manage workplace conflicts; the processes and strategies in the school; the policy guidelines and documentation; perceptions on women leadership.

1.5.2 Geographical Scope

In terms of geographical scope, the study was conducted in the Western part of Kenya - Migori County - for the convenience of the researcher. The study was a holistic case with embedded units in which four secondary schools headed by female principals were chosen for the study. Additionally, this study was spanned over four sub-counties within Migori County in which each school was picked from Suna West, Suna East, Kuria West and Nyatike sub-counties respectively to underscore the geographical spread of the

study.

The reason for purposively choosing a school from each sub-county was because it was believed that various sub-counties may have experienced conflicts differently while the ways in which the women leaders utilized communication strategies may have been determined by the region to the extent of informing this study. Other than the regional factors, tribal factors were also considered hence, kuria, Luo and Suba as tribes that make up Migori County were thought to be important contextual factors to consider in understanding the women leaders' ways of utilization of communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts.

Another geographical factor that was considered was whether the school was situated in the urban areas or in the rural areas. This factor had developmental implications that would inform the study in terms of whether a school was well resourced or minimally resourced. This was because it was thought that the abundance of resources or lack of it would influence the nature of conflicts to the extent of informing this study.

1.5.3 Methodological Scope

In terms of methodology, this study adopted a relativist-interpretivist philosophical paradigm hence, lent itself to a qualitative approach. Additionally, the study adopted a holistic case study with embedded units. Data was generated through multiple techniques such as individual interviews, document analysis as well as focused group discussions in four schools. Choosing to study the four schools helped the researcher to identify any differences or similarities that might have existed between the four categories of schools. This helped in understanding how women leaders utilized communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts, hence, enriched the study (Yin, 2009). The researcher purposively selected the school as well as participants who were thought to deliver the required data that would answer the research questions to the

study. Hence, other schools which did not fall within the geographical spread were excluded.

Thus, the participants chosen to take part in the study were as follows: four women principals, four deputy principals, four HoDs guidance and counselling, four senior teachers from the four schools and 24 school prefects - six from each school - giving a total of 40 research participants.

1.5.4 Time Scope

In terms of time scope, the researcher anticipated the duration of six months to be enough to complete the research activities which included: pilot study and pre-testing of the research tools, data collection and data analysis and writing of the research report. The research activities are explicated further in chapter three of this thesis.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

According to Simon and Goes (2013) limitations of a study entails issues and happenings that are out of the researcher's control hence, limit the stretch of research. The study is limited to women leaders' utilisation of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts in public secondary schools within Migori County. Also, owing to the nature of qualitative study, this study took place in a natural setting with a small sample size, therefore, the findings may not be generalized statistically but can be generalized naturalistically (Stake, 2006). Additionally, the thick descriptions of findings will allow for schools with similar characteristics to learn the utilisation of communication in conflict management while making comparisons with their own experiences (Creswell, 2014).

1.8 Justification of the Study

My research interest intersects educational leadership communication. Thus, the need to explore the women principals' ways of utilising communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts emanates from my desire as a practitioner to expand my knowledge in organizational communication, particularly in educational leadership communication from a gender perspective.

This study was prompted by the fact that first, despite several conflicts experienced in secondary schools in Kenya; very minimal research has been conducted to investigate potential causes of unrests in schools such as inappropriate communication by school principals. Furthermore, the study focused on female principals because it is normally assumed that women have better communication strategies and that their schools experience less conflict. However, a review of relevant literature shows that this issue has not been established through research, especially in the Kenyan school context. Thus, the study purposed to explicitly empirically explore the utilization of communication strategies by women leaders in managing workplace conflicts with a view to ascertaining the actual practices, the current needs, the challenges faced and the possible remedies. Therefore, the study sought to contribute to this knowledge gap.

Secondly, this study being in the social sciences domain, the researcher sought to explore the possibilities of understanding conflict management from a qualitative dimension. A review of relevant literature shows that despite the problem as aforementioned there are very few publications in Social Sciences and Humanities in developing countries and especially in Kenya, that seek to understand people's experiences and practice from a qualitative dimension. Yet, ascertaining the actual

practices from a qualitative dimension will enable educational context of similar characteristics to reflect and learn. Hence, this study sought to fill this gap.

Thirdly, as our country is striving to reform our education system to embrace the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC), school leadership is high on the education policy agenda in Kenya (Task Force Report, 2012). The reason being that with the reforms in place, school leaders are expected to prepare young people to function in the 21st century coupled with information intensive world of unpredictable technological change and economic globalisation. Hence, the radical changes will require Competence Based Leadership. One of the competencies that school leaders will require is to effectively employ communication skills in dealing with conflicts in schools as the nature of conflicts and their management are likely to take another turn.

Lastly, with the third gender rule in place more women managers are brought on board. However, from my experience it has come to my realization that most women dread conflict management and are therefore reluctant to take up leadership roles. This explains the 'affirmative action' which has seen forty-seven women Members of Parliament (Women County Representatives) into Kenyan parliament. This implies that most women are unable to climb the elective leadership ladder fairly unless appointed or nominated. Furthermore, during a class discussion with my students in the course;' Gender and Communication', it became apparent that even when women do take up leadership positions; their fellow women rarely approve of their leadership, and so the old adage that, "women are their own worst enemies."

This calls for the need to mentor Kenyan women leaders as well as support and encourage women to take up leadership roles. Hence, it is hoped that allowing women principals to recount their experiences through research will be a starting point of

mentorship to other upcoming women leaders in educational institutions. Moreover, it is essential that research, at the grass root level, finds out the actual practice and needs of women in managing conflicts through communication. This is because as Foss, Foss and Griffin (1999) state, "Until women themselves name their experiences and the phenomena of the world, many of their experiences will remain invisible and thus difficult to think about, even for women" (p.59). Hence, this study shed some light to this effect.

1.9 Significance of the Study

First, this study is beneficial to organisational communication as it highlights what a relativist-interpretivist paradigm has to offer in communication studies. Additionally, this study is of benefit to organisational leadership as it highlights the role of communication in workplace conflict management.

Secondly, this study is of benefit to Educational leadership and management in the Kenyan context as the study sheds more light on communication strategies utilised in managing workplace conflicts at secondary school level. Furthermore, the study highlights the need to develop a handbook to enhance the capacity of educational management personnel on the improved ways of managing organisational conflicts.

Thirdly, the study is of benefit to policy makers as well as institutions which conduct continuous professional development for head teachers such as Kenya Education Staff Institute (KESI) as well as Kenya Educational Management Institute (KEMI). The study sheds light on the training needs of principals and teachers with regard to communication skills in conflict management.

Lastly, at practitioner level, this study interconnects educational leadership communication hence; it has expanded my knowledge on organisational communication- particularly communication skills in conflict management. On the

whole, the study has provided a chance for women principals who are participants in this study to reflect on their practices and probably reconsider how conflict management is carried out in the study school.

1.10. Summary

This chapter has discussed the Kenyan context particularly: the Kenyan educational leadership structure, the gender situation in the Kenyan educational context and the communication context of Kenyan educational management. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the statement of the problem, the research questions, scope, limitations and justification of the study. The chapter reveals the need to capture the women leaders' own narratives on how they utilise communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts from their own points of view in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issues raised in the background. The subsequent chapter presents a literature review which situates this study in the field of communication while highlighting previous research as well as the knowledge gap that the study seeks to contribute to.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter entails the review of literature relevant to the study. A literature review can be defined as a critical look at the existing body of knowledge that is of importance to the study which the researcher reviewed in order to carry out a study (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

This review addresses the different areas in form of sub-sections as follows: First is the review of key concepts in the study such as communication, conflict as well as gender with related concepts under them. Second is the review of relevant theories. Third is the review of related previous research. Fourth is the rationale for the study based on literature review. Fifth is the summary of literature review. The next subsection begins with a review of relevant concepts.

2.2 Review of key Concepts to the Study

This sub-section explores the meaning of related concepts to the study where definitions of concepts are given while linking the concepts to the study. This will be discussed as follows:

2.2.1. Communication

Communication has received various definitions by different scholars. Historically, communication is related to the action 'make common.' Stemming from Latin word *communicare* - meaning 'to share,' we communicate by transmitting information with the intention of sharing knowledge or understanding through the use of common symbols (Rosengren, 2006).

The conventional understanding of communication is borrowed from classical model of communication as developed by Shannon and weaver (1948) as well Shramm (1953) in form of five questions as: who said, what, in what channel to whom and with what effect. From a classical point of view, communication strategies in conflict management can be understood in terms of: the female principal, what she says or does to manage workplace conflicts, how she says it, to whom she says and the effect of what she says or does concerning conflict management.

Other than the classical model, scholars have viewed communication as a cyclic process (Jones, 2008; Plunkett et al 2008) which begins with the sender encoding the message then selecting the communication media that fits the message followed by decoding by the receiver in which message is interpreted and sent back to the sender through feedback. The information is the message being sent while the chosen means is the channel. The receiver is the person or group that receives the message while the person who sends the message is referred to as the sender (Plunkett et al and Jones, 2008). The success of this process is realized when the receiver acts as per the sender's expectations. However, if the receiver does not act as expected by the sender, there is bound to be conflict of interest (Quirke 2008).

Oetzel and Ting-Toomley (2007) view communication as the perception of verbal and nonverbal behaviours and the assignment of meaning to them. Hence, the authors' understanding that whether the sending of the signal is intentional or not and even takes place when the verbal or non- verbal behaviour is unconscious or not, as long as it is observed and meaning assigned to it, communication has taken place. The premise is that for efficient communication, it is necessary that the senders share their understanding with the receivers who are then expected to indicate their understanding

of the meaning of the messages to the senders through some expected reactions known as feedback (Ivancevich and Matteson, 2002).

It is argued in this study that communication in an organization may not follow a particular pattern and so relationships in communication are neither linear nor cyclic but fluid. Blundell, Ippolito and Donnarumma (2013) support this when they say that sometimes the meanings sent are not always received as expected since meanings reside in the mind of the receiver not in the words or symbols used. Therefore, it can be concluded that communication bridges the gap between information theory and interpersonal communication because it is not expected that when knowledge is shared people will have similar perspectives or ideas or even respond in a particular way (Cole & Kelly, 2011). Thus, creation of understanding or clarity of misconceptions between or among individuals calls for dialogue. In this context, individuals stimulate meaning in the minds of other individuals by means of verbal or nonverbal messages (Richmond, McCroskey and McCroskey, 2005).

2.2.1.2 Communication Strategies

Communication strategies as used in this study refer to patterns and approaches of communication in terms of responses and behaviours of women leaders - who in this study are female principals of public secondary schools (Spaho, 2013).

From the conventional point of view, communication follows various patterns. Cole and Kelly (2011) describe them as: downward, upward, horizontal, diagonal, informal patterns among others. Downward communication refers to the flow of communication from the supervisor to their subordinate while upward communication refers to the flow of communication from the subordinate to their superiors. Lateral/Horizontal communication takes place between or among members who are of the same rank in the

organization. For example, two supervisors of the same department (ibid.). Diagonal communication refers to the flow of messages between persons who are in position at different levels of the hierarchy and also in different departments. This type of communication takes place under various situations. Communication which takes place on the basis of informal or social relations among people in an organization is known as informal communication.

One of the basic skills in communicating conflict management is the ability to navigate an argument by remaining focused on a single issue and avoiding other issues or getting personal. Levine (2009) calls it turning conflict into collaboration by addressing the real concerns and getting into the real issues in conflict. More when one listens effectively they are able to ask questions while taking care of their body language. As Levine advises, organizational leaders should always remember to make communication about issues being handled and not about their position or power at the time of resolving conflicts.

Further, communication is important in resolving conflict at the workplace such as school because it is the only means to delivering constructive feedback. This is congruent to Kokeyo's (2011) view that school leaders who offer constructive feedback will satisfy, motivate, retain and grow teachers in their profession .The author continues to argue that with constructive feedback their performance is improved and is assure way of developing teachers in their career because teachers will learn to reflect and learn from their mistakes. Gallagher(2017) has termed constructive feedback as counseling conversation arguing that school leaders must always remember that their word carry a lot of weight. Hence, in handling difficult conversations, leaders must

ensure that their communication strategies do not encourage resistance but ensures that they are understood and action is taken (ibid.).

The explanation is that since conflict arises out of dissonance in values and beliefs, an open communication strategy will enable people to express their thoughts and beliefs which in the end will clarify issues that may cause conflicts. Communication is an important aspect in conflict because how one behaves and how one says what they say could either fuel or quench conflict. Levine (2009) agree adding that the role communication in conflict management is sometimes underestimated and often viewed as a 'natural and neutral' means of communication while it is in fact a medium of expressing or suppressing deeply held values, beliefs and attitudes.

Managing conflicts through communication is directed in the following ways: first, request for a meeting in an indirect medium of communication such as email or telephone rather than face to face. Second, identify a private place and this should not be in the office because that may be treated as a threat from authority. Work with minimal distractions and make communication about issues and not about what you need or think. Others have suggested the use of CANDID approach so as to resolve conflict as follows: first, classify the message and create a neutral opening, second, ask questions based on the other person's response, third, normalize discussions, fourth, discuss details factually and neutrally without taking sides, fifth incentivize the outcome sixth, disengage from discussion and shift to normal workday.

2.2.2. Conflict
Conflict is derived from a Latin word *configure* meaning to strike together or a state of antagonism (Hodgetts, 1993; Barash & Webel, 2002:26 in Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). The term conflict has received various definitions from different scholars, for instance,

for Thompson (1998: 4), conflict is the perception of differences of interests among people while Hocker and Wilmot, (2014) view conflict as an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals resulting from some form of interference or opposition.

The implication is that conflict is a process of social interaction involving a struggle over claims to resources, power and status, beliefs, and other preferences and desires. The aims of the parties in conflict may extend from simply attempting to gain acceptance of a preference, or securing a resource advantage to the extremes of injuring or eliminating opponents (Bisno, 1988:14; Coser, 1968, p. 232 Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). However, the modern view of conflict is that it must not be a fight since people will naturally hold divergent views, opinions, values and goals. Although, varying view of conflict may be held, conflict is inherent in human interactions and an inevitable perpetual given of life.

What threads through all the aforementioned definitions is that when two or more social entities [individuals, groups, organizations, and nations] come in contact with one another in attaining their objectives or what they value, there may be inconsistency or incompatibility in their relationships (Rahim, 2002). Inconsistency presents itself because the desire for a similar resource may be in short supply or when people have selective behavioural preferences regarding their joint action; or when they have different attitudes, values, beliefs, and skills (Putman & Poole, 1987;Dubrin, 1994; Achinstein, 2002; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003).

Understood from a different perspective, however, conflict is some form of behaviour that reveals itself when one intends to block the achievement of another person's goal (Mullins, 2010). As a form of behaviour, conflict is seen in many facets: conflicts can

be individual or interpersonal- a feeling that a party is about to affect negatively what one cares about (Thomas 1992). It can also be intercommunal- a disagreement between clans or community. It can as well be at organizational level. Conflict can be viewed positively or negatively depending on the consequences. Some may view conflict as a negative behaviour that must be avoided at any cost since it leads to inefficient, ineffective and dysfunctional behaviours. This was witnessed in the past where conflict was seen as bad for the organization (Mullins, 2010). Understood in this manner, the deviant behaviour was controlled and changed. In extreme cases, conflict can affect performance and may cause excessive emotional or physical stress.

Viewed differently, conflict is necessary and a positive force for effective change. Others may see conflict as being a phenomenon which necessitates management. Still others may consider conflict as being an exciting opportunity for personal growth and so try to use conflict to their best advantage. Be it as it may, conflict- free institution has never existed because antagonisms, tensions, aggressions, stereotypes, negative attitudes and the frustrations of perceived conflicting need will always be present wherever people live and work together (Rahim, 2002). Consequently, the absence of conflict in an organization is an indicator of closed channels of communication with limited dissent voices and that conflict is being suppressed (Flippo, 1999).

2.2.3. Gender

This study looks at organisational communication with a gender perspective. Gender can be defined as a set of expectations for individuals' behaviour, attitudes and feelings as well as that of social structures created and recreated through human interactions (Connell, 2002; Taylor & Hardman 2004:3).

2.2.3.1. Gender and Conflict Management Styles

While studies that have looked into the relationship between conflict management styles and gender roles are in the field of business, very few studies if any have researched the matter in educational institutions. However, even those in business indicate inconsistent result in this area of study. For instance, there are those who have reported that masculine individuals adopt a dominating style (Portello & Long, 1994; Brewer et al., 2002) while feminine individuals employ an avoiding conflict-handling style (Brewer et al., 2002).

Some researchers have claimed that gender plays a minimal role in conflict management (Antonioni, 1998). For instance, in making comparisons between male and female administrators' conflict management styles, it was discovered that there is no much difference in either gender's preferred conflict management styles (Shadare, Chidi & Owoyeni, 2010). There are those like Dean (1992) who proved that small family businesses owners prefer to use a dominating style to manage conflicts while the compromising style was employed to some extent. Sutschek (2001) joined in the debate in her study when she discovered that females did not use the integrating and obliging conflict-handling styles more often than males when confronted with the same conflict scenario.

Additionally, male managers did not use the competitive conflict-handling style more often than female managers. Males prefer to use the dominating conflict-handling style before utilizing the avoiding strategy. Females, on the other hand, prefer the avoiding instead of the dominating conflict-handling style. Research work by Sorenson and Hawkin (1995 in Havenga n.d.) show more similarities between preferred conflict-handling styles for managers of both sexes when dealing with the same conflict

situation. Even so, the jury is still out there. This forms the canvas against which this study seeks to explore women principals' lived experiences with utilization of communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts.

2.3 Situating Research in the Field of Communication Studies

This study is situated in the field of Communication Studies and in the discipline of Organizational Communication with an aspect of leadership communication with a gender perspective. As a scientific discipline which has received recognition in the recent past, Organizational Communication is diverse in concepts and approaches. The discipline focuses on how people create and stimulate meanings from the messages they share within and across the organization and in varied contexts, cultures, channels and media (Richmond et al., 2005). According to the authors, the messages that are shared within the organization are referred as internal communication while those that are received from outside the organization are known as external communication.

This study focuses on internal communication based on the premise that organizational communication lends itself to processes used to analyze communication needs of organizations as well as the social interactions existent in an organization - including the communication between supervisors and their subordinates. Hence, the researcher purposed to study conflict management as a communication need within the organization but was intrigued in finding out how women leaders manage workplace conflicts through communication. Therefore, this study looks at conflict management in organizations from a gender perspective, specifically, on the topic of Role of Communication in Managing Workplace Conflicts. The aforesaid will be explicated in the ensuing sub-sections.

2.3.1. Organizational Communication

How one defines organizational communication depends on one's view of the relationship between communicating and organizing. According to essentialist container approach, organizational communication can be defined as the transmission of a message through a channel to a receiver. The container definition emphasizes on the constraints that are placed on communication given pre-existing organizational structures. The implications is that the forms of interactions within the workplace environment is critically influenced by the structure of an organization which further influences the purpose of communication and the direction communication takes in an organization.

This is different from Spaho (2013) who views organizational communication as a social constructionist approach which seeks to understand the way language is used to create different kinds of social structures such as relationships, teams and networks. The social constructionist definition highlights the creative potential of communication that is responsive and adaptive within the environment which purpose to construct new possibilities for the organization. Hence, this study lends itself to social constructionist view point to understand organizational communication in a place such as school to underscore the role of communication in the management of workplace conflicts.

This study also analyzed Grunig and Hunt (1984) excellence theory which puts forward four ways of understanding organizational communication. The purpose of analyzing Grunig and Hunt excellence theory was to underscore the purpose and direction of communication between the supervisors and their subordinates as follows: First, Grunig and Hunt's one-way mode of communication aims at disseminating information through monologue. Further, in a one-way closed monologue, successful communication is

measured by the number of times information is passed from the supervisor to the subordinate rather than the outcome of communication since the purpose is to disseminate information (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Hence, feedback is rarely sought while decisions are made for and not with the recipients because the purpose of information is to receive and realize changes as communicated (Cutlip, et.al 2000).

Second is Grunig and Hunt's two-way mode of communication which aims at exchanging information through dialogue with the purpose of enabling creativity and realizing changes in the organization. Third is Grunig and Hunt asymmetrical mode of communication and the fourth is symmetrical mode of communication. The authors highlight that asymmetrical mode of communication purpose to benefit the organization at the expense of the employee while symmetrical modes of communication purpose to benefit both the employee and the organization (ibid.). Ways in which communication takes place include among others emails, letters, news -letters and phone calls, informal meetings like barazas, morning briefs, departmental meetings, caution signs and even notice-boards.

Proponents of this theory contend that the system is advantageous because there is a balanced flow of information. However, Grunig and Hunt's excellence theory was found to be inadequate in understanding organizational communication since interactions do not necessarily occur in a linear container way of thinking. Hence, in this study I concur with critiques of this theory that organizational communication may be viewed more profitably as balancing creativity and constraints, as it is never entirely either constrained or creative. Further, the direction of interactions between the organizational leader and the employees in the workplace cannot be categorized as either a one-way [closed] or a two-way [open] modes of communication while the

purpose cannot be categorized as either asymmetrical or symmetrical as purported by Grunig's excellence theory. Rather interactions will very much depend on situations as echoed by Contingency theory of accommodation (Einsenberg et al., 2007).

Furthermore, Grunig's two-way symmetrical model is criticized for being tedious in making constant and systematic environmental monitoring to reach out to all publics in a bid to obtaining feedback. This heavy involvement requires solid and thorough research that explores the internal and external situation of the organization (ibid). In such a system, an organization invests in resources that determine and enhance their success while deflecting threats that can compromise their survival (Newcomb, 1953; Chaffee and McLeod, 1968). Hence, the Contingency accommodation approach which employs integrated communication was thought to be the best way of understanding effective communication strategies utilized in managing workplace conflicts. The explanation, in this study, is that an organization that relies solely on closed one-way monologue or open two-way dialogue systems of communication fails to capture and address the issues existent in organizational communication effectively.

2.3.2 Role of Communication in Organizational Conflicts

Communication is a key element in any organization. The premise, according to scholars, is because communication is not only understood as the glue that holds the organization together but also as the string that pulls the organization towards a common purpose (DuBrin's 2009; Drenth et al, 1998). Further, the success of an organization is dependent on effective communication which enables shared meaning, shared understanding and shared leadership (Fill, 2006:42; Manion, 1998:58; Nwagbara, 2010).

However, communication can either reduce or cause more conflicts. This is because, as it has been mentioned in this study, it not expected that when people share ideas they will always have shared understandings. Furthermore, organizational conflicts are expected in any social interactions as it is not expected that people's needs, interests and values will be compatible at all times. Be it as it may, constant communication hitches that result in dysfunctional conflicts are likely to cause disintegration in the organization (Spaho, 2013). Thus, proactive leaders who are also sensitive to the environment will identify and manage conflicts before they become dysfunctional.

In addition, high levels of interpersonal conflicts indicate that an organization lacks effective communication strategies and that the leader of this organization is reactive in resolving organizational issues (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2011). Moreover, whenever there is weak communication in an organization, there is bound to be uncertainty among employees on their role expectations hence, conflict (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2011). Furthermore, it is the contention is this study that insufficient communications between superiors and their subordinates where employees' voices are suppressed, their needs neglected and are minimally informed is bound to create more conflicts.

Moreover, internal disagreements are easily managed by continuous, consistent and integrated communication strategies which encourage strong cooperation within the organization (Spaho, 2013). Hence, effective communication is a necessary strategy that can be used to reduce high levels of interpersonal conflicts while increasing high levels of employee commitment in an organization (Brassingtoon and Pettit, 2007; Djordjevic and Cotton, 2011). Therefore the role of communication in organizational conflict management cannot be ignored.

This study suggests that there is need to embrace an integrated communication that is alive to all the directions that information may come from - baring the idea that the work environment can be unpredictable and fluid. Thus, there is need for organizational leaders to be proactive by preparing to meet the unpredictable future through strategic integrated communication. Integrated communication lays emphasis on creativity, proactive thinking, reciprocity and genuine dialogue as the focus of communication. Hence, initiation of dialogue and involvement of members in changing and developing the organization is taken seriously. Moreover, in integrated communication, boundaries are porous with great emphasis placed on changes that take place as a result of reciprocity communication (Spaho, 2013).

Furthermore, the purpose of communication is to realize mutually acceptable goals that are based on the needs of the organization as well as individuals in that organization (Theaker, 2008). An integrated form of communication will encourage their leaders to effectively monitor and interact with other major groups in the organization so as to promote shared decisions.

2.3.3 Conflict Management in Organizations

Classical organizational theories of the latter part of the nineteenth century up until mid-1940s have seen the need for workplace to be efficiently managed to achieve organizational goals. This made conflict to be viewed as bad and counterproductive to organizational goals. Therefore, those with differing views were only left with one option: a win and lose scenario. The losers, however, would feel hurt and this would result to renewed antagonism. The continued antagonism created a notion that conflict was something negative and had to be eliminated from the organization and so, conflict management was synonymous to conflict avoidance. The avoidance approach may not

be a satisfactory approach since it fails to address perceived differences that originally caused conflict. Hence, the original basis for conflict continues unnoticed. While it may be put on halt temporary it will wait for another confrontation for it to erupt again.

The avoidance theory of the 1940s was followed by human relations view form late 1940s to mid-1970s. The view was based on the premise that conflict was beneficial and unavoidable and so the need to accept conflict. It was during this period that the term conflict management was born (Nurmi & Darling, 1999).

From the mid-1970s modern theories were driven by the premise that work place interactions conform neither to smoothly operating hierarchies nor clearly transmitted messages. Hence, the acceptance that workplace interaction can be messy and bewildering, and so, conflict should be accepted and encouraged. The mid 1970 scholars argued that a conflict free environment that is harmonious and superficially cooperative tends to be stagnant, non-responsive to changes and innovations. Thus, to maintain optimum level of performance in an organization, there is need for leaders to inject some level of conflict. This explains Shelton and Darling (2005) suggestion that conflict is necessary both for individual as well as organization progression. The authors have encouraged leaders to embrace conflict and to use it to continually transform their organizations.

2.3.4 Role of Women in Conflict Management

Women play a pivotal role in conflict management. This view is supported by the UN Security Council Resolution when they say that women have made and built peace in conflicting situations. However, the contributions made by women in conflict management have been largely overlooked and undervalued (Ntahori and Ndayiziga, 2003). Furthermore, women have contributed to the equilibrium of the society owing to

their caregiving roles. This explains the notion that gender influences conflict management dynamics both at societal and individual level (Gwartney-Gibbs, 1974). Moreover, to understand the role of gender in conflict and conflict management, there is need to analyze people's interactions at three levels: at individual level, between individuals and between groups of people. Scholars have observed that there are two paradigms with regard to conflict management-essentialist and post-modern feminism paradigm.

Essentialist paradigm's view is that because women's maternal abilities are aligned to their roles, their nature of being is predestined and different from men. In their view women are naturally cooperative, nurturing, peaceful, care givers and peace makers. Post-modern paradigm on the other hand understands conflict management from the Feminist conflict resolution theory. The explanation is that for a long time, segregation, subjugation and discrimination have contributed to women's perceptions on social issues which more observantly reveal the true structures and actors of the world than men.

The relevance of feminist theory to the study and practice of conflict management is the based on the contention that to reveal and manage conflicts involving unequal power relations, it is important to look at the situation from the perspective of the subject and not the master (Barley, 1989). Additionally, since roles are socially constructed and that individuals have their own constitution regarding their roles through language, symbols, and discursive meanings, the way in which social power is exercised and the social relations of gender, class and race can be transformed.

This study is cognizant of women's experiences and rigid societal expectations about their roles in leadership. Likewise, in a patriarchal society, historic discrimination and subjugation are said to be reproduced in various institutions and organizations while

biases are reproduced in norms and rules. This has also been observed in literature that organizational systems of oppression create and escalate other conflicts as people interact in the society while gender issues reveal themselves when people interpret and assign meaning to conflicts during workplace interactions (According to Gwartney-Gibbs, 1974). Hence, this study set to explore how women who occupy top managerial positions in secondary schools have utilized communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts.

Furthermore, Gwartney-Gibbs has observed that workplace conflicts originate from socially constructed workplace conditions especially in the way women articulate their grievances and the ways in which their supervisors translate them. More, in her research the author noticed that even though men and women experienced conflicts arising from interpersonal relations, it was found that most women's grievances arose from personality clash than men. In addition, women seemed to experience stereotype conflicts and expectations which had nothing to do with their ability to perform their roles. Other than the origin of conflicts, the study also reveals that gender influenced the way in which conflict was managed as well as the outcome. For instance, women who were found to have disputes in the workplace were mostly transferred; hence, the outcome for conflict resolution was different from that of men. This study is important because it reveals the influence of gender on workplace conflict management dynamics in terms of their nature, processes and outcomes.

Other studies have shown that socialization is one of the factors that has influenced the ways in which women leaders communicate. Aker (n. d) support this while stating that mostly women leaders have to confront unconscious thoughts that leaders are male and arise against societal and structural discriminations. According to Netshitangani and Msila (2016), some women leaders tend to draw from their domestic experiences and

roles as mothers while involving personal feelings to solve workplace disagreements. Netshitangani's (2014) study on socialization and communication of women school managers confirms that mostly women leaders tend to view workplaces like school as their homes.

Additionally, while comparing the experiences of men and women in community mediation Northrup and Segall, (1976) noted that women felt vulnerable in conflict situations with men than with other women because they feared aggression and violence that were likely to arise from men. Other than fear of aggression and violence during conflict, women also felt vulnerable because of lack of support, lack of trust as well as loss of identity and status. Furthermore, women differed in the way they communicated during conflict management. For instance, research showed that in articulating their issues during conflict, women were more lengthy and detailed especially in explaining the context of conflict and their relationship with the other conflicting party. Men on the other hand were more brief and with little details concerning context and did not refer to how conflict would impact on their relationship with the other party. Moreover, women were more concerned with the influence of conflict on relationships and used more strategies to manage conflicts more than men. In this study Northrup focus is on how men and women's different realities may lead them to understand conflict in a different way and so approach conflict management differently.

In another study, Kolb (1978) view was that women were voluntary peacemakers in their institutions as they offered to settle differences whenever they were approached by disputants in the workplace. Additionally, women were more sympathetic and felt obligated to provide care and support. For instance women provided a hearing for people to tell their stories, reframed peoples understandings of the situation, translated people's perceptions of each other, they orchestrated occasions for private conflicts to be

48

made public. In this study however, there was uncertainty about the role and skills of women as peacemakers as they were neither understood nor appreciated.

Kolb's earlier work focused more on how women's ways of understanding the world based upon essential differences affected their conflict management practices. Kolb focused on four themes that define women's place in negotiations: a relational view of others, a contextual and related definition of self and situation, an understanding of control through empowerment and problem solving through dialogue. This implies that women's communication strategies in conflict management are influenced by their early social development. In addition, women's roles in negotiations are different due to systems of discrimination existent in the organizations.

A study conducted by Watson (1999) looked at the influence of gender or power on leaders' negotiation behaviours in conflict management. In this study, Watson concluded that perceived gender differences during negotiations are synonymous to status and power differences existent in men and women during conflict management. The study provided a more realistic review of the validity of the existence of gender stereotypes especially when the author compared the effects of power and gender on leadership negotiation behaviours. Watson further found that power revealed itself in feelings, behaviour and conflict resolution outcomes than in gender. Furthermore in this study, women neither felt more cooperative nor less competitive than men. However, women were less subordinate and more dictatorial. Moreover, participants in high power roles, regardless of their gender, felt more competitive before the negotiation; expected greater cooperation from those opposing them; felt more powerful and more in control; felt more satisfied with the decision than those that occupied low power roles.

However, managerial women felt significantly less confident about negotiating than managerial men did and women were particularly uncomfortable when negotiating with fellow women. Similarly, women did not enjoy the role-play and were very uncomfortable with whatever role that was assigned to them. In addition, women underrated their performance compared to men. This study illuminated the role of gender in conflict management with minimal conclusion as to whether gender in deed influence the way in which conflict was handled. Hence, the jury is still out there. Upon this backdrop is the study on women holding top managerial positions in schools and how they communicate conflict management.

In particular this study purpose not to investigate the influence of gender rather this study explores ways in which conflict is perceived, felt and understood by individuals and groups as well as the ways in which women principals uniquely utilized communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts at secondary school level - Migori County, Kenya.

2.4 Review of Relevant Theories

The study being in the relativist - interpretivist paradigm, the intended purpose for the theories reviewed was neither based on burden of proof nor hinged on the notion of testing theories. Rather, the purpose of this study was to explore in order to gain an in-depth understanding that contributes to learning of unique features, hence develop theories from it. Grunig and Grunig (1992: 286) support this when they say that theories do not "represent reality' since 'no representation can capture reality perfectly.' Instead, the theories reviewed by the researcher were to explore so as to understand the communication behaviours of women leaders as well as their values as public relations

personnel in managing workplace conflicts in their institutions. The ensuing sub-sections explicate the theories reviewed in this study.

2.4.1. Grunig and Hunts (1984) Excellence Theory

This study reviewed Grunig and Hunt, (1984) excellence theory in order to understand public relations practices in the management of workplace conflicts. Grunig and Hunt, (1984) excellence theory was founded on best practices of public relations to explain the various managerial and organizational functions that create good relationship with the strategic publics so as to make an organization highly effective in realizing its intended goals (Grates 1995:16) The theory explains how public relations practitioners or their departments, in an organization, perform their communication functions and explains why they behave in different ways (Gruing and Grunig, 1992). The theory is in four folds as: the press agent or publicity model, the public information model, the two way asymmetrical model and the two way symmetrical model.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) excellence theory is used in this study to underscore women leaders' utilization of' communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts. The theory was found appropriate in understanding the women principals' communication behaviours in different conflicting situations and in different school context.

The theory underscores communication behaviours in four folds as: the press agent or publicity model, the public information model, the two way asymmetrical model and the two way symmetrical model. According to Grunig and Grunig (1992) excellence theory is based on two main assumptions: the direction and the purpose of communication. The direction of communication can be referred to as a one-way or a two-way communication strategy. One-way form of communication or closed system as it is

known in some literature is aimed at disseminating information through monologue while a two-way form of communication [also known as open system] is aimed at exchanging information through dialogue. Grunig and Grunig further categorizes the purpose of communication as either asymmetrical or symmetrical. The premise is that imbalanced or asymmetrical communication purpose to benefit the organization while symmetrical or balanced form of communication purposes to benefit both the individual and the organization.

The ensuing paragraphs will explain each form of communication as it applies to this study.

2.4.1.1 Press Agent or Publicity Monologue Model

Press agent or publicity is a one-way monologue form of communication which aims at disseminating inaccurate information in order to persuade an individual towards making certain decisions (Grunig and Grunig, 1992). In this study, the woman leader is said to practice monologue if the reason for communication is to persuade so as to shape the thoughts and opinions of those in conflicting situations for the benefit of the school or the principal. Persuasion in the event of disagreement could be in form of inaccurate policies or use of threats or force or highhandedness or favours to manage workplace conflicts. Hence, the communication behaviour neither gives accurate information nor seek feedback. Furthermore, research is not embraced in order to analyze the nature or causes of workplace conflict. Moreover, understanding reasons why people behave the way they do is not given attention. Instead, the major aim is to use a propagandist technique to persuade people's thoughts in a certain way that is beneficial to the school principal and to the school-without taking the interest of individuals into consideration.

Hence, conflicts are suppressed while divergent views are regarded as unnecessary and evil.

2.4.1.2 Public Information Monologue Model

The public information model is a one-way mode of communication which is also referred to as a monologue. In this study if the woman principal's aim is to purely present information and not to persuade or manipulate thoughts in conflicting situations in a school context, then the communication behaviour will aim at giving accurate information such as presenting what is stipulated in the TSC code of conduct and ethics regarding a teacher's conduct [if the conflict involves a teacher] or read the riot's act but will neither seek their opinion nor analyze why people behave the way they do through research. Furthermore, the communication pattern will be a one-way which aims at giving information through notices, warnings, memos, letters, school rules, Basic Education Act among others.

The two-way asymmetrical model is a scientific way of communication that uses persuasion to dialogue with key audiences for the benefit of the organization. In this study, for instance, if the aim of the woman principal is to persuade so as to shape the thoughts and opinions of those in conflicting situations in a school context, she will have to scientifically study reasons why people behave in certain ways, analyze those behaviours in conflicting situations for the purpose of understanding attitudes and behaviours of people in school context regarding conflict and conflict management. With this background, the communication behaviour of the woman principal will not only aim at giving accurate information but will also be persuasive while making informed decisions on the appropriate strategy that will be used to resolve or manage

conflicts for the purpose of benefitting the organization more than employees in the workplace.

The two-way symmetrical model is a mediation strategy of the public relations practitioner who serves as a liaison between the organization and public, rather than to persuade so as to shape the thoughts and opinions of those in conflicting situations in a school context. The communication behaviour will aim at exchanging accurate information while seeking feedback as well as analyzing why people behave the way they do through research. Furthermore, the purpose of the woman principal's communication behaviour is to create a mutually beneficial situation in which communication is used to negotiate and to benefit all stakeholders-not just so the organization benefits but for the benefit of the employees and the students in a school context. The two-way symmetrical model is deemed the most ethical model, one that professionals should aspire to use in their everyday tactics and strategies (Simpson, 2014).

Most studies that have embraced Grunig's public relations model have largely used quantitative approach to identify and describe, using numerical data, and the model as used by public relations practitioners (Buffington, 1988; Hardwick, 1980; Nanni, 1980; Grunig, 1985a; Grunig, 1976; Grunig; 1984; Maymi, 1987 in Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Besides, while those that have used a qualitative approach have only supplemented qualitative observation to describe how the model is practiced in an organization, very little is known concerning the application of a qualitative approach to understand how women principals manage workplace conflicts using communication as public relations practitioners in a school context. This study being in the relativist-interpretivist paradigm that is in line with a qualitative study purposed to fill this gap. Qualitative

studies allowed the women principals who were participants in this study to recount their experiences of managing workplace conflict through communication as the researcher observed them in their real life context (Creswel, 2014), analyzed their documentation and personally interviewed them regarding their public relations activities (Grunig,1992). The ensuing paragraph will discuss Grunig's two way symmetrical models and its relevance in conflict management.

2.4.1.3 Grunig and Hunt's Excellence two-way Symmetrical Theory and Conflict Management

Grunig and Grunig (1992:312) have identified communication techniques inherent in the two models when they say that asymmetrical, which benefits the organization, is for 'compliance gaining' while symmetrical, which benefits both employee and organization, is for 'problem solving.' That explains why the scholars have used the two models to explain the concepts related to dispute resolution, negotiation, mediation and conflict management. Hence, seven conceptual themes have been identified such as: interdependence and relationships; conflict, struggle and shared mission; openness, trust and understanding; negotiation collaboration and mediation; Limitations, obstacle and effectiveness; processes and strategies of collaboration. The ensuing paragraphs explicate the concepts as used in conflict management.

Interdependence, Grunig and Grunig (1992) say is based on the notion that public relations practitioners' role is to coordinate interdependence among those in the workplace in a way that increases employee productivity and effectiveness. However, to achieve interdependence there is also the need to invest in sustainable and solid relationships with the publics as evidenced in conflict and negotiation literature (Conrad, 1985:241; Fisher and Brown, 1988:166; Gray, 1989:11; Wilson and Putman,

1990). The explanation is that so long as interactive relationships exist; interdependence is usually a cause of conflict. Thus, to enhance future relationships, negotiation is key in managing conflicts (Keltner, cited in Keltner, 2016).

Interdependence also creates a need for public relations because sometimes interdependence may cause disagreement or agreement based on a shared mission. This explains Conrad's (1985:243) notion that developed relationships is a sign that conflicts are managed hence, less power struggle and confrontations. Keltner (1987:4) concurred while adding that conflict is a process that begins with incompatibility and evolves in six stages as: mild difference, disagreement, dispute, campaign, litigation and fight or war. The author explains that it is in the first three stages that communication is in form of discussion, negotiation, arguments and bargaining.

However, during the campaign stage, the Keltner contends that communication takes the form of persuasion and pressure while at the litigation stage, communication of conflict moves to advocacy and debate. At the final stage communication is inform of violence or verbal aggression. Hence, when symmetrical model is applied it is possible that communication can work from the first stage to the last stage. According to Grunig and Grunig (1992:315) campaign stage is a good sign that negations can begin especially when an organization is willing to find a 'mutually acceptable solution' to the existing disagreement between it and the public. It should however be remembered that communication is not a magic spell on conflict management. Nevertheless, not to communicate is a starting point for conflict while at the same time, conflict cannot occur without communication (Jandt, 1985:71). This implies the need for effective communication in conflict management. The premise is that communication can either reduce or cause more conflict (Grunig & Grunig, 1992).

In negotiating conflict, scholars have identified openness, trust and understanding as important symmetrical assumptions that increase credibility in which those in conflict negotiate in good faith (Hance, Chess & Sandman1988; Wilson & Putnam, 1990) while listening to the other person (Fisher and Ury, 1981:35; keltner, 1987:386). However, trust can be problematic where people have mixed motives and so do not communicate their intentions openly. This is rightly stated by Fisher and Brown (1988) that "other things being equal, the better the mutual understanding, the better the working relationship (p.64)." Hence, the authors' conclusion that people can still communicate effectively during conflict without being friends. The implication is that problem solving is a skill that can be learnt. Thus, what is important in a working relationship is that people are willing to listen and understand one another even when they do not agree with them.

According to the two-way symmetrical theory, collaboration, just like accommodation and compromise in conflict management styles, is important in negotiation and mediation during conflict management (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). The idea behind collaboration is that all parties are committed to spend their resources such as time and energy in solving the problem at hand (Conrad, 1985: 243). Collaboration is also based on the understanding that those in conflict must realize that competition is not among the options that they have. Thus, incompatibility can be negotiated by engaging in "a give and take interaction to reach a mutually accepted solution (Wilson and Putman, 1990:375)."

The idea behind processes and strategies of collaboration as put forward in this study is that an organization must be proactive in solving problems among employees in the workplace. Thus, the need to set up structured processes, systems and regulations that embraces dialogue within the organization. Keltner (1987:6) calls it the management of

struggles by rules while to Fisher and Brown (1988) an organization is like a garden that needs constant weeding.

2.4.1.4 Gender and Grunig and Hunt's Excellence Theory

This study reviewed Grunig and Hunt's Excellence theory in relation to gender theory. This was based on Feminist scholars' contention that there is a similarity between Grunig's assumptions of the excellence two way symmetrical theory such as cooperation, compromise, negotiation and feminine characteristics. (Grunig and Grunig, 1992) This is congruent to Wethrell (1989) study that was conducted extensively to underscore communication, gender psychology and management studies. In her findings, however, initial data did not directly confirm the relationship between feminine characteristics and Grunig's two-way model, nevertheless, a strong link was evident. However, subsequent analysis revealed that men and women possess both feminine and masculine characteristics. Hence, people who possess famine characteristics - whether male or female - are likely to 'practice 'and would also 'prefer' the press agency and public information models (Grunig and Grunig, 1992: 302).

Additionally, further analysis and findings revealed that there is a relationship between feminine characteristics and the 'practice' and 'preference' of a two- way symmetrical model when the effect of managerial role was controlled (ibid.). On the other hand, a managerial role had a relationship with a two-way symmetrical model and masculinity. Hence, Withrel's (1989) conclusion that since men with feminine characteristics rarely ascend to managerial positions in order to practice the model, women are encouraged to develop ways of overcoming societal discrimination and subjugation that bar them from ascending to managerial posts in an organization. Additionally, women in managerial

positions should use their feminine characteristics to excellently perform their roles as public relations practitioners without having to act or behave like men (ibid.).

In this study, however, the intention was not to test the theories in order to prove otherwise or support it. Rather, the feminist theory is linked to Grunig's excellence theory due to its application of accommodation and collaboration in order to explore the women leaders' experiences in utilizing communication strategies in conflict management. Furthermore, Wethrel's study did not explore the women leaders' experiences to learn any unique ways of managing workplace conflicts. Hence, this study sought to explore the unique ways in which women principals who were participants in this study communicated in managing workplace conflicts. The foregoing necessitated a qualitative study because experiences and people's unique ways of performance can only be understood in a real life context and from an insider's perspective (Creswell, 2014).

Furthermore, while Grunig and Hunt's excellence theory contributed in understanding the role of communication in conflict management, the theory was found to be inadequate in explaining the different directions of communication and the different conflicting situations that will require the application of different communication strategies by public practitioners. Hence, this study hoped to fill this gap.

2.4.2 Kent and Taylor (1998) Dialogic Public Relations Theory

This study also reviewed Dialogic Public Relations Theory. This theory is based on the premise that interactions in the organization should be carried out in an 'honest' and 'ethical' manner with a view to creating effective communication channels - referred to as communication strategies in this study (Kent &Taylor, 2002). The theory contends that the use of dialogue is a softer and more meaningful way of managing conflict in

any situation be it international, national, individual or institutional conflict (Broom and Collier, 2012). Additionally, communication concepts can be used to examine the context of historical and contemporary power relations in any context where conflict is evident while establishing the source of influence- whether internal or external while incorporating critical social justice approaches (ibid.).

Furthermore, to achieve this level of understanding there is the need to apply what communication theorists call dialectic relationships. The understanding in dialectic relationship is that an idea will always present to sides-those for and those against (Baxter 2015). Thus, the most probable lens in conflict management is to apply the dialectic process lens so as to view various forms of apparent opposing views in order to see where there can be a reconciliation process between the dividing sides - although some forms of conflict may seem unmanageable.

Kent and Taylor's theory contend that there is usually a way to manage even the most difficult disagreements. According to dialectic theory, disagreeing parties must not be viewed as the two opposite parties but 'as two possible ends which mutually define each other'. The various forms of conflict allows for dialectical lens to be applied to all, more especially, to those arising from interpersonal and intercultural barriers. Hence, as it is aptly stated: "Contradictions are not located in individual heads, serving as dilemmatic goals that direct individual's communicative strategies, rather, from a dialogic perspective; contradictions are located in the communication between relationship parties" (Baxter, 2004: 181).

Implying that stalemates do not arise from what an individual thinks, rather it arises from ways in which conflict management is communicated. Hence, the conclusion that people in conflicts will always be willing to find a solution to their stalemate but this

will depend on the strategies utilized in managing organizational conflicts. The role of the leader in conflict management, therefore, is to discover a unifying factor among the competing values. Approaching conflicts through dialogue discourages competition in conflict management while encouraging meaningful interactions. The idea is that dialogue brings about compromise and collaboration.

Thus, this is the point where conflicts are finally resolved because communication facilitates "…the discovery of united-yet-competing values" and the unearthing of a connection between conflicting parties (Broom and Collier, 2012:245). It is through this relation of values that constructive connections are formed. According (Baxter 2004) what encompasses the core assumptions of dialogue thus gives communication scholars the knowledge needed to assess the underlying and often subconscious oppositions within a dispute, and therefore find the most-likely means to reconcile those seeming opposites. The author has also observed that resolving conflicts using peaceful means such as dialogue is referred to as softer power while using forceful means is referred to as hard power. However, critiques of Dialogic theory contend that a substantial reason why soft power is rarely utilized to solve conflict is because it takes a longer duration of time to achieve successful results because it involves creating a shared consensus among all parties involved in the conflict. (Roselle, Miskimmon & O'Loughlin, 2014).

However, proponents of dialogic theory contends that there is a strong evidence that, if this consensus is achieved, it is often gives a long lasting solutions compared to the use of a hard power approach which only suppresses conflicts (Broom & Collier, 2012). Furthermore, through a soft power approach, the intervener creates a realignment of values that occurs through the process of creating a collective understanding. Thus, the

values incorporated in the shared consciousness should eventually become a cultural reality that can define one's lifestyle and identity (ibid.).

This study embraced the dialogic theory because as scholars have observed, the most common view in persistent conflicts is that of the need to destroy the opposing side. However, by creating a new cultural reality that is based on acceptance and cooperation, rather than one founded on opposition and hatred, there is a possibility for dysfunctional culture to be reduced and for the formation of a culture of acceptance that is engrained in society (Witkop 2015). Therefore, it is the contention in this study that when a way of managing conflicts through peaceful means is engrained as part of organizational culture rather than enforced through physical or judicial means, the result is often more successful and sustainable.

2.4.3 Cancel, Cameron, Sally and Mitrook (1998) Contingency theory of Accommodation

This study also reviewed Cancel, Cameron, Sally and Mitrook (1998) Contingency theory. The theory was developed to explain the communication behaviours as well as the relationship between public relations personnel and their stakeholders. Cancel et al view Contingency theory as a theory of accommodation. The theory was reviewed in this study as it is seen as an alternative to Grunig and Hunt's excellence two-way symmetrical theory. Contingency theory is congruent to this study based on the premise, as put forward by situational theory of leadership, that it is not possible for an organization to operate along a continuum of one-way two-way without considering situations inherent in conflicts. Hence, there is need to choose that which suits every situation. Furthermore, in this study, Contingency theory synchronizes with Taylor and Kent's dialogic theory that solutions to resolve conflicts reside within an organization

(Broom & Collier, 2012). Hence, the need for an organization such a school to develop strategies and processes that develop a culture of peace that is inherent in the school culture.

Furthermore, the theory explores ethical accommodation which is in tandem with two-way symmetrical communication in Grunig's excellence theory of public relations where dialogue, compromise and accommodation are the communication strategies utilized in managing workplace conflicts (Qi Quick and Cameron, 2007). Hence, in this study, the relevance of this theory is that there is a link between conflict as a theory and contingency theory of accommodation. Hence, choosing to use an integrated communication strategy to manage workplace conflicts is based on the realization that conflicts differ in terms of their nature and are dependent on different situations.

Still, while the understanding of conflict as a theory is based on the nature of conflict, contingency theory focuses on management aspect of conflict in the workplace (ibid.). Hence, in this study, contingency theory is integrated with conflict theory to provide an understanding of how women leaders, who were participants in this study, utilized communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts.

Hence, this study views communication as a strategic function because it connects an organization to its intended purpose. Hence, organizational leaders who are also public relations practitioners must understand their roles as strategic leaders with a passion of preparing the organization to meet unpredictable and turbulent future such as conflicts. This explains the need for organizations to embrace an integrated communication that supports different ways of communication with its stakeholders in the organization. This study applies communication as a strategic function of managing workplace conflicts through processes and policies that are engrained in the school culture.

2.4.4 Theories on the Origin of Conflict

This study reviewed various theories of conflict to understand the causes of organizational conflict. The premise is that the understanding of conflict should take an eclectic approach because conflicts emanate from various sources and so their origin may be difficult to determine. This explains the many theories which aid in understanding how conflict came about. One such theory is the naturalist theory propounded by Thomas Hobbes (1992) who asserts that human beings are naturally violent. The author argues that violence is used by human beings as self-defense in order to avoid death.

Scholars like Niccolo Machiavelli blame it on greed [human beings are naturally selfish] arguing that war is the only way to acquire power. However, according to Machiavelli, dissent voices should not be discouraged as such voices contribute to the stability of a nation. Social integrationists' point of view is that conflict is synonymous to human existence while Emmanuel kent blames it on how one has been socialized in his or her world. Other scholars like Berdal (2005) argue that there is more to greed [there may be underlying organizational politics] when it comes to conflict. For Karl Marx, however, the appeal is to the down trodden. From the going, the jury is still out there.

In Nhema and Zeleza's (2008) lenses, conflict in Africa is pegged on five major theories. This discussion will understand conflicts in institutions using three of these theories. The first theory is the assumed pledge of loyalty to which an institution, in this case school, headed by the principal, enjoys as a result of legitimate power and authority. The principals as symbols of authority are the masters while the teachers are their subjects. Alternatively a state where the teachers are the masters while students

remain as subjects and so the assumption by the teachers that students' pledge of loyalty is expected. By virtue of their legitimate power those in authority assume that any differences or conflicts, regardless of the source, will be settled automatically. Mullins (2010) refers to this kind of assumption as the 'unitary perspective' in which an organization is viewed as a unitary whole, integrated, cooperative and harmonious.

From the unitary perspective, conflict is viewed as dysfunctional activity which arises from communication breakdown within an organization. Hence, conflict should be avoided by all means. However, to remain fixated in the unitary perspective is erroneous because it is not possible for an organization to enjoy complete cohesion with harmoniously shared goals and values. Furthermore, there are cases where loyalty is pledged more to a group of people - such as mentors or those whom are thought of as role models - more than to the organization itself. Thus, tension between the symbol of authority in institutions and their subjects still exists. Therefore, an institution that tends to use power to silence the aggrieved remains exposed to combatants at any moment (Nhema & Zeleza, 2008).

Another theory is that of lack of democracy in an institution where participation in decision making has little or no involvement of the stakeholders with regard to economic, social and political realms. This, according to Nhema and Zeleza (2008), creates tension between the master and the subjects depending on who is in authority. However, an institution that recognizes civil rights, freedom of speech and basic human needs according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs are not prone to conflict at any time. The premise would be that once a forum is created for people to express how they feel towards one another; the tension between them is lessened and discouraged from

building up. Such forums in school situations may include staff meetings, consultative meetings and students' barazas.

Another theory is that of not respecting the rule of law, in this case human rights and freedom of speech. According to Nhema and Zeleza (2008), as long as people in authority like the principal are not subjected to the rule of law when in fact they themselves violate such laws, this can be a breeding ground for conflicts. More, it is by opening up structures for dialogue and creativity without people feeling that they are limited by rules such as the teachers' code of regulation or school rules that conflicts are moderated.

In a real school situation, other scholars like Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012) suggest that conflict may be caused by goal incompatibility, limited resources [greed and grievances theory], expectations on performance [accountability theory] and organizational structure [structuralism view point]. For instance, goal incompatibility may arise from lack of agreement with regard to direction of evaluating punishment or reward in line with task accomplishment. Besides, questions such as when does an action amount to reward and another to punishment must be clearly answered and stipulated in the school rules.

In Kenya, teachers are guided by the Teachers' Code of Regulation as well as the Basic Education Act while students are directed by the school rules. However, sometimes the said remain mere documents until enacted by the principal who in most cases does not follow them religiously depending on different situations. This source of conflict is said to be the most common in institutions. In some cases teachers and students may develop their own culture of time, goal and use of space orientations different from that of the school resulting in a state of high differentiation, hence, conflict. Furthermore, conflict

66

resulting from competition for limited resources like shortage of books and furniture is common in many schools in developing countries (ibid.).

Another source of conflict may arise from chain of command as propounded by Marx Webber where the performance of one person, say the principal or the head boy/girl, is dependent on the performance of another, say the teacher or the student. The problem arises when one member cannot work or begin work until vital information is availed by another member. For instance, a case where the teacher of sports may not take students for sports competition until the principal avails resources. Another example is where students may not sit exams until fees is paid by parents and approved by the school. The problem, therefore, lies in the view points of each member and their roles in school.

According to Adhiambo and Samatwa (2011) causes of conflicts in Kenyan schools range from academic performance, difference in views, negative attitudes, disciplining of students, intimate relationship between teachers and administrators; between teachers and students to lack of professional documents or irresponsibility in terms of keeping and updating professional records. On the whole, causes of conflicts in school are diverse as situations and the environment in which they occur vary.

2.5. Review of Related Previous Research

This section reviews related previous literature relevant to the study that informed this study under three main subtopics: research on workplace conflicts; on communication and conflict management, on women leadership and conflict management; on challenges that women leaders face in managing workplace conflicts.

2.5.1. Research on Workplace Conflict

Workplaces are occupational sites such as school where academic and non-academic staff spend time for paid employment (Ministry of State for Public Service in Kenya,

[MSPS] 2010). Workplace conflict is an interactive process that reveals itself at the place of work as a result of a disagreement between people or a group of people working in an environment based on incompatibility of ideas or principles or interest or goals (Mullins, 2010). Conflicts can be classified in four ways as interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup and intragroup (Barry, 2011).

This study explores interpersonal conflicts as it is one of the most common conflicts in the workplace. Viewed as multi-dimensional in nature, interpersonal conflicts consist of two facets as cognitive and relational conflict (Rahim, 1983; Pinkley, 1990; Priem and Price, 1991; Jehn, 1995; Simons and Peterson, 2000). Cognitive conflicts arise from task-related issues, incompatible interest or ways in which work is to be performed (Jehn, 1995; Putnam and Wilson, 1982; Roloff, 1987; Wilmot and Hocker, 2000). Relational conflicts on the other hand are interactional and relationship oriented and are mostly caused by incompatible emotions (Thomas, 1992; Jehn, 1995; Jehn and Mannix, 2001; Rahim, 2002) as well as disruptive behaviours (Alper et al., 2000).

A study conducted by De Dreu and Weingart (2003) observed that both cognitive and relational conflicts influence employee performance and workplace satisfaction (De Dreu and Weingart, 2003). Also, cognitive conflict that are associated with interests are usually caused by incompatible goals and objectives while those related to tasks are caused by disagreements on how to reach the set objectives (Jehn 1994, 1995 and Jehn and Mannix 2001).

Hence, two parties may have shared goals and objectives but may be unable to reach an agreement on how to achieve the set goals. Additionally, the authors also conceptualized that emotional conflicts which are inclined to relations occur when parties experience aggression and resentment towards one another. Thus, interactions become strained and hostile. Furthermore, Cox (1998) associates hostile behaviours

with emotional and behavioural conflicts. From the foregoing, organizational leaders must learn to employ different leadership styles to manage various conflicts existent in the workplace. However, the manner in which conflicts are managed will depends on different situations such as school context as explained in the ensuing paragraphs.

2.5.1.1. School Conflict

Institutional conflicts like those found in schools have become a major concern worldwide. Blasé and Blasé (2004) have noted that internationally, interpersonal conflicts among teachers have been witnessed in countries such as Sweden, Germany, Australia, and Norway. Mostly, interpersonal conflict arise between teacher to teacher; teacher to student; teacher to principal as well teacher to parent (Loock, 2003). Research has shown that conflicts that reveal themselves in a school environment are caused by many factors and this describes their nature (Chadwick, 1995; Jones, 2005; Squelch & Lemmer, 1994; Steyn & van Niekerk, 2002). The factors range from struggle for power, resistance to change, inadequate resources, individual differences, groupings, isolation, unfair treatment of staff, miscommunication among others (Chadwick, 1995; Mullins, 1999).

Factors that contribute to disagreements in the workplace can be categorized as: relationship, interest, needs, value, structure and data based (More, 2003; Bradshaw, 2008) in addition to being cognitive and substantive in nature (Johnson, 1994). Hence, in order for school leaders to manage and or resolve conflicts it is important to understand their nature because it is then that organizational leaders are able to organise how to mitigate or manage the potential conflicts identified. This study adopts Bradshaw's (2008) multi-faceted cube see figure 1; Moore (2003) and Johnson (1994) models to analyse the nature of school conflicts.

FIGURE 1

Bradshaw's Multi-faceted Conflict Cube
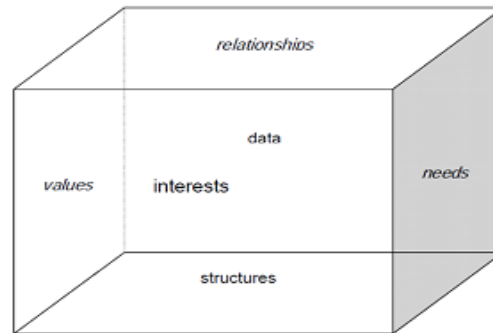
The nature of workplace conflicts based on Bradshaw's multi-faceted conflict cube (Bradshaw, 2008:3)

Interest-based conflict occur as a result of commotion for resources which are usually in short supply or positions of power in which people are not able to agree on the modalities of sharing or distributing them (Hitt, Miller & Colella, 2006; Rahim, 2001). The explanation is that because resources are not enough, members usually feel that they will be disadvantaged in terms of realizing set goals. Hence, the conclusion that, conflicts usually arise out of competition (Landau, Landau & Landau, 2001).

Competition for power and positions in an organization is a good example of interest based conflict. Bennett, Crawford and Cartwright (2003:145) agree adding that power is usually one of the most sought after resource and so "individuals compete for jobs, titles and prestige." Additionally, Hord and Sommers (2008) have observed that power struggle tops the list of conflicts in schools as those who already occupy managerial positions still compete for higher posts. Chadwick (1995) explains that limited resources like finances, staffing and time are likely to cause conflicts in school.

Other than interest conflicts there may also be value-led conflicts. Values are the importance we give to something based on our beliefs in religion, politics or ideologies (Bradshaw, 2008). Hence, the understanding of value-based conflicts is founded on the

70

premise that what people value as important in their own perspectives are the ones they use to evaluate the behaviour of other people towards them (Carpenter & Kennedy, 2001).However, the values are neither obvious nor observable but only reveals themselves whenever there is a disagreement (Bush & Anderson, 2003).

Need-based conflict can be either physical or psychological (Bradshaw, 2008). The author explains that like other Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the desire to fulfill certain needs will drive people's actions, hence conflict. The need may be referred to as physiological needs, the safety and job security need, self-esteem and self-actualization need (Du Preez, Campher, Grobler, Loock & Shaba, 2003). There may be need for scramble for power or positions in which one controls the behaviour of others (Wilmot and Hocker, 2001).

Conflicts may sometimes arise because of false information through rumours or miscommunication. Moore (2003) concurs adding that conflicts based on data usually arises out of distortion of information or the way in which data has been interpreted. Furthermore, individual sometimes experience perception barriers which hinder them from understanding the actual situation which leads to conflicts because a person tends to be, "seeing only one side of the picture" (Bradshaw, 2008:.19).

Conflicts that are based on misinformation can end up being relational in nature. Moore (2003:64) concurs while adding that conflicts that are based on people's relationship are usually caused by "strong emotions, misperceptions or stereotypes, poor communication or miscommunication and repetitive negative behaviour." Bradshaw (2008) adds that previous interactions could influence the way people relate with others. Hence, this could cause conflicts among people.

Relational conflicts arising out of distorted or lack of information regarding something or about a person in the workplace end up hurting relationships. This is because they are

usually in form of gossip or grapevine. Ngcobo (2003) found that mostly conflicts arise when some teachers spread untrue stories about their colleagues which are either work related or non-work related. Kurland and Pelled (2000) add that gossip takes place when some members of an organization informally discusses and evaluates issues concerning other members' work or personal lives in their absence. Mostly, the members are not present to defend themselves and so this creates tension when those members get to hear about it. Gossip can cause a person to quite their job, because of low job morale or a divided staff because victims of gossip feel unwanted, discriminated and embarrassed especially when it is about their personal lives (Makibi, 2010; Burg and Palatnik, 2003; Barnhart and Barnhart, 1994).

While referring to the workplace, Gouvela, Vuuren and Crafford (2005) have termed gossip as discussion between employees about a colleague's character and their work. The author explains that gossip that is not related to work focuses on a person's domestic life while gossip that is work related mostly touches on job performance, promotion, disciplinary issues among others. Okumbe (2007) is of a different opinion when he says that grapevine is one of the informal communication channels in the workplace which supports members in understanding the disjointed information and help in reducing anxiety.

Structural-based conflicts arise out of differences between staff members in terms of line of command. Bradshaw (2008) agree adding that structurally, conflicts are based on three domains such as political, economic and social conflicts. For instance, physical layout within the workplace can form the basis for conflict thereby causing social and political conflict in a school set up. Additionally, it has been observed that whenever there is increased specialization (Hitt et al., 2006; Nelson & Quick, 2008) where some members of staff are promoted to top managerial positions, other staff members may not

approve of their roles and so may not embrace their positions (Steyn & van Niekerk, 2002).

Other forms of structural conflict are usually related to interdependence on task performance (Aquinas, 2006; Nelson & Quick, 2008) where a person relies on someone else's co-operation, output or input in order for them to perform their roles. For example, a class teacher who is constantly late to submit students' results causes the head of department's lateness to submit reports about his or her department. Interdependence conflicts can be overcome by mastery of delegation skills, good training on handling difficult conversations and that people learn to take responsibilities for their actions.

Preference in the way work needs to be performed is a common workplace conflict. Johnson (1994), while referring to it as substantive conflict, says that structural conflict presents itself when people do not agree on task content and compete on ways of accomplishing the tasks. For instance for one teacher it is important to build effective teams if one intends to win a competition while for another teacher what is important to them is acquiring skills on how to win a game. Hence, disagreements between individual is inevitable since each one of them has their preference on the manner of performing a task (Squelch and Lemmer, 1994). Further, while some people prefer to get a job completed faster other people prefer to give every person an opportunity to understand how to perform a task before giving them a chance to finally do it. Therefore, since substantive conflict always ends up in personality clash, organizational leaders need to be skillful and proactive in identifying people's preferences and styles. The premise is that identification of early warnings has the capacity to abort potential dysfunctional conflicts even before they erupt.

Other than the conflicts mentioned, people may differ because of their background or gender differences. Conflicts can arise between people because of differences in age, educational backgrounds, .personal experiences, ethnic heritage and political preferences. Furthermore, people may differ because their personalities tend to clash. Conflict related to clash in personality at the workplace is often ignited by emotions and perceptions about somebody else's motives and character. For example, a team leader may angry with someone for being late, because she or he views the team member as being lazy and disrespectful. The team member may see the team leader as out to get him because he or she is not one of his or her favourites. In sum, there are very many types of workplace conflicts hence, leaders will have to skillfully apply various approaches in managing them. The next section looks at communication and conflict management.

2.5.1.2. Conflict Management

An organisation's ability to compete within the prevailing settings relies on its capacity to identify and understand the conflicts at play in the organisation and how they influence the success of an organisation over time (Beggy, 2003). Conflict management involves implementing certain strategies to eliminate the negative aspects of conflict, increase the positive aspects of conflict and to enhance performance and effectiveness in an organized setting (Ramani and Zhimin, 2010).

Rather than eliminating or avoiding disagreements, the purpose of conflict management is to establish a learning organization on conflict resolution skills, such as managing conflict, developing self-awareness about the types of conflict and effectively communicating while in conflict with a team member. These skills assist teams in establishing a positive outcome from conflict. The practice of recognizing and dealing with disputes in a rational, balanced and effective way usually involves effective

communication, problem resolving abilities as well as good negotiating skills so as to restore the focus to the organisation's overall goals(Spaho, 2013; Siira, 2013). Conflict arises between individuals due to different styles of communication, cultural backgrounds, political and religious views and within or between groups due to disagreements between subgroups or due to competition or rivalry (Rahim, 2002). Interpersonal conflict is existent in every organization where employees interact on a daily basis, regardless of the size and the number of people in that organization (Wilmot and Hocker, 2000). Further, interpersonal conflicts are caused by multiple inter-related circumstances like constant changes in the competitive environment, increased diversity among employees and limited resources (Rahim, 2002). This explains the author's suggestion that managing rather ignoring conflict has various advantages. For instance, first, according to the author, unmanaged conflict can result in expensive legal redress as aggrieved persons seek legal action as a way to solve the problem. Second, managing conflict is important because high level of negative conflict can cause employee dissatisfaction and expensive turnover as well as decreased productivity (Blundel, Ippolito & Donnarumma, 2013).

Lastly, managing conflict is important because when done well it can become a catalyst for creativity and innovations (Mullins, 2010). More, when conflict is managed effectively it can become a strategic advantage as an institution becomes a learning organization capable of benefiting from different points of views (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2002). Hence, the employees of a learning organization feel open to express opinions and make suggestions that lead to improvements without the fear of victimization (Mitchel & Gamlem, 2015).

2.5.2 Research on Gender and Organisational Communication

Feminist scholars in Gender and Communication have claimed that there are differences in way in which men and women communicate (Davidson and Berret, 2006). This is evident in Deborah Tennen's work: 'You Just Don't Understand (Tennen, 1990)' and 'Talking from 9 to 5 (Tennen, 1996).'In her studies Tennen has categorized men talks as 'report talk' which identifies male assertiveness and authority.

However a woman talk, Tennen says is categorized as 'rapport talk' and this skill is used by women to make connections in conversations. Other scholars, while basing on Deborah Tennen's work, realized that gender plays a critical role in communication (Fomin and Yakimova, 2015). According to the authors, Deborah Tennen noticed that girls and boys differ in their communication styles. Girls for instance were found to listen to one speaker at a time and would discuss personal issues in smaller groups while boys expressed their own interests and discussed many issues all at the same time (Tennen, 1990). Further, based on conventional standards, it has been observed that men tend to elicit physical aggression in conflicting situations and their aggression is passed as more adequate than that of women (Eagley & Steffen, 1986; Brandt & Pierce, 2000). In the same vein, women elicit verbal aggression more than a physical one during conflict (Ilin, 2010, pp. 160-161). According to social-psycholinguistic theories, verbal confrontation is referred to as communicative conflict where aggression is expressed through language (Sedov, 2002). However, other scholars have observed that confrontation through verbal means is a common form of communication in conflicting situations but not inclined to any gender (Fomin & Yakimova, 2015).Thus, verbal aggression is a human behaviour that is not largely inclined to one being male or female. From psychological point of view, verbal aggression is used to elicit negative emotions for the purpose of attacking other people's self-concepts so as to cause

psychological pain (Infante and Wigley, 1986) and so it is not gender specific. Hence, the jury is still out there.

Ahmad and Rethinam (2010) have joined this debate to investigate gender and communication styles as purported by Gray (1992) in his book titled "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus" that was consistent with Tannen's (1990) research work. Hence, based on an empirical study in Malaysia, Ahamad and Rethinam concluded that although averagely there exist ways in which men and women communicate, the generalization is not applicable to all men and women. The authors explain that certain characteristics that are predominantly female are exhibited by some male gender while those that are predominantly male are realized in some women.

However, the premise that prompted this study is that an organization, such as school, need to appreciate the differences in communication style especially in conflict management than to assume that women and men communicate in specific ways. Hence, the conclusion that styles and communication differences are independent of one's gender. Going forward and as suggested by the Ahmad and Rethinam (2010) is that it is better to train the workforce on communication practices that suit particular situations with the aim of helping people in understanding preferences and needs of communication instead of understanding communication practices from a stereotypical or essentialist view point.

Hence, there is need to desist from dichotomy thinking of gender differences in communication styles and instead, embrace the fact that, depending on circumstances, men and women have the capacity to "reaffirm, negotiate with, and challenge the parameters of permissible or socially sanctioned behaviour" (Mills, 2003:169). It is therefore hoped that by exploring different ways in which women principals communicate conflict management, the study will highlight some unique ways of

communication that the women principals who have participated in this study have developed overtime to manage conflicts.

2.5.4. Research on Challenges facing women leaders in Conflict Management

Leadership involves persuasion of followers to act towards achieving goals that represent the values, motivations, wants, needs and the aspirations of an organisation (Gardner, 1990). In most workplaces like the teaching fraternity, women have contributed greatly through their commitment and expertise in teaching as well as leadership positions to achieve organisational goals. However, women continue to face challenges that in a way frustrate their efforts to provide for successful educational leadership and so remain a minority (Celikten, 2005). Globally, studies have shown that women are majorly underrepresented in education management with a ratio of five to one compared to their male counterparts at middle management level (UNESCO, 2010).

The glass ceiling is evident in countries such as Greece and the United Kingdom (Mitroussi and Mitroussi, 2009), Turkey (Celikten 2005; Inandi, 2009), Uganda (Sperandio and Kagoda, 2010) and New Zealand (Brooking, 2008). A study that was conducted by Kotze (2004) on women leaders in Namibia, indicate the gender inequality, inequity and the disadvantage it poses on women in Namibian education system.

Further, Abu-Khdair, (2012) contend that women have limited ambitions and lack confidence in themselves. However, it is the contention in this study that women leaders just like any other leader have the drive to lead but are chocked by many challenges among them being societal expectations and inadequate skills to perform their roles. Greyline and Steyn (n. d) while conducting a study in South Africa noted that women are usually appointed to management positions without really being prepared to conduct

their roles. This poses challenges on educational leadership preparation. According to Naidoo and Perumal (2014) women's experience and challenges in leadership are uniquely different when compared to that of men. Hence, the need for women school leaders to acquire a wide range of attributes and skills in dealing with those challenges. The major challenge experienced by women principals is that they are most times posted in disadvantaged schools with limited infrastructure as well as finances. This is a view supported by Rarieya (2011) that mostly women principals find themselves in schools that have limited resources and in the rural areas.

Furthermore, women principals experience stereotype view that women do not make good leaders because they are weak, submissive and emotional (Mestry and Schmidt, 2012). Hence, for women leaders to be accepted by most stakeholders- especially where there are deep seated cultural beliefs - most women principals are forced to act like men by being authoritarian and dictatorial (Morojele, Chikoko and Ngcobo, 2013). Women leaders are faced with other challenges such as juggling between domestic roles and leadership roles. However, as home makers and caregivers, women pose such attributes like nurturing, caring, being sensitive, empathetic, counsellors and cooperative. This makes women effective transformational leaders.

Hence, as Morojele et al advises, women principals should desist from copying male dictatorship and continue with positive attributes of being collaborative, understanding and emotionally connected in order to achieve organizational goals. Furthermore, women should embrace the view that men and women possess unique communication styles especially when faced with difficult conversations and tensions. While Zulu (2016) has referred to it as coping technique, this study refers to understanding,

counselling and caring approach of women as a unique communication strategy used by women principals to manage conflicts in the workplace.

2.6. Rationale for the Study Based on Literature Review

Organizational communication literature has been dominated by the 'glass ceiling debate' which has seen the rise in scholarly works such as journals, books and dissertations, in which 'equal numbers' has been discussed (Davidson & Burke, 2004; Ryan and Haslam, 2005). Furthermore, those studies that have looked at gender differences in communication styles have majorly dealt with differences which quantify styles. Yet, little is known about women leaders' experiences of communicating leadership issues such as conflict from a qualitative perspective in order to understand and learn from actual practice. This is a view supported by Jwan and Ong'ndo that studies in social science in the kenya and the East Africa as well as Africa are majorly quantitative.

This study was prompted by popular works of gender and communication with a kin interest in actual practices and inherent needs and challenges. While embracing the differences and styles in literature, there is need to embrace and utilize that which is applicable in different situations without insisting on a dichotomy lense. Furthermore, while some studies assert that there are different ways in which men and women communicate and these differences are bound to cause communication breakdown in the workplace (Kaiser, Haller, Schimits and Nitsch, 2009; Palomares, 2009; Stout and Dasgupta, 2011). This study purposed to explore experiences while appreciating the unique qualities of women leaders in communicating conflict management. This is a view that is supported by literature that an organization that fails to capitalize on unique skills of both sexes is bound to be disadvantaged in the competitive edge (Berret & Davidson, 2006).

Furthermore, the concept of embracing diversity in the workplace aims at putting to full use the values and talents brought about by individual differences and so, the need to foster diverse ways of communication in problem solving (Davidson and Fielden, 2003). This explains the contention in this study that very little is known about women educational leaders' unique ways of communicating conflict management at the workplace such as school. Thus, this argument forms the canvas of this study.

2.7. Summary of Literature Review

This chapter has reviewed literature on conflict management as well as organizational communication. Specifically, the chapter has looked at what conflict and conflict management is all about. Additionally, the chapter has reviewed literature on communication models, forms and processes while looking at the influence they have on conflict management as well as the role of women in conflict management. The chapter reviews theories that explain how communication has been used in conflict management. The theories include; Grunig and Hunt excellence theory; Dialogic theory, Contingency theory of accommodation; feminist theory and conflict theory. The chapter concludes with a review of relevant studies while identifying the gap that necessitated the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and justifies the research methodology used to explore communication strategies utilised by women leaders in managing workplace conflicts at school level in Migori County. Specifically addresses the philosophical paradigm, the approach used, the research method, and sampling. Additionally indicates the various data collection tools and procedures. Finally highlights data analysis as well as the ethical issues considered. The chapter concludes with an explanation of how trustworthiness was ensured in the study.

3.2 The Research Design

A research design is defined as the overall plan or procedure of research in terms of its ontological as well as epistemological assumptions, methodological considerations, the data collection methods together with the analysis that the study adopts in order to answer the stated research questions (Creswell, 2014). The choice of research design, as Creswell says, was guided by the issue that needed to be addressed, the researcher's own experience and the people the study sought to address. Hence, a relativist-interpretivist qualitative case study design was adopted for the study by the researcher. In the ensuing sub-sections, the design is explained into details in which I begin with the research paradigm.

3.2.1 The Research Paradigm

This study was guided by a relativist-interpretivist paradigm. A research paradigm is defined as a world view or a set of beliefs or values that guide decisions on how research will be conducted (Klenke, 2016)). The set of beliefs are general orientations

that guide the researcher on their epistemological and ontological stance about the world and the nature of research (Creswell, 2014).

Relativist-interpretivist paradigm was deemed suitable for this study because the researcher needed to explore the women leaders' experiences of utilizing communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts from their own points of view. To do this, the researcher interviewed the participants and also analysed documents in order to obtain multiple realities of the manner in which communication strategies were utilized. This is supported by Mason (2002) who says that there is no single reality, rather, multiple realities are socially and contextually constructed and interpreted.

The premise for explaining my philosophical paradigm and how it informed my study is based on two reasons: First is that, as advised by other scholars, I needed to be aware of my philosophical assumptions so that other studies can be read against such assumptions (Mason, 2002; Richards, 2003). Secondly, and as stated previously in the statement of the problem (see 1.2), which informs this study, is that while social sciences deal with people's experiences and practice, research in the Kenyan context is still dominated by the realist/positivists paradigm which lends itself to quantitative studies (Jwan & Ong'ondo, 2011). Hence, this study may be valued against realist positivist assumptions thereby creating the notion that qualitative approach such as the one adopted in this study is not trustworthy. The subsequent paragraphs explicate ontological as well as epistemological orientation in relation to this study.

3.2.1.1 Ontology

This study lent itself to relativist ontology. The concept ontology refers to the assumptions we have about the nature of being. The assumptions can be categorised as

objective [realist belief] or subjective [relativist belief]. Richards (2003:34-35) contrast realist and relativist belief about the nature of being when he says that while realist belief is that "things have a single reality that is independent of them being perceived by someone," the relativist view is "that there is no single reality hence things exist only in relation to the construction of people's points of views."

Relativist ontology was best suited for this study because the researcher considered an institution such as school, where the research was conducted, to have a subjective reality that is constructed by those individuals. The study considered women leaders to be individuals who continuously create and re-create the school norms and rituals, hence, driving the manner in which communication strategies are utilized in managing workplace conflicts in the study school (Richards, 2003). However, if the researcher were to consider an institution- such as school -to have an objective reality with independent existence and behaviours outside individuals, the researcher would fail to capture multiple realities concerning utilization of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts (Creswell, 2014). Hence, embracing relativist ontology was thought to be the most appropriate for this study because the researcher purposed to listen to the participants as they narrated their experiences from their own points of view while creating and recreating meaning in the actual school context (Richard, 2003). Furthermore, the understanding in this study is that institutions such as school come into existence and are maintained by the communicative acts of teachers, students, school leaders and other stakeholders (ibid). The explanation is that communication enables the school community to make sense of the work environment as they establish shared patterns and negotiate their own identity and enact their roles. Hence, their experiences can only be explored through the participants' points of view. This explains the need to

focus on the meanings that the participants gave to utilisation of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts (Stake, 2010). Thus, as a researcher, it was not possible to determine this independently without the participants' interpretations of the phenomenon and without the researcher's presence to capture these interpretations.

The concern for this study was more on obtaining data about 'how' the participants utilized communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts and 'why' they did so from their own perspectives as insiders. This is supported by Mumby and Clair (1997), who explain that an organisation such as school is not based on one act of communication but it constitutes of interactions of its members who derive varied and multiple meanings. To capture the varied meanings, this study purposed to collect data from varied sources using varied methods. In other words, as Creswell (2014) say, the study sought to address the process of interaction which is also referred to as social constructivism. The premise, as held by social constructivists, is that meanings are constructed by human beings who engage with their world to make sense based on historical and social perspectives as a result of interaction in human communication (ibid.). These subjective constructions of their 'inner' world of experiences arise from social interactions. Hence, the study was conducted within the relativist ontology. The ensuing paragraph will explicate the epistemology tradition.

3.2.1.2 Epistemology

This study was subscribed to interpretivist epistemology. The concept epistemology is understood to mean the researcher's view of how knowledge is acquired and how it can be communicated. Corman (in May and Mumby 2005) refers to epistemology as the philosophy that informs us of how things come to be known. In addition, the researcher purposed to obtain data based on the cultural norms that have shaped the perceptions

and expectations of women leaders regarding utilization of communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts and the roles they played. Therefore, from an interpretivist view point, which this study lends itself to, things come to be known from a subjective reality because individual members possess free will to drive what their organisations do. Hence, the researcher's view point was that knowledge is obtained by listening to the participants in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences in utilizing communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts using their own interpretations. However, from the aforesaid, the role of the researcher was not to choose the best approach over another, rather, the intent was to appreciate while drawing from each of these approaches in order to answer the research questions for this study. Therefore, the researcher noted that observing collective actions while measuring aggregates would fail to answer the research questions for this study (Mason, 2002).

Consequently, the understanding of an institution's [school] existence in this study was believed to be maintained through members' interactions. The implications is that, knowledge about utilisation of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts by women leaders could only be obtained through interpretation of the mind-set of participants and not by merely observing aggregate behaviours. To do this the researcher used various data collection methods as: semi- structured interviews focused group discussions as well as document analysis. Therefore, to generate data, the researcher involved forty research (40) participants who included women principals, the deputy principals, HoDs guidance and counselling, senior teachers as well as students from the study schools, all selected purposively. Hence, this study was conducted within the interpretivist epistemology. On the whole, this study adopts a relativist-interpretivist

paradigm thus lent itself to a qualitative approach to collect data. The next sub-section addresses the approach.

3.2.2. The qualitative Approach

This study lent itself to a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is defined as that study that seeks to understand people's experiences and their creation of meaning in a natural and social setting (Litchman, 2014). Qualitative research was deemed suitable because the research purposed to seek an in-depth understanding of how communication strategies were utilized in managing workplace conflicts by women leaders who were the key participants in this study. To do this the researcher physically visited the selected secondary schools headed by women principals in Migori County. The purpose was to talk to and listen to the participants as they recounted of their experiences from their own points of view in order to explore as well as understand how individuals or groups assign meaning to their experiences (Creswell, 2014).

The process of research compelled the researcher to collect data from the participants' natural setting, analyse the data inductively while building from emerging themes and finally make meaning from the data to draw conclusion on the study. Denzin and Lincoln (2017) support this when they say that qualitative research identifies the researcher in a natural setting that is made up of interpretations that makes the world visible thereby transforming the world into a series of representations in form of field notes, interviews, informal discussions, audio recordings and documents generated from the natural world with a view to make sense, interpret phenomenon according to the participants' points of view.

Furthermore, as it is expected of qualitative approach, the research stood to benefit from a richer and deeper understanding of how individuals in a natural setting create, negotiate and share meaning of communication strategies utilised in managing workplace conflicts from their own understanding without being restricted to structured questions (Stake, 2009). Additionally, to obtain participants narratives from the perspective of an 'insider' in a natural setting, a qualitative study was the most appropriate (Creswell, 2014; Bogden & Biklen, 2007).

Additionally, the research questions sought women principals' own account of their experiences in utilizing communication strategies in the management of workplace conflicts, and so, the expected responses were in form of words that described and explained 'how' and 'why' women principals utilised the strategies the way they did. However, if the participants were to be subjected to questionnaires which would yield numbers that merely quantified without explaining 'how' and 'why' women principals utilised communication strategies to manage conflicts the way they did in their study schools, such an approach would have failed to answer the research questions for this study (Carlson & Ducharme, 1987 in Bogden & Biklen, 2007). Therefore, a qualitative approach was the most suitable for this study. The approach adopted a case study method to generate data as explained in the next sub-title.

3.2.3. Case-study Method

This study adopted case study as a method of research. Case study is defined as a systematic study of events with the purpose of describing and explaining a phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2009). The premise for the preferred choice for this study, and as propounded by the author, was that case study provided information about 'how' and 'why' women principals utilised communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts the way they did in real life contexts.

88

Furthermore, the researcher conducted the study within a particular context [selected public secondary schools in Migori County] because it would have been impossible for the researcher to have a true picture of people's experiences without considering real life context such as schools headed by women principals (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). To do this, the researcher listened to the participants in their natural settings as they described and explained their experiences of utilizing communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts through in-depth interviews and focused group discussions which were later corroborated through document analysis (Yin, 2009).

Additionally, a case is defined as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" or the researcher's unit of analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994:25). Therefore, the issue for this study was the women leaders' utilisation of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts in Migori County. However, since it was a single case with embedded units, the researcher purposed to look at the same issue but was intrigued by different experiences of women principals managing different types of secondary schools. Therefore, a holistic case study with embedded units was adopted to enable the researcher to explore the case while considering the influence of different types of secondary schools.

The aforesaid is a view supported by Barxter and Jack (2008) who add that the researcher's ability to study sub-units [different types of secondary schools] situated within a larger case [women leaders' utilization of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts in Migori county] is a powerful way of gaining insight in a phenomenon especially if analysed within sub-units separately, between different sub-units and across all of the sub-units. However, the purpose of studying the sub-units was not to compare the differences or similarities that existed but to gain an in-depth understanding (Yin, 2009). Thus, single sex and co- educational schools headed by

women principals were thought to be appropriate settings that would help answer the research questions for this study. The next section explains the sampling procedure used in this study.

3.3 Sampling

This sub-section discusses the research setting, the research participants' profile as well as the sampling procedure which is in accordance with qualitative approach and a relativist-interpretivist stance.

At the time of this study there were 185 public secondary schools in Migori County in which 50 of those schools were headed by female head teachers. In Migori urban setting, there were 46 secondary schools. Among the 46 schools, 40 were co-educational schools with 34 male principals heading such schools trailed by 6 women principals.

This study was conducted in four public secondary schools managed by women principals. Two schools were single-sex while two others were co-educational schools. Additionally, two schools are located in the urban areas of Migori while the other two schools are in the rural areas of Migori County. Two schools were thought to be technologically rich; another school was averagely equipped while another school was thought to be technologically malnourished. Additionally, some schools had never experienced student unrest while others had experienced quite a bit of student unrest. Hence, four schools were purposively chosen for the study. The four schools were given pseudonyms as school A, B, C and D to enhance anonymity.

3.3.1 Sampling Procedure

This study adopted purposive sampling technique. Punch (2005:187) describes this type of sampling as a "…a deliberate way, with some purposes or focus in mind." This a view supported by Patton (1990) that:

> …the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information- rich cases for study in depth. Information- rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research thus the term purposeful sampling… (p. 169).

From the aforesaid, purposive sampling was the most appropriate for this study because the researcher needed to handpick the cases on the basis of their possession of certain characteristics that were relevant to the study (Mason, 2002). Furthermore, the researcher needed to gain access to participants that had specific knowledge based on their roles as well as their experiences in utilization of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts (Klenke, 2016). However, as Creswell (2014) says, qualitative research purpose to understand a phenomenon from subjective reality of the participants. Hence, it was not possible to understand the 'how' and 'why' of a phenomenon through large representative sample. Rather, as Creswell says, the study needed to reach people within the study area who had unique slices of reality that would help answer the research questions. Therefore, the sample size was small because the researcher purposed to conduct intensive interviews as well as focused group discussions.

To obtain information-rich sites for the study, the researcher identified the schools in Migori County through the office of the MoE as well as TSC County director during a visit in the month of January 2014. The purpose was to find out the secondary schools managed by female principals as well as those that had experienced unrest or otherwise. It became apparent that there were quite a number of schools under the aforementioned

categories. However, to obtain information rich research sites that would inform the study, the researcher reduced the number of schools from 50 to 10 schools. However, as the study progressed, new categories emerged that led the researcher to sample specific locale as well as particular dimensions in accordance with the purpose of the study (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Glaser, 1978 in Klenke, 2016).

Following a pilot study, the categories that emerged formed the basis for spanning over four sub counties, specifically: Suna West, Suna East, Kuria West and Nyatike sub counties to identify the schools. Hence, schools were purposively selected from each sub-county. The reason for this selection was because it was believed that various sub-counties may have experienced conflicts differently while the ways in which the women leaders utilized communication strategies may have been determined by the region to the extent of informing this study.

Additionally, tribes found within Migori County such as kuria, Luo and Suba were thought to be another important category to consider in selecting the study schools. This was to facilitate the understanding of women leaders' ways of utilisation of communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts as well as the challenges experienced based on different sub-counties and with different tribes.

Furthermore, another category that was considered was whether the school was situated in the urban areas or in the rural areas as this factor had development implications that would inform the study in terms of whether a school is well resourced or minimally resourced. This was because it was thought that the abundance of resources or lack of it would influence the nature of conflicts to the extent of informing this study.

The sampling was further based on three categories: first, successful or unsuccessful schools were identified on the basis that conflict management or lack of it may have

contributed to their success or failure in terms of performance. Second, 2-4 streamed schools were identified because it was believed that a school of a very small population may not have engaged with conflict to the extent that it would inform this study.

Third, some schools were chosen depending on their type, that is, single- sex or mixed school. Further, the schools were grouped under national, extra-county, county and sub-county schools. Finally, through informal conversations with the teachers of those schools, the researcher reduced the number of schools to four as: two single- sex schools and two co-educational or mixed schools. Two schools were thought to be technologically equipped, one being averagely equipped while another being technologically malnourished. Hence, in line with the contextual characteristics mentioned, four schools were purposively chosen for the study.

According to Eisenhardt and Graebner (2007), a researcher may choose to study cases with similar and sometimes different characteristics, for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the issue under study. This is a view that is supported by scholars when they mention that the general rule of qualitative research is that researchers need to continue sampling until they no longer gain new insights (Richards, 2003; Creswell, 2014). Hence, four schools were purposively chosen for the study in which 4 women principals, 4 deputy principals, 4 HoDs guidance and counselling, 4 senior teachers from the four schools and 24 school prefects - six from each school participated in the study- giving a total of 40 research participants.

The next section briefly describes the target population:

3.3.2 Target Population

For the purpose of this study, the target population included women principals heading secondary schools in Migori County. Hence, all the 50 women principals were targeted.

However, for the purpose of a qualitative study which requires a small sample size, the women leaders were reduced to four based on the following categories:

i) Number of students

ii) Mixed/co-educational or single sex

iii) History of strikes although this was dependent of how long the Principal had been in the study school

iv) Experience of the participant as Principal

v) Ethnic community in which the school is located such as Suba, Luo and Kuria

vi) Whether the school is well resourced or minimally resourced

vii) Whether the school is located in the rural or urban area

viii) Four sub counties were considered : Nyatike, Kuria West, Suna-west and Suna-East

ix) The category of school such as national school, extra-county, county and sub-county school

The women principals were of interest to the study because it is part of their management roles to handle conflicts in their schools. However, the principals work in consultation with other school leaders such as the deputy principal, HoD guidance and counselling and the senior teachers. Hence, the other school three categories in school leadership were of interest to the study for the purpose of triangulation.

The deputy principals are responsible for handling workplace conflicts -especially matters to do with discipline. Additionally, the senior teachers of each school were chosen because whenever there are unrests or elements of unrest they are called upon to assist in the management of conflicts. The HoD guidance and counselling is the one responsible for counselling students with any problems which includes conflicts. This study also purposed to use focused group discussions with six school prefects from the student council of each study school to get their views on the process of conflict management in the school since the student council deals with conflict management

among students. The next sub-section explicates the study area as well as the background of the four schools selected while giving a composite profile of the participants that were purposively selected to participate in the study.

3.4 Study Area

This study was conducted in Migori County which is among the 47 counties in Kenya. Migori County is located in the Western region of Kenya 63 km south of Kisii and 22 km north of the Tanzania border. The county borders Kisii and Homabay counties. Migori town, which is the biggest town in the county, has an urban population of 31,644 and total population of 46,576 (1999 census) and is connected to a road leading to Masai Mara National Park. This study was conducted in four Sub-Counties found within Migori County. The Sub-Counties were Kuria West, Nyatike, Suna West and Suna East.

3.4.1 School A

School A is located in Kuria West Sub-County. It is categorised as a four-streamed single-sex National public school. The school is well resourced with adequate facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, computer room as well as a well-equipped library. It has a population of about 650 students from form one to four, a teaching staff of 25 as well as a non-teaching staff of 7.

3.4.2 School B

School B is located in Suna West Sub-County. It is categorised as a three-streamed co-educational County public school. The school is averagely resourced with adequate facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, computer room as well as an averagely-equipped library. It has a population of about 550 students from form one to four, a teaching staff of 24 with a non-teaching staff of 5.

3.4.3 School C

School C is located in Nyatike Sub-County. It is categorised as a two-streamed co-educational Sub-County public school. The school has limited resources and few facilities such as few classrooms, one laboratory and no computer room with a book store. It has a population of about 250 students from form one to four a teaching-staff is 08 and a non-teaching staff of two.

3.4.4 School D

School D is located in Suna East Sub-County. It is categorised as a four-streamed single-sex Extra-County public school. The school is fairly well resourced with adequate facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, computer room as well as a well-equipped library. It has a population of about 600 students from form one to four, a teaching staff of 21 with a non-teaching staff of 7.

The next sub section explicates a composite profile of the participants for this study.

3.5. Participants' Profile

This study highlights participants' profile in order to explicate their roles and how they are referred to in this study through pseudonyms in order to increase confidentiality as is required of a qualitative study. The four principals that were chosen for the study included: Jessica, Naomi, Jackline and Nicole [pseudonyms]. Other research participants included four (4) deputies from each school as DP 1; DP 2; DP 3 and DP 4. Additionally, four (4) senior teachers one from each school as SNR 1; SNR 2; SNR 3 and SNR 4 participated in the study respectively. The study also involved four (4) guidance and counselling HoD as follows; GC1; GC2; GC3 and GC4. Finally, the study involved 24 school prefects in which six (6) were picked from different levels in each school to participate in the focus group discussions as FG 1; FG2; FG3 and FG4. The

ensuing paragraphs explicate the participants' profile based on their roles in the four schools.

3.5.1 Principals

At the time of this study, Jessica was the principal of school A, a position she had held for three years. She had a B. Ed (Arts) degree in Geography and C. R. E and had taught for over 20 years with the age bracket of 40-50. Before joining School A, she had headed two other renowned schools in Kenya.

At the time of this study, Naomi was the principal of school B, a position she had held for two years. She had a B. Ed (Arts) degree in Kiswahili and C. R. E, 30 years teaching experience with the age bracket of 50-60. Additionally Naomi holds an M. Ed degree in Educational Administration and Policy studies. Before joining School B, she had headed a co-educational school in Migori County and another renowned single-sexed school in Kenya.

At the time of this study Jackline was the principal of school C, a position she had held for three years. She had a B. Ed (Science) and a teacher of Biology and Chemistry for the last 30 years with an age bracket of 50-60. Before joining School C, she had been a deputy principal in another school for 2 years and the HoD in a boys' school in Kenya.

At the time of this study, Nicole was the principal of school D, a position she had held for three years. She had a B. Ed (Science) degree in Business and Mathematics, 20 years teaching experience with the age bracket of 40-50. Before joining School D, she had headed two other renowned schools in Kenya.

3.5.2 Deputy Principals

DP 1 was the deputy principal of school A, a position she had held for the last two years. She had a B. Ed (Science) with age bracket of 30-40. She had taught Physics and

Mathematics for the last 14 years. Before joining school A, she was the HoD in the same school.

DP 2 was the deputy principal of school B, a position he had held for the last five years. He had a B. Ed (Arts) History and C. R. E with an age bracket of 40-50. At the time of this study he was undertaking a Masters degree in Religious Studies. He has taught for the last 20 years in various schools. Before joining school B, she had been the HoD in various schools.

DP 3 was the deputy principal of school C, a position he had held for the last three years. He had a B. Ed (Arts) in Geography and C. R. E with an age bracket of 50-60. He had taught Geography and C. R. E for the last 20 years. Before joining school C, he was the HoD in one of the schools outside Migori County.

DP 4 was the deputy principal of school D, a position she had held for the last three years. She had a B. Ed (Science) with age bracket of 40-50. She had taught Physics and Mathematics for the last 10 years. Before joining school D, she was the HoD in various schools.

3.5.3 Senior Teachers

The senior teacher is the third in command in the Kenyan public secondary school context. He or she is appointed by the TSC based on years of service as well as competence in leadership. The senior teacher participates in selecting various heads of department in the school and is also responsible for the orientation and mentoring of new teachers. He or she is also responsible for coordination of internal and external examinations and also responsible for maintaining discipline in the school. The ensuing paragraphs explicate profiles of the senior teachers who were selected to participate in the study as follows:

SNR 1 was the senior teacher at school A, a position he had held for the last 2 years. He had an age bracket of 40-50, had a B. Ed (Arts) and had taught English and Literature for ten years. He had been the HoD in the same school before being promoted as the senior teacher.

SNR 2 was the senior teacher at school B, a position he had held for the last five years. He had an age bracket of 40-50, a B. Ed (Arts) English and Literature and an M. Ed degree in Curriculum studies. He had been the HoD in the same school before being promoted to the position of a senior teacher.

SNR 3 was the senior teacher at school C, a position she had held for the last two years. She had an age bracket of 30-40, had a B. Ed (Arts) English and Literature HoD in the same school before being promoted as the senior teacher.

SNR 4 was the senior teacher at school D, a position he had held for the last five years. He had an age bracket of 40-50, B. Ed (Arts) English and Literature and an M. Ed degree in Curriculum studies. He had been the HoD in the same school before being promoted as the senior teacher.

3.5.4 HoD's Guidance and Counseling

GC 1 was the HoD of guidance and counseling, a position she had held for the last five years and had 10 years of teaching experience in teaching Biology and Chemistry and with an age bracket of 30-40. Before joining school A, she had taught in several schools and held various responsibilities.

GC 2 was the HoD of guidance and counseling, a position she had held for the last 2 years. She holds a B. Ed (Science) and has taught Chemistry and Biology for the last ten years with an age bracket of 30-40. Before joining school B, she had held various responsibilities in other schools.

GC 3 was the HoD of guidance and counseling, a position he had held for the last 2 years. He holds a B. Ed (Science) Mathematics and Physics with an age bracket of 30-40. Before joining school C, he had taught in several private schools and held various responsibilities.

GC 4 was the HoD of guidance and counseling, a position she had held for the last five years. She holds a B. Ed (Arts) in History and C. R. E with an age bracket of 30-40. Before joining school D, she had taught in several schools and held various responsibilities.

3.5.5 Student Council

The student council is a system of governance which consists of student leadership roles in the school. The student council replaced the prefect system in the Kenyan secondary school context. The student council is involved in the decision making process as well as policy formulation aimed at preparing students for leadership roles. The ensuing section explains the focused group discussions drawn from the student council as follows:

FG 1 consists of six prefects as participant 1-6 purposively selected from the student council to participate in the focused group discussions. FG 2 consists of six prefects as participant 1-6 purposively selected from the student council to participate in the focused group discussions.

FG 3 consists of six prefects as participant 1-6 purposively selected from the student council to participate in the focused group discussions.

FG 4 consists of six prefects as participant 1-6 purposively selected from the student council to participate in the focused group discussions. The ensuing sub-section explains how data was generated.

3.6 Data Generation

This study generated data by using multiple techniques such as interviews, document analysis and focused group discussions. In choosing the various techniques, the researcher considered whether they would help answer the research questions for this study (Stake, 2010).

Furthermore, the use of various methods strengthens and ensures credibility in the findings when triangulated (Stake, 2010). It was also anticipated that multiple data gathering procedures would minimise limitations by compensating weakness of one method with the strength of another method. In addition, as Creswell (2014) asserts, the study stood to benefit from obtaining rich data with thick descriptions to enable the applicability of characteristics to a similar context. The descriptions were obtained from semi-structured interviews, focused group discussions as well as field notes as explained in the next section.

3.6.1 Interviews

This study used interviews to generate data. An interview in research is understood to mean the procedure of generating data "through direct verbal interactions between individuals" (Cohen et al 2007: 269). Since this was a qualitative study, the use of interviews was considered as an important procedure for generating data as it allowed the researcher to ask questions while listening to participants as they responded by recounting their own experiences (Jwan and Ong'ondo, 2011). Hence the researcher used semi-structured individual interviews through open ended questions. Furthermore, the interview questions were accompanied by a list of possible sources of data that included: the women principals, the deputy principals, the HoDs guidance and counselling and the senior teachers. The next sub-section explains how semi-structured interviews were conducted.

3.6.1.1 Semi-structured individual Interviews

In this study, semi-structured individual interviews were used to obtain data regarding the women leaders' utilization of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts. Individual interview is defined as a technique that allows the researcher to dialogue with participants (Lichtman, 2014). Additionally, individual interview is described as a "guided conversation" and major source of generating data through case study method (Yin, 2009: 106). Hence, the use of semi-structured individual interview was thought to be the most appropriate for obtaining data that described: the nature of workplace conflicts, communication strategies and how the women leaders utilized them to manage workplace conflicts, the challenges experienced by the women leaders and the ways they minimized those challenges.

Punch (2005:168) supports the use of individual interviews while describing this data collection procedure as "a very good way of accessing …people's experiences, descriptions of situations and constructions of reality" as well as a deeper understanding. Additionally, semi-structured interview enabled the exploration and probing for emerging issues relevant to the study during data collection (Richards, 2003).

To do this, and as advised by Zucker, (2009), the researcher used interview schedules (see Appendix A1; A2; A3; A4) with open-ended questions. More, while digital audio recorder was used to capture the participants' verbatim responses to be replayed later for clarification, the interview schedules were used as scripts to elicit experiences as well as their meaning from participants in each subsequent interview. However, the schedules only acted as a guide to the type of questions that the researcher intended to ask the participants. Furthermore, as Guion (2006) suggests, the flow of questions

depended on the responses obtained from the participants and so, the researcher did not ask questions in any specific order.

Each interview with the principals, the deputy principals, the HoDs guidance and counselling and the senior teachers of the four schools were anticipated to last for a period of 30-45 minutes. However, since interviews and data analysis were on-going, the interviews were conducted twice with each participant. The first interview was to get the participants' points of view, followed by a second discussion towards the end of the study which took 5-10 minutes. The discussion helped the researcher to probe and clarify the issues that had emerged during data analysis. Other than the interviews the researcher also conducted focused group discussions as explained in the next section.

3.6.2. Focused Group Discussions

This study used Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) as a way of generating data. A focus group discussion is a data generation procedure in which the researcher conducts a discussion with a composition of six- eight people on a specific topic (Krueger and Casey, 2015). Focused group discussion was used in this study because it enabled the researcher to triangulate as well as prompt students' understanding and feelings about conflicts in the school. Thus, the researcher obtained information that may have been inaccessible through other data collection methods.

To do this, the FGDs were conducted with a group of six students from the student council in each school giving a total of twenty-four (24) prefects. Each FGD was anticipated to last for a period of 30-45 minutes. The FGD that were conducted face to face allowed the researcher to adjust questions when there was need, probed and sought clarifications from the participants there by gaining a deeper understanding of utilization of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2013).

Other than the interview schedules the researcher also used a digital audio recorder. However, the researcher had to first seek consent from the participants. The main function of the audio recorder was to capture the questions asked and the responses verbatim with which the researcher later replayed, transcribed and reflected upon (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014). Also, towards the end of the study, the responses captured verbatim enabled the researcher to clarify and probe further as a follow up on emerging issues. The researcher created rapport with the students and did not assume any line of authority to enable the prefects to express themselves freely. Additionally, the discussions were conducted at a time and place that was convenient to the gatekeepers and the students. Other than FGD, the researcher also used a document analysis as explain in the next section.

3.6.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis was another technique that was employed by the researcher. Document analysis can be defined as a data generation technique that analyses official documents so as to answer the research questions (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2012). In this study, document analysis was deemed suitable to verify as well as corroborate what was mentioned by the participants during interviews and FGDs regarding the manner in which the women leaders utilised communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts. Yin (2009) concurs while adding that documented information provide evidence that is relevant in a case study. This is a view that is supported by Miles et al. (2014) that the analysis of documents helps in justifying and giving evidence obtained from other sources of data through triangulation.

In order to gain access to the documents the researcher first explained the purpose of research and assured the gatekeepers of anonymity and confidentiality. With consent the researcher was able to access documents which were studied and data generated using

document analysis framework. The framework (see Appendix B) was used to systematically record information arising from the analysis of the documents used for managing workplace conflicts in the study schools.

The documents that were analysed using this framework included: the School policy documents and reports (see Appendix F1; G) like the TSC code of conduct and ethics, basic education Act, school rules, punishment book, logbook as well as minutes. The school policy document gave direction on communication strategies used in conflict management as well as how conflicts are supposed to be managed; the punishment book gave information on the nature of conflicts while the minutes, the memos and the reports gave direction on the process of employing communication strategies in conflict management in the study schools. Data that was obtained were transcribed before being analysed to develop codes, followed by patterns and finally themes. Other than the document analysis framework, the researcher recorded personal reflections using a diary as explained in the next section.

3.6.3.1 Research Diary

The researcher kept a research diary during the research project. The diary was used to record the researcher's personal reflections on daily occurrence during the research project. As Hughes (2000) has observed, the content of the journal complemented other tools used by the researcher but was not in itself a tool for collecting data. Finally, the researcher made sense of the data collected as explained in the next section.

3.7 Data Analysis

This study analysed data thematically. Thematic analysis is defined a method that is used to identify and analyse data in order to create patterns (Clarke and Braun, 2013). Thematic analysis, which said to be the common practice in qualitative analysis, was the

most suitable because it enabled the researcher to capture in-depth descriptions of the women principals' experiences in utilizing communication strategies from their own points of view (Jwan and Ong'ondo, 2011). Therefore, the researcher was able to organise data non-numerically to form patterns, themes and qualities from transcribed interviews, focused group discussions and document analysis (Klenke, 2016). Analysis was done in seven stages as proposed by Clark and Braun, (2013) as follows: Transcription, familiarization with data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing themes, revising and naming themes and then write up.

3.7.1 Transcription

The researcher analysed data while collection was on going. The researcher noted themes that popped up in form of field notes using a research diary. The data generated from interviews and focused group discussions in form of recorded audio tapes were transcribed together with the field notes from my research diary (Clark and Braun, 2013). Transcription was a tedious and time consuming process.

3.7.2 Familiarization with Data

The transcribed data and the documents analysed from each school were read more than once to familiarize with the information that was obtained from data. Listening to audio recorded data was done more than once to compare with the transcription. This was followed by another reading and reflections upon the data collected with the purpose of obtaining key ideas which were recorded. Additionally, similarities and differences were noted.

3.7.3 Coding

Using the research questions together with what had emerged within the data, colour codes were developed such a yellow, orange, pink and purple to highlight the codes. Using the colour codes developed the researcher skimmed through and noted the key ideas then grouped them into categories.

The categories developed were used to further develop themes. Using these themes and also bearing in mind the research questions, the researcher's experiences and the literature read in this area, the researcher was able to make sense of the information gathered and drew conclusions which formed themes.

Categories and themes developed together with the full data-set were read and re-read for review. The purpose was to check whether the categories and the themes were convincing, whether they were in line with the research questions and whether there was any relationship between them. The review helped in identifying similarities between the themes while checking for repetition in order to split themes or collapse them or even discard and begin the process of theme development.

Having developed themes this was the point where the researcher analysed themes while checking how one theme fitted into the main story on communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts. The researcher then constructed a name for each theme developed.

At this stage the researcher weaved together the analytic narrative as well as data extract. The results obtained from this analysis as well as the themes that were named gave a descriptive account of women principals' experiences with utilization of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts at school level. The next section explains the ethics that the researcher considered in each phase of this study.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

According to Creswell (2014), it is during the planning and designing of a qualitative study that the researcher takes into consideration the ethical issues so as to plan how to address these issues as they arise during the study. Creswell continues to argue that even though most researchers only consider ethical issues during the data collection process, there is need for the issues to be addressed in several phases of the research process. Accordingly, to capture how the issues might array in all the phases this study considered ethical issues as follows: prior to conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, data analysis, reporting the data and in publishing the study (APA, 2010; Creswell, 2014). These phases will be discussed in the ensuing sub-sections.

3.8.1 Prior to Conducting the Study

Before commencement of the study; I sought clearance from my university through the Ethical Review Committee at Rongo University having availed my proposal to them (see Appendix C). I then proceeded to seek research permit from the National commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) before proceeding to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology at the County director's office to allow me to conduct research in the sample schools (see AppendixD1; D2).

Additionally, I examined the standards for ethical conduct of research available from professional organisations by consulting with my supervisors (Lincoln, 2009). This was followed by negotiation for entry into the study schools to seek access to participants by seeking permission from gatekeepers such as the county director of education and well as the secondary school principals. This entailed explaining to the principals the purpose and the details of the research both in verbal and written form before consent letters (see Appendix E1; E2) were issued for the principals to sign. Finally, the researcher

purposively selected the research site that would not raise power issues and without a vested interest in the outcome of study.

3.8.2 Beginning to Conduct the Study

At the beginning of this study I first sought informed consent from all the participants who were involved in the study by explaining the purpose and the details of the study, including their rights to withdraw from the study any time they wished to do so. Second, I sought their permission to audio record. Third, I assured them of anonymity by using pseudonyms and not their real names in my report and assured them of not exposing the information collected to anyone.

I also assured the participants that the information would be used for research purposes hence confidentiality was ensured. After that, I requested the participants to sign the consent form (see Appendix, E3) while assuring them of their right to decline to sign the forms if they wished to do so.

Additionally, I sought to find out about the cultural, religious, gender and other differences that needed to be respected in the research sites. Further, the research sites being boarding secondary schools, it was not possible to seek consent from the parents of the students who were to participate in the study. Hence, I sought consent from the principal as well as the students to conduct focus group discussions. Lastly, I assured the participants of sharing my findings with them by giving them a copy of the findings.

3.8.3 During Data Generation

During the data collection process I built trust and anticipated disruption of gaining access by negotiating for entry. Further, I explained the purpose of research in details while explaining how data shall be used. More, I avoided leading questions during interviews as well as focus group discussions and did not indicate personal impressions

or sensitive information. I assured the participants of conducting a workshop on communication strategies in conflict management in the study schools after completing the study.

3.8.4 During Analysis of Data

During data analysis I captured dissenting voices and noted multiple perspectives while ensuring that I had taken into consideration both the negative as well as the positive results. Furthermore, I ensured respect of participants' privacy by using pseudonyms for both the research site as well as the participants. Finally I developed a composite profile of the participants.

3.8.5 Reporting Data

This study has reported findings honestly based on the participants views while adhering to APA (2010) guidelines for permissions needed to adapt the work of other authors. Additionally, to avoid disclosing information that would reveal the identity of participants or the research site, the researcher has used composite stories. Finally this study has been reported in clear, straightforward and appropriate language for the audience of this research.

3.9. Trustworthiness of the Study

This study followed the advice of Jwan and Ong'ondo (2011) to ensure truthfulness and honesty by adhering to the traditions of rigor and trustworthiness in qualitative studies through; credibility, confirmability, applicability and dependability as explained in the ensuing discussions:

3.9.1 Credibility

To ensure credibility the researcher used various methods and sources of data collection for triangulation as advised by Cohen, et al., (2013). Additionally, this study has been

framed within the assumptions and characteristics which are consistent with recognized qualitative approach to research. Moreover, the study identifies and defines the approach as a qualitative-interpretivist holistic case study while citing studies that have employed the approach and follows the procedures outlined in the approach (Creswell, 2014).

3.9.2 Applicability

To ensure applicability to schools of similar characteristics, the study includes detailed and rigorous data collection methods, data analysis and reporting where I have reported findings of this study giving thick descriptions of field notes, data analysis and interpretations. Hence, giving the reader the experience of 'being there.' According to Creswell (2014) the thick descriptions of data will allow for applicability of characteristics to a similar context.

3.9.3 Confirmability

In this study, the researcher ensured confirmability by validating the accuracy using member checking, availing audit trail of field notes, research diary and the proposal indicating the research procedure used which Miles & Huberman(1994) say increases confirmability and rigor in a qualitative study.

3.9.4 Dependability

In this study, the researcher ensured dependability which refers to the extent to which the research procedure is clearly stated to enable other people to conduct the study in the same manner and get similar results (Klenke, 2016). To this, I maintained an audit trail through field notes, transcriptions as well as the proposal for this study. Further, the research questions for this study can be used to examine the ways in which the women leaders utilized communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts in this study.

Furthermore, I have explained the methodological assumptions, the data generation techniques, ways in which data was analysed and reporting in a truthful and trustworthy manner, hence adhered to the traditions in qualitative studies.

Lastly, the researcher considered ethical issues that may arise in several phases of the study.

3.10. Summary

This chapter has discussed and justified the choice of the research design used to examine communication strategies as employed by women principals to manage conflicts in selected public secondary schools in Migori County. Specifically, the chapter has addressed the philosophical assumptions, the approach used as well as the sample and sampling procedures.

Additionally, the research setting, the various data collection procedures and the tools that were used to collect data, the data processing and analysis as well as the ethical issues considered in each phase has been explained. The chapter has concluded with an explanation of how rigor and trustworthiness was ensured in the study. Since the nature and desired results of the study guide the approach of the study, the purpose of this study was to: explore the experiences of women principals in employing communication strategies in conflict management from their own points of view.

From the participants' own narratives of their experiences, the researcher purposed to gain understanding of: the nature of communication strategies used; the approach taken in utilizing the strategies; the challenges they face and suggestions on how these challenges are mitigated. The subsequent chapter presents the presentation and discussion of findings based on the aforementioned categories.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents findings on the study that sought to explore the communication strategies utilised by women leaders in managing workplace conflicts at secondary school level. Ways in which the women principals utilized communication strategies were sought through interviews which were later corroborated through document analysis as well as focused group discussions. To do this, the researcher first sought the nature of workplace conflicts experienced by women principals in the study schools, followed by the nature of communication strategies utilized and ways in which those strategies were utilized; the challenges faced as well as ways in which those challenges were mitigated. It became apparent that although the women leaders, who were participants in this study, had devised unique ways of utilizing communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts, they experienced many challenges. Findings also reveal that the women principals had formulated ways of mitigating these challenges.

The findings for this study are discussed under the following themes: the nature of workplace conflicts in schools headed by women principals; the nature of communication strategies in schools headed by women principals; ways in which communication strategies are utilised by women principals to manage workplace conflicts; the challenges experienced by women principals in utilisation of communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts and ways of mitigating the challenges.

Since this was a study of four schools, it was discovered that the nature of workplace conflicts, communication strategies utilised and ways in which the women principals utilised communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts as well as the challenges experienced by women principals varied from school to school and this depended on the type of school and the context where the school was situated. The ensuing sub-sections present and discuss the four themes mentioned as it was revealed in the study schools visited.

4.2. The Nature of Workplace Conflicts in Schools headed by Women Principals

Based on the interviews that were conducted with the four principals and their four deputies, the four senior teachers and the four HoD guidance and counseling as well as focus group discussions with 24 prefects from school A, B, C and D, it was established that the nature of workplace conflicts resulted from incompatible interests, incompatible needs, distorted information as well as emerging issues which are referred to respectively as interest-based, need-based, data-based and social-based conflicts. The next section will discuss these conflicts as sub-themes.

4.2.1 Interest-based Conflict

Having conducted an interview with the principal at school A, Jessica's view was that conflict is unavoidable perpetual of life. Hence, in response to her experience with conflict at school A, Jessica recounted:

> I had one worker who had really been close to a principal who left to another school…there was some money that used to be given to him but I didn't see the need for when I took over. He was not very happy and he was in charge of a very delicate department (Water). So he got into the ceiling board and closed valves and so we begin(sic) to suffer like where is the problem coming from…We even called the plumber…without success… you know girl schools without water is terrible so they went on strike and we had to send the girls away (Principal, School A).

During an informal discussion with GC 1, she confirmed that the said worker had

purposed to punish the principal when she mentioned:

> The school suffered a lot we had no water and the girls were sent home because they became unruly until when the worker in charge of water revealed how he had managed to make the principal suffer to a fellow worker … the worker came to report what he heard (HoD Guidance and Counseling school A).

The implication from the fore going is that the subordinate's previous relationship with the former principal influenced his relationship with the new principal. Hence, probably the subordinate felt that Jessica would not serve his interest while Jessica's interest was to practice ethical leadership. Interest-based conflict is congruent to interpersonal conflicts which arise when two or more people who work in the same institution have perceived differences in beliefs, values, or goals (Jameson, 1999; Barki and Hartwick, 2001). Therefore, when the school principal talks about the disagreement as aforesaid, she is probably talking about interest-based conflict at school A.

Interest-based conflict was revealed through informal discussions in which findings indicate that at school D, Nicole was forceful and dictatorial, hence, most of the teachers at school D wished that she would be transferred to another school. This became clear when SNR 4 said that, "When you don't agree with the boss she will recommend for your transfer if you are working under TSC but if you are a BoM teacher she will look for ways of sacking (sic) you".

Another participant exemplified that:

> … there was also a case where because teachers employed by the board are usually paid even when they are on vacation because it is assumed that they are still at work, there is a time the principal sacked (sic) the BoM teachers over the holidays because she didn't want to pay them for the holidays (HoD GC 4, School D).

Based on focus group discussions with prefects at school D, it emerged that the students were uncomfortable and reluctant to discuss anything about their principal. However,

most students did not have a problem with the principal as one of the participants alluded, "the principal is harsh in her decisions when it comes to teachers but for us she is very understanding (Focus Group iscussions, participant 5, school D). Nevertheless, one of them indicated that although the principal treated them well, some students were worried that their teachers kept leaving to other schools.

The implication from the aforesaid concerning competing interests at school D is consistent with Squelch and Lemmer (1994) that interest-based conflicts always end up in personality clash. Furthermore, conflict manifests whenever resources are in short supply or positions of power or a case where people are not in agreement on the modalities of sharing or distributing resources (Hitt, Miller & Colella, 2006; Rahim, 2001). Consequently, due to shortage of resources members of an organization usually feel that they will be disadvantaged in terms of realizing set goals. Hence, conflicts usually arise out of competition for the limited resources (Landau, Landau & Landau, 2001). Therefore, it can be concluded that probably the shortage of resources in school D was based on employee wages as well as power relations which had monetary implications. Bennett, Crawford and Cartwright (2003) agree while adding that usually one of the most sought after resources are "… competitions for jobs, titles and prestige (p. 145)."

4.2.2 Need- based Conflict

Based on an informal discussion with SNR 1 in this study, it emerged that sometimes disagreements between teachers and students are as a result of their needs to fulfill certain goals. This was exemplified in the way the Ministry of Education in Kenya introduced abrupt changes regarding time management in public schools which caused

conflict between the teachers and the students. Jessica confirmed this when she mentioned:

> We had serious disagreements between teachers and students in terms of waking up time, and when they are supposed to go to sleep… the government introduced some changes that wanted students to go to bed at specific time and wake up at specific time, so that they only be in class at the recommended time and that became an issue. You know initially we were teaching up to prep time and sometime dawn time…so when these rules were put into(sic) place…we stopped and students were not happy with the decision. (Principal, school A)

Focus group discussions with six prefects in school A confirmed that need-based conflict emerged when:

> …students wanted to be waking up as early as four and go to bed as late as ten yet the teachers wanted us to wake up at six, do some manual work and settle in class by eight…That became a problem then we planned to go on strike and before teachers knew about it we started throwing stones (Focus group discussion, school A, participant 1).

The aforementioned was supported by one of the prefects when she said "students can sometimes choose to plan for a strike because they feel… teachers are not listening to them or their desires (Focus group discussion, school A, participant 2)."However, according to DP 1, she felt that government directives could not be violated at the expense of students' needs because as the administration they also had a need to protect their jobs. In another interview one of the participants said:

> For me government directives are government directives… we as teachers must also protect our jobs and so probably students didn't take it kindly and thought they were schemes … So for me I think that the government also causes conflicts with their policies and it becomes difficult to convince the students. Like in this case students were preparing for a national examination and they felt threatened that they would fail exams if they did not have adequate time (Deputy Principal, school B).

Need-based conflict is parallel to Bradshaw's (2008) view that sometimes conflict arise out of politically instigated needs but which contrast with the needs of individuals. Johnson (1994) while referring to need-based conflict as substantive conflict says that

sometimes conflicts occur when people compete on ways of accomplishing the tasks. Hence, when the woman principals talk about conflicts that arise from government directives, they are probably referring to need-based conflicts that arise out of incompatible needs of various stakeholders in an organization.

In another interview, findings reveal that since school C was largely underdeveloped at the time Jackline took over as the principal the major conflict experienced was largely need- based. In one of the interviews she vividly explained:

> I have experienced development conflict…between me and a representative of a politician who told us in the board would wish to build a laboratory for the school and finish everything…materials of low quality were brought… and put up a foundation with mad which we did not approve of… thereafter he requested for money…we declined so the he incited the community against me. It was bad. People now saw me as an enemy to development I stood firm but ended up with community and the Board conflict (Principal, school C).

The explanation that Jackline gave regarding her action was that as the chief accounting officer of the school she had to follow the correct procedure and this was consistent with guidelines on procurement of public property.

In an interview with DP 3, he confirmed that the situation as stated by the principal was worsened because "…there was no way the principal was going to sign a cheque without participating in the construction and also for accountability… (DP 3, school C). Hence, these caused a lot of problems between the political class, the community and the school. In another focus group discussion with the prefects in school C it became apparent that Jackline was guided by her Christian values which in a way conflicted with the political class as well as the Board of Management when one of the participants said, "our principal is a Christian and motherly, ever since she came here things have changed, even our diet has changed. She keeps telling us to be honest in all things (Focus group discussion, school C, participant 3)." Another student added, "When our

parents were saying she's bad and wanted to transfer some of us from the school, we defended her and refused to transfer because she is good to us (focus group discussion, school C, participant 4)."

The implication from the fore going and consistent with studies in this area is, that like Jackline, one's values are neither obvious nor observable but only reveal themselves whenever there is a disagreement like it happened in school C (Bush & Anderson, 2003). Besides, the cause of conflict in school C was probably founded on the premise that what people value as important in their own perspectives are the ones they use to evaluate the behaviour of other people towards them (Carpenter & Kennedy, 2001). This probably explains why Jackline refused to comply with the demands from the political class as well as the community. Furthermore, structural conflicts arise out of interdependence on task performance (Aquinas, 2006; Nelson & Quick, 2008).

In school C for instance, the principal depended on her values to make a decision and heed to the demands of the political class while the BoM depended on the principals' cooperation for the laboratory to be built by the political class. Additionally, the school depended on the political class for funding. In the same vein the political class was probably using construction of the school laboratory as a campaign tool. Therefore, interdependence was evident and this caused conflicts. Hence, when the principal at school C talks about development conflict she is probably alluding to need conflict.

It appeared that the major cause of conflict at school D was based on incompatible needs as a result of witch-hunting between the teachers and the principal. This was highlighted when SNR 4 said

> …there was some tension between principal and some teachers, she had some teachers on her side and there were others she did not get along with so when the

teachers saw that the principal is(sic) doing something irregular by asking teachers to be present during national examination, one of them tipped off the authorities (Senior teacher, school D).

The DP 4 affirmed that this was indeed the case when he said that the teachers had been requested by the principal to be present during Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination and this was against the national examination regulations. He further explained that:

> After the information went viral (sic), the government officials ambushed the school and found some teachers locked up in a room. After some investigations the BOM was charged to sit down and give a recommendation some teachers who were being paid by parents were sacked while those under the government were transferred as a disciplinary measure (Deputy Principal, school D).

To understand the reason for need-based conflict, GC4's opinion was that:

> Even if the principal was wrong there was a job to keep the principal had to protect her job so she sought protection from the BOM whom because she is an official member stood firm by her side and put the blame on other teachers (HoD guidance and counseling, School D).

From the foregoing discussion, it seemed that the teachers who were not on the principal's camp wanted to punish the principal. However, their action ended up affecting the other teachers who seemed to get along with the principal. Findings also reveal that the principal of school D had manipulated information regarding exam regulation out of a need to secure her job and not because she did not like the teachers. Hence, it can be concluded that the nature of conflicts at school D is congruent to Bradshaw's (2008) view that need-based conflict can be either physical or psychological. Hence, like other Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the desire for the teachers who were against the principal to punish the principal and Nicole's desire to protect her job probably informed their actions which contributed to conflicts as witnessed in school D.

Additionally, need based conflict may be referred to as the safety and job security need like it is the case in school D (Du Preez, Campher, Grobler, Loock & Shaba, 2003).

Research indicates that need based conflict may arise out of competition for power or positions in which one controls the behaviour of others (Hocker & Wilmot, 2013). Hence, when the participants in this study explain the nature of conflict that is related to job security or competition for positions, they are probably referring to need-based conflict.

4.2.3. Data-based Conflict

In another interview, findings reveal that according to the women principals, conflicts form part of life in an organization and so schools are not exceptional. However, according to Naomi, some conflicts can be very serious especially when they are based on wrong information regarding a delicate issue in the school in which she exemplified:

> There was a conflict between the management and the students over a boy who passed on…it made the students go on strike and the allegations they were putting forward… the student was delayed to be taken to hospital…they claimed student had been killed and there were many issues…but the mama (sic) told us … the Mama did investigations on her own… was able to say that Madam all those things you are hearing are not true (Principal, school B).

SNR 2 had this to say:

> We did investigation and find (sic) out that fine the student went home because he was not feeling well but instead of being taken to hospital he was taken to a mganga(sic) in Tanzania and that's where the boy passed on and his body was brought to Kenya (Senior Teacher, school B).

During an informal discussion with the GC 2 her conclusion was that it is important give correct information because like in this case 'later on things were made clear cause people were told… the truth… (HoD Guidance and Counseling, school B).' From my observation, I came across a quote embedded on one of the trees in the compound which read: 'TELLING HALF TRUTH IS LIKE TELLING A WHOLE LIE.' Implying the seriousness school B had given to the issue of giving false information. Additionally, an interview with DP2 at school B on the nature of conflicts revealed that sometimes

121

conflicts arose out of a misunderstanding which is referred to in this study as data-based conflict. The DP2 had this to say:

> …conflict was between a Teacher and an HOD… this teacher felt like the male HOD was kind of harassing her to an extent…the two teachers could not talk to one another(sic)...I wanted to know whether there was something more than just handing in her schemes of work late…After some small investigation, it was noted that the female teacher just overreacted…the HoD was very remorseful and because that was not the intention…the cause of conflict was that…the way you talked to me was not good…(Deputy Principal, School B).

The implication from the foregoing is parallel to Moore(2003) that conflicts based on data usually arises out of distortion of information or the way in which data has been interpreted. Therefore, when the women principals talk about the nature of workplace conflicts that are related to misunderstanding they are probably referring to data-based conflict.

4.2.4. Social-based Conflict

In another interview it became apparent that other than data-based conflicts there were other types of conflict - which the participants in this study refer to as emerging issues. Teacher and administration conflict arising out of missing classes due to heavy drinking was one of the social-based conflict referred to as emerging issues by the participants in this study. Naomi recounted:

> I was dealing with a teacher… was a drunkard…the wife comes on board…says Madam, my husband doesn't even come home… not even performing sexually… and then you are wondering now what do I do? How do I start? I studied the life of that teacher…(Principal School B).

Following this discussion I corroborated Naomi's interview with the minutes taken in resolving the issue as well as the logbook where she had recorded the incident. The corroboration was to confirm that what she had said was indeed what had taken place(see Appendix F3). For the purpose of further triangulation I held an informal discussion with GC 2 who concurred that:

"…the principal kept on talking to the wife and also kept on talking to the teacher severally…she even brought pastor … even when the pastor could come to the house the teacher would disappear through the window but at the end of the day we thank God he was saved (HoD Guidance and Counseling, school B."

In another discussion the participants cited other forms of social-based conflict. For instance there was one that contributed to a fight between two support staff to the extent that "one wanted to stab the other one in the kitchen using a knife… and one of them had to appear before the BOM (Deputy Principal, school C)." The problem according to SNR 3 was concerning devil worshiping which had become rampant among the students and was spilling over to non-teaching staff. From the foregoing it seemed that social-based conflict was of concern to most of the participants in this study. One of the participants mentioned:

In some cases like Spiritual conflict e.g. Secret societies in the school or rather devil worship, I call the parents or guardian to explain to them whatever is going on to find a possible solution…other times I talk to the BoM in order to seek a better way of solving the conflicts but I still don't find answers...I just turn to God (Principal, school B).

Social-based conflict is parallel to Bradshaw (2008) who categorizes social problems as one of the domains in structural conflict that causes dysfunctional conflicts.

4.3. The Nature of Communication Strategies in Schools Headed by Women Principals

The study sought to find out how conflicts are discovered in the various school visited by analyzing the nature of communication strategies of various groups of people in the event of conflict. Findings indicate that conflicts reveal themselves through various forms of communication such as counselling, aggression, dialogue as well monologue. These forms of communication shall be discussed as sub-themes in the next section.

4.3.1 Counselling-based Communication

Findings reveal that one way through which conflict was identified and communicated was through counselling. This was revealed in one of the interviews with Jessica. The school leader indicated that the practice of open door policy is one way identifying conflict when she said:

> Sometimes alcohol is good… it can make you say things… this worker who had closed the water valve drunk(sic) alcohol and started confessing how he has managed to make the principal suffer and a fellow worker heard him say and came to report what he heard at the bar (Principal, school A).

This was similar to some views that the prefects had during a focus group discussion. According to one of the participants, "Sometimes students plan bad things but if as a leader… if you are easy with them and you find time and tell stories you get to hear many things (FG 1, school A, participant5)." In another discussion GC 1 mentioned that during guidance and counseling sessions, "students just confess how they feel and the steps they intend to take and we guide them (HoD guidance and counseling, school A)."The GC1 sentiments corroborated well with a written confession of one of the students (see Appendix G).

Counselling communication is parallel to Bickmore (1997:14) that developing a culture of peace and democracy in the school environment needs a more open approach in communicating conflicts where individual voices are heard and people's concerns are valued. However, there is need for programmed processes and strategies for managing conflicts but "not when people are hurt and angry… but in the every-day process of learning and living in a school community" (ibid.). Implying that there is need for an organisation to institute processes that are systematic and sustainable rather than reacting to conflicts as they arise.

4.3.2. Aggression- based Communication

In another interview it was discovered that sometimes conflict is revealed through verbal as well as physical aggression. This became apparent when one of the participants explained that they had no idea of the existence of conflict until students went on rampage because of government directives on time management. This is a view that was supported by another participant that some school conflicts were hidden and could only be realized the moment they erupted. For instance when one of the participants mentioned that:

> We were also trying to adjust when students started throwing stones shouting and screaming at the top of their voices while saying… "this is not day school… we are in a boarding school and just have to continue the whey we were…this people are planning to fail us"… and that was their understanding (Senior Teacher, school A).

Further discussions revealed that verbal aggression was not a one of thing but would erupt from time to time when one of the prefects said, "some students are rude and use abusive language whenever there is a disagreement (FG 1 School A, participant 4)."In another interview with the principal, Jessica confirmed that sometimes conflicts are identified through aggression when she said:

> There was this child who was caught cheating in exams when KSCE was almost approaching, so I summoned her parents and she came with her dad. The dad started defending the daughter in my face that no one can make it without stealing and he shouted and abused me while telling me that I am just a woman who cannot speak to a Maasai man and he threatened me with a sword (Principal, school A).

The sentiments of the principal were corroborated with the minutes taken during a BOM meeting in which the said parent was summoned to settle the dispute (see Appendix F1). The views of the principal and the prefects were not different from DPI when she mentioned that "some teachers can be very rude and can even abuse you

125

verbally if you differ with them concerning their roles" (Deputy Principal, school A).

Therefore, it can be concluded that frequent interpersonal conflicts like witnessed in school A is an indication of ineffective communication strategies in conflict management. Thus, the principal at school A would benefit more from what Keltner (1987: in Grunig & Grunig, 1992) calls "managing struggles by rules (p.6)."

Based on discussions with the participants in this study, findings reveal the use of aggression to communicate conflict management when GC4 said:

> I just got information that when some teachers tried to get in after they received information that their services had been terminated they were beaten up by the watch men and even tore up a female teachers dress who reported the matter to the police and they were arrested (HoD guidance and counseling, school D)

Following this discussion, I sought audience with the principal but she was unwilling to discuss the matter and instead shifted to another discussion. Hence, the researcher felt that her unwillingness to shed light on the matter indicated that she was hiding something. However, further discussions with the other participants confirmed the use of aggression to manage conflicts. The use of aggression is similar to Mullins (2010) view that if conflict is viewed as bad for the organization, any attempt of conflict is suppressed and punished before it erupts like it happened in school D. Nhema and Zeleza (2008) explain that lack of democracy in an institution where participation in decision making has little or no involvement of the stakeholders with regard to economic, social and political realms creates tension between the master and the subjects. Contrary to the occurrence in school D, Nhema and Zeleza advices that an organization should recognize civil rights, freedom of speech and basic human needs according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Furthermore, there is need for other avenues other than violence where people are able to express how they feel towards one another.

Thus, the tension between them is lessened and discouraged from building up. Hence, probably if the school leader gave room for dialogue and participation in decision making some conflicts would have been managed effectively.

While conducting interviews with various participants in this study it emerged that Nicole used a one -way technique to resolve conflicts. This became evident during a focus group discussion, in which one of the participants mentioned that, "it was said that the principal had asked the watchmen to place a notice at the gate instructing some teachers not to gain entry into the school compound." Hence, in another interview, DP 4 mentioned that:

> BoM teachers who had received notice of termination of service wanted to receive their letters in person but were stopped by the watch men at the gate and one teacher was even assaulted when she resisted who ended up reporting the matter to the police…So after a lot of deliberations, she was told to withdraw the case from the police and she was compensated financially together with the other teachers for being terminated without notice (Deputy Principal, school D).

While SNR4 remarked:

> The watchmen only acted under the principal's instruction even if other teachers blamed them…I say this because after all the boss is the legitimate gatekeeper and the one that authorizes entry. But I think the watchmen went over board by assaulting the teachers (Senior Teacher, School D).

When asked if the BoM intervene when such matters arise one participant reiterated:

> Most members of the Board of Management do not play their roles because some don't have proper education while some are controlled by the principal because most principals in public schools in Kenya influence their selection so they cannot defend any teacher except those recommended by the principal(Senior Teacher, school A).

I wanted to know the ultimate result of the aforesaid communication practice when another participant concluded:

> those BoM teachers were compensated…some say one month in lieu… only after they recorded statements of assault at the police station otherwise they would not have received compensation because even the other teachers she had been sending away were not compensated(Guidance and Counseling, school D).

The interviews with various participants which were corroborated with documents used in conflict management reveal that Nicole use competition as a way of communicating conflict management. Competing technique involves the use of coercion to attain a goal (Bickmore, 1997).Competing style is a closed system of communication in which success is measured by the number of times information is passed rather than the outcome of communication since the purpose according to Grunig and Grunig (1992) is to disseminate information. Hence, feedback is rarely sought while decisions are made for and not with the recipients because the purpose of information is to receive and realize changes in an organization (Cutlip, et.al 2000).

4.3.3 Dialogue- based Communication

Another informal discussion with some of the participants reveals that apart from counselling and aggression, conflict is also communicated through dialogue when she recounted:

> There was one of the teachers who was not teaching a class well and so we held a meeting with one of the classes and students mentioned then we held parents consultative meeting to discuss this matter and then the teacher… She was elderly and I overheard that she was rude, so I called the deputy and the senior teacher to be at the meeting so that she can be rude to all of us. It was so bad that we took the matter forward (Principal school A).

For the purpose of corroboration, a look at the minutes taken during the meeting mentioned by Jessica confirmed that some conflicts were communicated through dialogue (see Appendix F2). The discussions were further triangulated through focused group discussion with the prefects to find out how the students of school A communicated their concerns to the administration. One of the participants mentioned that:

128

> … we have a baraza (sic) in which we sit down as the prefect council every Saturday and discuss our problems...Sometimes we make a forum where we the students talk about our issues and the teachers are not allowed to be there, so we do it alone and someone writes down the minutes then take to the principal. The meetings are held once every term (FG 1, School A, participant 3).

This is not different from one of the participants in school B who said that, "students have their own kamkunji (sic) where they discuss their own issues and report to the administration (HoD Guidance and Counseling, school B)."

In another discussion with SNR 1 he mentioned:

> We have regular meetings with the principal, we brief on the daily occurrence and in these meetings the heads of department are members and so we brief the principal and other school leaders on the daily occurrences so sometimes disagreements are revealed in this kind of meetings like we feel aggrieved about this and that and areas that need to be seriously worked on.

Dialogue communication during conflict management is congruent to Cloke and Goldsmith's (2011) view that an organizational leader should view the presence of conflict as an opportunity to learn. Furthermore, organizational leaders should desist from playing safe by not holding dialogue to resolve misunderstandings. Additionally, leaders who view conflict as unnecessary tend to move against dissent voices because of the fear of divergent opinions or because of fulfilling the desire to oppose and suppress voices in order to serve their own interests. Instead, the author is of the opinion that, leaders should learn to take risks in conflict management by engaging dialogue, listening to dissent voices in order to learn and celebrate diversity with the desire to address a need or concern. Hence, allowing face to face meetings with the view to discuss concerns as done in some of the schools visited could be the basis of identifying conflict cultures, taking conflict audits and mediating conflict before it becomes dysfunctional.

In another interview with the Principal at school C, findings revealed that most of the conflicts were noted during formal and informal meetings. According to Jackline, there

was need for several meetings with stakeholders as the school was just starting. Hence, there was need for economic as well as social support from all stakeholders. During this interview the principal explained:

> with a lot of meetings and sometimes inviting the pastor to hold prayer meetings in the school and also holding private talks with them I managed to obtain some resources but this was not without conflict because during the second meeting with the representative of the MP, we disagreed because of the demands they were putting forward (Principal, School C).

For the purpose of triangulation, a discussion with DP 3 confirmed that dialogue was a major source of conflict because the stakeholders seemed to disagree on many issues with regard to school development. The GC 3 commented, "I think the principal's values contradict that of other stakeholders because some demands are not ethical if you asked me so those meetings don't bear much fruit." From the foregoing it can be concluded that communicating effectively as done by Jackline is not only seen as insightful "realm of understanding" but also as the reason for "shared meaning" as well as shared leadership which enabled the stakeholders in school C to eventually corporate with Jackline in order to develop the school ((Manion, 1998: 58).

4.3.4 Monologue-based Communication

Findings also revealed that apart from dialogue, conflicts were also communicated through monologue-based communication in form of anonymous letters. This was evident when of the participants mentioned:

> A young teacher got into a relationship with students and we received complaints from students and we picked such kind of information from the suggestion box… and also received some information from beneath our doors. And so we came to know that there was a problem (Senior Teacher school A).

Through informal discussions with the principal at school A it was revealed that having received numerous anonymous letters from the students regarding the matter as mentioned, she decided to follow up by holding private conversations with the students.

This discussion prompted the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding by talking to the prefects through a focused group discussions. It then emerged that:

> …yes, he used to do it and he could call girls privately and pretended to be assisting them with Maths and some students were not comfortable with this teacher's advances and so we received complaints during our student baraza (sic) and informed the office using anonymous letters(FG1, participant 4, school A).

Findings also indicate that school D utilised informal means of communication such as anonymous letters when formal communication was not possible as it is not expected that conflicts arising from intimate relationships would be communicated formally. As a form of behaviour, conflicts can be revealed in many ways. Adhiambo and Samatwa (2011) agree while adding that causes of conflicts in Kenyan schools range from academic performance, difference in views, negative attitudes or disciplining of students, intimate relationship between teachers and administrators; between teachers and students. However, school leaders should not depend on one way of communication as the nature of conflicts vary. Hence, there is need for organisational leaders to house varied and sustainable workplace conflict communication that will assist in understanding people's beliefs, attitudes and perceptions as this will influence successful interactions (Olubunmi, 2014).

Findings reveal that some conflicts revealed themselves through formal complaints and written confessions. This was evident in the documents analyzed (see appendix) which corroborated well with the interviews conducted. SNR 2 for instance recounted an experience when she said that "there is a time the principal felt that she was being undermined by the teachers. So she wrote to the County Director's office to complain about the matter." Furthermore, during a focus group discussion, it also emerged that students logged their formal complaints and presented to the principal through the

131

student council when one of the participants mentioned that "normally, we hold student kamukunji and then jot down complaints and take to the principal."

During an interview with DP 2 it emerged that sometimes conflict revealed itself in silence when he said:

> …non-verbal cues could speak volumes for example conflict came up… between a Teacher and an HOD. So this teacher felt like… was kind of harassing her. The HOD was a male teacher and the other was a female teacher, this went to an extent of which these two teachers could not talk to one another. So it the one who felt offended ended up not talking to the said teacher (Deputy Principal, school B).

GC 2 supported this when she mentioned:

> …there was conflict between two classes that were not getting along…then there is a sometime they planned a very bad thing. The other class had to come up and say what they were planning. But when the class was called they refused to talk. It is like there was some sort of covenant. So the whole class was sent home (HoD Guidance and Counseling, School B)

In an informal discussion the principal reiterated that while conflicts in school B revealed themselves in various ways 'there is something said in silence.' In my view as the researcher it seemed that Naomi told me what she thought I wanted to hear especially when she said, "in my opinion, a leader should learn to listen to what is not being said…what is not mentioned…the silence in school…the people who are not talking and you will smell that trouble is brooding (Principal school B). Hence, I corroborated Naomi's sentiments with GC2 and realized that contrary to what she had mentioned findings revealed that:

> …there was a time when the principal was new… she came with her rules. She wanted a sudden change from the one that was running and bringing a new one. And so it went to an extent where teachers were now not going to class…remained in the staffroom and were not talking to the administration and the principal was not bothered (Senior Teacher, School B).

Further DP 2 mentioned that "in that incident an arbitrator had to come from the TSC County director's office to settle the matter and that is when teachers went back to work." Silence-based communication can also be referred to as avoidance technique in conflict management. It can as well be referred to as passive-aggressive behavior because the aggrieved person communicates their negative feelings through non-verbal behaviour of either not completing the task or choosing to remain silent (Spaho, 2013). The author further contends that mostly, avoidance leads to both parties losing. However, avoidance may be used when the conflict does not involve high stakes and with low personal involvement. Hence, when the participants talk about non - verbal behaviour to communicate conflict, such as anonymous letters or silence, they are probably referring to monologue-based communication.

Based on discussions with various participants in this study it became apparent that monologue was a common form of communication in school D. For instance some participants mentioned the use of notices as a form of communication. The use of notices in conflict is manipulative as it is used to influence those in conflict to serve the interest of an organizational leader at the expense of their own interests (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). For instance, one of the participants mentioned:

> … because the principal had gone against the exam regulations to allow teachers in school during national examination period but you see… the boss faked a notice which from face value looked like the teachers were the ones on the wrong while indeed she is the one who had done contrary to national examination regulations (HoD guidance and counseling school D).

Another participant added that:

> because the principal managed to convince the authorities through fraudulent notice, finally the teachers who were working under the TSC were transferred against their wish while those under BoM lost their jobs because she had recommended for their dismissal through the Board of Management(Senior Teacher, D).

133

From the foregoing it can be concluded that some women principals used closed channels of communication [referred to in this study as monologue] to resolve conflicts. Spaho (2013) refers to the use of monologue-based communication as a one-way closed system of communication. The author's view is that an organization that relies solely on one-way closed system of communication fails to capture the views of their members as most of the ideals are imposed and does not give room for dialogue. Furthermore, closed system of communication that is majorly top down is regarded as "hindering structures," which sees disagreements as a threat to the organization, hence, consensus is forced and in most cases mistrust, control, rewards and punishments are ways in the institutional goals are achieved (Hoy & Miskel, 2007:110).

Furthermore, high levels of interpersonal conflicts as witnessed in schools visited is an indication that the schools lack effective communication practices as most of the women principals tended to be reactive in managing conflicts (Cloke and Goldsmith, 2011). The explanation according to Banks (2000) is that proactive leaders who are sensitive to the environment will identify and manage conflicts before they become dysfunctional. Moreover, whenever there is weak communication in an organization, there is bound to be uncertainty among employees on their role expectations hence, conflict is expected. Additionally, insufficient communication between superiors and their subordinates where employees' voices are suppressed, their needs neglected and are minimally informed is bound to create conflicts like it happened in some of the schools visited (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011; Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Hence, the organizational leaders in this study would have benefited more if they managed internal disagreements by instituting continuous, open and consistent channels of communication.

4.3.5. Grapevine-based Communication

Based on informal discussions, it became apparent that grapevine formed part of the means through which conflicts were revealed in some schools visited. For instance, one of the participants recounted:

> Students went on strike because there was a rumour going round the school that a student had been killed because the school delayed to take him to hospital but the student had died at home…I visited the parent and Mama (sic) told us how she was fed with the information about the death of her child… was able to say that Madam all those things you are hearing are not true (principal school B).

Additionally GC 2 confirmed what the principal at school B had said about grapevine when she mentioned:

> …from where I am sitting as a counselor, I handle a lot of disagreements arising from gossip and rumours among students which they love very much… they do not bother to find out the truth before they react (HoD Guidance and Counseling, school B).

One of the prefects confirmed this when she mentioned, "When some of us have fought and gone through a lot of pain we later realize that whatever caused the fight was based on an idle talk that is untrue (FG2 School B, participant 5." From data obtained from these interviews it can be established that disjointed information or rumours has negative effects such as anxiety, stress and dysfunctional behaviours like it happened in school B where students went on strike based on rumours (Makibi, 2010). Additionally, the author contend that gossip can be detrimental when some members of an organization decide to spread untrue stories about their colleagues which are either work related or non-work related. This is a view that is supported by Kurland and Pelled (2000) when they say that gossip can have a negative effect when some members of an organization informally discusses and evaluates issues concerning other members' work or personal lives in their absence.

While on another interview with DP2 seemed to have a different view regarding grapevine when he illustrated:

> Like in a certain case of some planned strike in the school that was leaked to the teachers…it forced us to give the school a half term and students went home then come(sic) back with their parents to sort out the problem (Deputy Principal, school B).

Based on the aforesaid it seemed that grapevine did not only have a negative effect in the schools visited but it also had a positive outcome. This is because from the findings in this study it became apparent that Naomi was able to make clarity on what caused the death of one of the students after being told of the untrue version that made students to go on strike. Additionally, a talk with the prefects indicates that another planned strike was aborted because it was leaked to the teachers before it happened. Implying that school leaders should put their ears on the ground and listen to what is being said. This is congruent to Okumbe's (2007) view that grapevine may not be a bad thing in an organization because it supplements informal communication and help make sense of disjointed information like it happened in school B. Thus, when the participants in school B talk about gossip and rumour they are probably referring to the positive and negative influence of grapevine in the school while recognizing that it is also another way of communicating conflict in school B.

During a discussion with Nicole it seemed that the principal's way of identifying conflicts was majorly through grapevine when she said: "I usually learn about disagreements through private meetings with some teachers and some students and this has worked very well." This is a view that was confirmed by DP 4 who mentioned that since Naomi came to school D they usually hold a staff meeting once a term and the agenda is driven by the principal. This was corroborated with the some of the minutes taken during staff meetings where it became apparent that most of the speeches was

given by the principal as the most sections begun with the word "the principal said that

…" (see Appendix F5).

The discussion with the school leaders prompted the researcher to conduct further interviews with the GC 4 who mentioned:

> In a school like ours we have many people working together and so there is bound to be division Like in this school most conflicts are caused by groupings and gossip found within the School, the teachers are divided one camp is for the administration which give information and another one is against the administration (HoD guidance and counseling School D).

Further discussion with the SNR 4 indicated that teachers rarely contribute in staff meetings for fear of victimization and this has contributed to informal ways of communication such as gossip and speculations. Further findings reveal that groupings of teachers like in school D often encourage gossip and rumours which end up dividing the staff. This is because the teachers in this school tended to form circles around camps to which they belonged to-for the administration inside the circle while against the administration were found outside the circle.

Thus, the teachers in this school were isolated from one another inform of groups which negatively impacted on communication within the school because it gave room to rumours and speculation. Rahim (2002) agrees adding that whenever groups or individuals have divergent opinions, beliefs or goals there is bound to be conflicts. Furthermore, relying on informal communication as is the case at school D implies that employees depend on inconsistent or sometimes in accurate information (Cole and Kelly, 2011). This is not different from Okumbe's (2007) notion that grapevine is one of the informal communication channels in the workplace which members use in understanding the disjointed information and help in reducing anxiety. The author continues to argue that grapevine is especially used where official channels of communication are closed and there are no alternative ways of communication. The

explanation is that incompatibility or dissonance is evident in relationships especially when people have preferences regarding their shared action; or even when they have different attitudes, values, beliefs and skills (Putman & Poole, 1987; Dubrin, 1994; Achinstein, 2002; Rahim, 2002; Jehn and Bendersky, 2003).

It can be concluded that probably teachers in D have resorted to grapevine because they are denied the opportunity to express their feeling and desires in a formal manner. Furthermore, the groupings in school D have contributed to grapevine because the camp outside the circle depended on gossip and rumour to receive information from the camp inside the circle and vice versa. Still, it can also be concluded that teachers in school D appeared to be reluctant to express themselves formally, for instance in a staff meeting, for fear of being transferred or sacked hence used grapevine as a means of communication.

4.4 Communication Strategies as Utilized by Women Principals

Findings also reveal that the women leaders who were participants in this study had devised unique ways of utilizing the communication strategies mentioned in 4.3 above to manage workplace conflicts. The techniques will be discussed as sub-themes in the ensuing sub-sections.

4.4.1. Coaching Technique

Based on discussions held with various participants in this study, it emerged that coaching approach through dialogue and modeling of behaviour was one of the ways of utilizing communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts. The premise, according to one of the school leaders interviewed was that:

> Where people live together and interact, there is bound to be divergent opinions... the perfect way of solving conflict in my opinion might be sit them together and to learn to listen to both parties... Many times I don't do

it alone, I find another person so that the person can also see that the problem has been seen by another person…so together we see on a possible way to solve the issue without creating enmity between them (Principal, School A).

While on a focus group discussion with some of the prefects at school A, one of participant said:

Our principal has always told us that whenever there is a disagreement we must learn to sit the students together and discuss so on my side I try and explain to them what responsibility means, I tell them that they must learn to accept other people's opinion and to learn to listen… and learning entails many things even outside class (, FG 1, participant 6, School A).

Based on Jessica's sentiments, the implication is that probably the reason for face to face meetings as conducted in school A was to enable the conflicting parties to share their concerns with a view to solving the problem. Grunig and Grunig(1992) calls this a two-way symmetrical model where dialogue is embraced to enable the conflicting parties exchange information. Further, in this study the school leader made informed decisions based on her experience as well as her studies on personality when she mentioned:

… what teaches best is experience. There is also that personal character, knowing how to work with people, and then learning about people as they learn from you… you as a person must really be able to learn your people, to know what kind of people they are and their character and then to know how to talk to them and mentor correct behaviour. There is also reading, I like to read books about personality and in fact I am reading one about mentorship skills and it is about personality (Principal, school A).

While in a discussion with SNR 1, he concurred that the principal had mentored them in managing conflicts through dialogue and this was based on how she herself handled conflicts. Baxter (2012) has referred to coaching approach as the use of soft power. The author explains that the role of the leader is to discover a unifying factor among the competing values. Approaching conflicts through coaching discourages competition in conflict management while encouraging meaningful interactions. The idea is that

coaching facilitates the need to compromise and collaborate in order to resolve conflicts because communication facilitates "…the discovery of united-yet-competing values" and the unearthing of a connection between conflicting parties (Broom and Collier, 2012: 245).

Following discussions held with various participants in this study it also became apparent that dialogue was another form of strategy utilized to manage workplace conflicts during conflicts. The purpose of dialogue, and as Grunig and Grunig (1992) say, was to exchange information with those in conflict in order to reach an agreement. Furthermore, dialogue was conducted with an informed decision based on the school leaders' ethical values as well as the requirement of public procurement act as witnessed in school C. Jackline vividly explained that:

> When the political class approached us and promised that they would do everything and at the end of it give us the key, I believed them…however, shortly, they started bringing in the materials and started putting up a foundation with mad which we did not agree with and even requesting for a 700,000 cheque which I did not do so the political class incited the villagers against me…who now saw me as an enemy to development but you see there was no way I was going to sign a cheque without participating in the construction and also for accountability and there was no way mad would be used. I stood firm but ended up with conflict (Principal, school A)

With this background I sought clarification from DP 3 who mentioned that the initial meetings held did not yield much because there were disagreements based on the materials to be used for constructing the laboratory. While in a discussion with the SNR 3 she added that through dialogue and with the intervention of the pastor and sponsors of the school, the community stopped interfering with school matters and was asked to give the principal a chance to negotiate with the political class on her own. From this discussion it is evident that Jackline's aim of communication was to coach the political class and the community on ethical leadership. However I also sought further

clarification on the reasons for her decisions as well as that of the political class when she mentioned:

> I could say it is about disunity on core values and also lack of harmony from both parties that caused the conflict because they simply saw me as woman and not the principal. The MP thought a woman would be easy to manipulate. Well I used the core values that govern me (Principal, school C).

According to the GC 3 interviewed, her take was that:

> the principal did the right thing because if she had yielded to the political class'demand the school would have remained at the mercy of politicians and they would manipulate and blackmail the principal to serve their interests any time they felt like(Guidance and Counseling, school C)

From these discussions, it can be concluded that Jackline's way of communication in conflict management facilitated mutual trust and understanding. This made it possible for shared values and aspirations through integrative communication as well as dialogue.

Another interview with Jackline indicated that her communication practice took nurturing approach and this she did through meetings as mentioned previously. The purpose, as Grunig and Grunig (1992) say, was to influence those in conflict to take a stand that seemed beneficial to those in conflict as well as that of the organization. A case in point was when she managed a social conflict between a teacher and his spouse which was interfering with the accomplishment of school goals. Jackline recounted:

> … I had this male teacher who was as a drunkard. I had met him before as a colleague in another school… was not a drunkard … was always smartly dressed in a suit…however this time he had been posted in this school having been rejected in other schools because of his drunkenness.

Based on a discussion with the DP 3, he confirmed that drunkenness was another source of conflict when he mentioned that "the teacher began to miss classes and students and the community were up in arms for his transfer".

In another interview Jackline revealed her ways of utilizing communication strategies to manage aforementioned conflict when she said:

> I first talked to him and told him that I had always known him to be a very responsible and neat person. I shared with him a lot then he opened up and told me the problem of his heavy drinking started with his wife. So I brought the wife onboard and talked to her. I decided to give her some tender for bringing milk to school…so we became friends. She became cooperative even at home and the drinking of the teacher started slowly to go down then he became committed and the problem was less…now hes a very good teacher.

Further discussion with the principal revealed that her experience as a widow informed her decision to manage conflicts the way she did when she said:

> I looked at him and saw beyond him…his family… his wife and children would continue to suffer…again My being a widow also makes me very patient…I know what it means to lack when you are the only breadwinner with no support so I told the teachers wife all that and she understood (Principal, school C).

In another discussion I wanted to know if her being female influenced her decisions as a woman leader when she said:

> Well as I have said I used my Christian values I use my core values but also relying on the BOM policy and my woman instinct. This school is like my home and I am like their mother and the judgment I make I do it like a mother. This is because I want to facilitate peace between both parties and enhancing good relation and harmony between the community and the school, teachers and students and even between teachers and teachers.

The aforementioned is constant to Netshitangani and Msila's (2016) view that some women leaders tend to draw from their domestic experiences and roles as mothers while involving personal feelings to solve workplace disagreements. Netshitangani's (2014) study on socialization and communication of women school managers confirms that mostly women leaders tend to view workplaces like school as their homes- similar to the views of the principal at school C. While other studies contend what I refer to in this study as the 'nurturing technique' as a weakness in leadership with a view that women

142

leaders should desist from it, in this study, the 'mothering technique' was a unique value that assisted the woman leader to manage workplace conflicts. This is a view that is supported by Grunig & Grunig's (1992).

4.4.2. Counseling Technique

Another interview with Jessica indicated that her communication practice took a counseling approach and this she did through meetings as aforesaid. The purpose, as Grunig and Grunig (1992) say, was to influence those in conflict to see things differently, concede and change behaviour that would be beneficial to the individual as well as the organization. This was evident while in an interview when she recounted:

> I had the power to dismiss the worker who had closed the valves and made the whole school suffer but I had a look at this man, he has three wives and the last(sic) wife is still very young and several kids. So I saw the need not to send him away because of those facts. I just advised him in a friendly manner to reflect on his family before he does anything. He eventually apologized

The aforesaid provoked the researcher to make clarifications as to what prompted the principal to reconsider dismissing the non-teacher staff when she mentioned:

> Even when there is professionalism… remember that you are working with human beings who have attitude but now when this attitude hurts them as an employer there is a way you should rise above that and see how you can bring this person over to see differently because this person is not seeing beyond you like there is a family and a child to defend so only gets rid of such a person when it only becomes impossible…there is management and also counseling…

A talk with DP 1 reveals that counseling is a form of communication practice during conflict when she mentioned that:

> For example maybe disagreements arise coz(sic) teachers not coming to the assembly, some are not reporting to work in good time and some are not meeting deadlines for their own reasons. In these cases the principal and her team talks to teachers at individual levels, so they are called and we sit down as teachers and share at individual level and sometimes as a staff (Senior Teacher, School A).

In another interview with Naomi it became apparent that her communication practice depended on a conflicting situation hence other than her masculine approach, she also applied femininity for the purpose, as Grunig and Grunig (1992) say, was to influence those in conflict to change their attitude in a manner that would benefit those in conflict as well as that of the organization. Her feminine qualities of mothering were evident in her actions. For instance when recounted

> I decided to help the teacher who was a drunkard…I could go looking for him where he is (sic) drinking…sometimes he disappears for even a month. I could go and pick the teacher from the drinking place myself. I go with other male teachers and security men in the vehicle in case anything happens then there is a time I took him in for two days, he had stolen something from the school…It took time almost a year…at the end of the day and I thank God that today the teacher is saved and has stopped drinking (Principal, school B).

In another interview with DP2 findings reveal that while at other times the principal portrayed masculine qualities, it also became apparent that at other times she embraced her feminine characteristics of being empathetic counsellor and nurturing. This explains her reason to want to help the teacher at school B to overcome drunkenness. As home makers and caregivers, some scholars contend that women pose such attributes like nurturing, caring, being sensitive, empathetic counsellors and cooperative which makes women effective transformational leaders Morojele Chikoko and Ngcobo, 2013). Hence, as the authors have advised, women principals should desist from copying male dictatorship and continue with positive attributes of being collaborative, understanding and emotionally connected in order to achieve organizational goals. Furthermore, as it is the contention in this study, women should embrace the view that men and women possess unique communication styles especially when faced with difficult conversations and tensions.

According to Cloke and Goldsmith (2011), counselling is an effective communication tool in conflict management especially where those involved in interpersonal conflicts are affected in terms of their work and productivity. Furthermore, counselling is an effective communication strategy in conflict management because it allows those in conflict to understand the issues at hand and objectively develop different viewpoints regarding the issue at hand like it was witnessed in school A (Exforsys, 2009).

4.4.3. Collaborating Technique

Based on discussion held with various participants in this study, it emerged that Jackline embraced collaboration through meetings as mentioned previously. The purpose, as Grunig and Grunig (1992) say, was to influence those in conflict to agree on a give and take scenario that seemed beneficial to those in conflict as well as that of the organization. A case in point was when Jackline said:

> …Where people live together and interact, there is bound to be divergent opinions. So the perfect way of solving conflicts … might be to learn to listen to both parties and see on a possible way to solve the issue without creating enmity between them let them learn to give and also take.

A discussion with SNR reveals that, "When we had disagreement with students on time as per government directives we had to invite a mediator…so the education officers came here and explained to them, the BoM were involved, parents associations were equally involved…"

According to DP 1 the reason why the problem was revolved due to dialogue because:

> … we had to have a common understanding…for example the students understood that we allowed them that anyone who is(sic) willing to extend can do that, if you are willing to wake up at the time that you want then you are free to do that….so as we speak students are waking up around five or four thirty and sometimes we come to teach them (Deputy Principal, school A).

Krauss and Morsella (2015) contend that collaborating through dialogue is a powerful communication tool in the management of conflicts because it allows one to gather information before making a decision that is mutually beneficial in addressing the concerns of conflicting parties. Isenhart and Spangle (2000) further agree that in collaboration there is high degree of concern for self and others with a view to establishing a working relationship. Hence, the end of conflict signifies satisfied members of an organization with a sustainable problem solving approach. Viewed as the best strategy, collaboration requires that feelings, beliefs and ideas are openly and honestly discussed with an active listening or apathy listening as employed by Jessica (Hannon, 1999). However, strategies or styles employed in communicating conflict management will very much depend on situations. Hence, it is not expected that organizational leaders will employ the same style in every situation.

The researcher sought to explore Jackline's communication practice in managing structural conflict aforementioned. Following another interview with Jackline, it became apparent that by comprising Jackline's purposed to collaborate with the political class to fulfill the goal of constructing a laboratory for the school. According to Grunig and Grunig (1992) compromising and collaborating aims at exchanging ideas to benefit the two conflicting parties where no party is a loser. This was evident in the way she handled the issue with the community and the political class when she said:

> …after realizing that things were becoming worse I chose to go together with the board and took a step and apologized to the MP who later on this year forwarded the name of the school and we were able to be given 1 million for the school. It all ended with apology which solved all the problem and conflict.

In another interview, SNR 3 confirmed the aforesaid when she mentioned that after sometime the differences were settled and the school received a grant to complete the project. This was congruent to the minutes analyzed which indicated how the school

was to use the grant they had received to put a laboratory (see Appendix F 4). While on observation the researcher noticed that a foundation had already been laid and there was construction going on.

I sought audience with the deputy principal regarding some decisions that were made regarding conflicts experience is the school. According to DP3:

> I think she kind of treat circumstances with humility and even sometimes bending low to avoid problems and issues…Like in the case where she had to go together with the board and staff and talk then come to one solution together with the area MP which even I tend to think as a male principals I would not go that direction. So she treats some situations with a lot of humility and understanding (Deputy Principal, school C).

Jackline's compromising technique is similar to Grunig' two-way symmetrical theory where the application of accommodating the political class and compromising her pride was an important technique especially where the school leader needed to negotiate and mediate with the political class at school C for the school laboratory to be constructed (Grunig and Grunig, 1992). The idea behind collaboration is that all parties are committed to spend their resources such as time and energy in solving the problem at hand (Conrad, 1985: 243). Collaboration is also based on the understanding that those in conflict must realize that completion is not among the options that they have. Thus, incompatibility can be negotiated by engaging in "a give and take interaction to reach a mutually acceptable solution (Wilson and Putman, 1990:375)."

4.4.4. Machiavellian Technique

Based on interviews with three participants in this study, findings indicate that some women principals utilized Machiavellian technique through notices, which were largely manipulative with a view to serving the school leader's interest. This was evident when one participant explained:

When the boss heard that the ministry official were on their way, and because she knew she had done something that was unlawful, she went and printed a notice and placed it on the notice board…in fact the officials were showed(sic) the notice board with the notice that read… 'TEACHERS SHOULD NOT BE IN THE SCHOOL COMPOUND DURING NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS' and this one she had cooked (sic) yet she is the one who asked the teachers to be present (HoD, guidance and counseling, school D).

In another interview, a talk with SNR 4 revealed that some school leaders utlised Machiavellian technique when she mentioned:

…. before the holidays began the BoM teachers received notice through a rumour that their services are no longer needed in the school and that their letters would be delivered to them. But there were some particular teachers who demanded to pick their letters but on arriving at the gate they got a notice that stated "NO ENTRY FOR BoM TEACHERS" (Senior Teacher, School D.

A discussion with the prefects during focus group discussion did not directly confirm if in deed there was such a notice as the students were reluctant to discuss the issue. However, one of them mentioned that there was a rumour that before the schools closed there was a notice stopping some teachers from entering the gate. Another participant mentioned that "it seemed the teachers were transferred to other schools against their will but they still wanted to continue teaching us." It is from these discussions that the researcher sought further clarifications concerning the use of notice at school D.

From the foregoing it can be concluded that the use of notices in school D served two purposes. First, it was to pass information that was false and manipulative to serve the school leaders' interest. Second, it was to stop the teachers employed by BoM from getting access to the school compound to seek audience and clarification on termination of service because probably allowing them would compel the school leader to pay the teachers their salary in lieu as per the regulations of termination of service.

This is similar to Grunig and Grunig's (1992) notion that when a public practitioner disseminates inaccurate information through monologue in order to persuade an

individual towards making certain decisions their communication behaviour will neither aim at giving accurate information nor seek feedback or even analyze why people behave the way they do through research. Instead, the major aim is to use a propagandist technique to persuade people's thoughts in a certain way that is beneficial to the organization at the expense of the employees like it happened in school D. Hence, when participants in school D recount the use of notice as a means of communication which caused various conflicts in the school, they are probably referring to Grunig's one-way Press Agency model of communication.

4.4.5. Mongrel Technique

While on an interview with Naomi, findings indicate that her communication practice took a convoluted approach where, depending on situations, she applied masculinity and at some point she embraced femininity - referred to in this study as a mothering technique. The school leader applied a mixed approach through formal and informal meeting with stakeholders in school B. The purpose, according to the school leader, was to influence those in conflict to take a stand that was beneficial to those in conflict as well as the school. Further, Naomi's application of both masculinity and femininity to manage conflicts was because according to the school leader, "conflicts do not have a pattern,'' hence ways of communication will be convoluted. The ensuing paragraphs will explain femininity and masculinity as sub-themes.

4.4.5.1. Masculine Technique

A discussion with Naomi reveals her courage to employ both feminine and masculine qualities to manage workplace conflicts as woman leader. Her masculine qualities became evident when she recounted:

> I live in a community where people still upholds their culture about women not making good leaders so I knew that was what was going on…after a short time I

reported I stood firm and I told them you are not looking at a woman, me I became a man long time ago and am not a woman you will see that I am a man…I told them there is nothing they can do and in fact I told them that me I walk with a small sword if you want to fight I can also fight(Principal, School B).

The aforementioned was confirmed by SNR 2 who said:

The moment she landed here things changed Even the boys who had issues with the female teachers were now looking at the principal differently… and you see when they started misbehaving the first time boys realized that the principal was firm on misconduct and would send them home to call their parents, they changed their attitude.(Senior teacher, school B).

The discussion prompted the researcher to explore further what propelled the principal to apply masculinity when she said:

I think it was for the first time that they were seeing a woman principal in an urban mixed school and were wondering why they had brought a woman and it was like people had given up…so I had to change people's perception and general view concerning gender issues. Some people and communities look at women in a different way and that's why we have to come out and solve possible conflicts as any other person could do (Principal, school B).

While on a focus group discussion with prefects, one of the participants mentioned:

…once you go there, she doesn't want to listen and will tell you many things and if ask, she will also ask you those many things are they negative to the performance or positive? If they are positive and accept them no matter how many they are but we are moving forward (FG2, participant 6, school B).

Research has shown that sometimes women leaders, just like the one in school B, experience stereotypical view that because women are submissive and emotional they are not fit for leadership (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012). Hence, for women to be viewed as competent like it happened to Naomi in school B, women leaders are forced to behave like men by being authoritarian and dictatorial (Morojele, Chikoko & Ngcobo, 2013). This is similar to studies conducted in this area that masculine individuals adopt a dominating style (Portello & Long, 1994; Brewer et al., 2002) Based on conventional standards, it has been observed that men tend to elicit physical aggression in conflicting situations and their aggression is passed as more adequate than that of women (Eagley

& Steffen, 1986; Brandt & Pierce, 2000). However, this was not the case with Naomi because her aggression was a result of the context and this explains the reason for Naomi to have categorically stated that she was a man and even behaved like one during conflict management.

4.4.5.2 Femininity Technique

In another interview with Naomi it became apparent that her communication practice depended on a conflicting situation hence other than her masculine approach, she also applied femininity. Her feminine qualities of mothering were evident in her actions. For instance when she recounted:

> I decided to help the teacher who was a drunkard…I could go looking for him where he is (sic) drinking…sometimes he disappears for even a month. I could go and pick the teacher from the drinking place myself. I go with other male teachers and security men in the vehicle in case anything happens then there is a time I took him in for two days, he had stolen something from the school…It took time almost a year…at the end of the day and I thank God that today the teacher is saved and has stopped drinking (Principal, school B).

In another interview with DP2 findings reveal that while at other times the principal portrayed masculine qualities, it also became apparent that at other times she embraced her feminine characteristics of being empathetic counsellor and nurturing. This explains her reason to want to help the teacher at school B to overcome drunkenness. According to Grunig and Grunig (1992) the purpose of this kind of communication is influence those in conflict to change their attitude in a manner that would benefit those in conflict as well as the organization. As home makers and caregivers, some scholars contend that women pose such attributes like nurturing, caring, being sensitive, empathetic counsellors and cooperative which makes women effective transformational leaders Morojele Chikoko and Ngcobo, 2013). Hence, women principals should desist from copying male dictatorship and continue with positive attributes of being collaborative,

understanding and emotionally connected in order to achieve organizational goals. Furthermore, as it is the contention in this study, women should embrace the view that men and women possess unique communication styles especially when faced with difficult conversations and tensions.

4.5. Challenges Faced by Women Principals and their Mitigation

This section presents the challenges experienced by women leaders and ways in which they are mitigated. Findings in this study revealed that although women leaders experienced various challenges depending on their school contexts, most of the challenges were similar with regard leadership and conflict management. The challenges as well as ways of mitigating them shall be discussed in the ensuing paragraphs while quoting the unique differences existent from various school contexts.

4.5.1 Inadequate Skills in Communication and Conflict Management

The interviews and focused group discussions conducted in the four schools were corroborated with the documents that the women school leaders used to communicate conflict management. Findings revealed that the major challenge that the women principals who were participants in this study faced was largely based on inadequate skills in communicating conflict management. This was based on the query as to whether the women principals had received training- in which the women principals' responded that they had not received any training on communication and conflict management. Further, the four women principals and their deputies responded that they had attended refresher courses on conflict management offered at Kenya Educational Management Institute.

However the participants felt that they had not gained enough skills from KEMI that would help them to manage conflicts. Jessica remarked, "I cannot say that the skills one

learns at KEMI will help you, what you need is experience." Nicole concurred adding that, "KEMI courses are not thoroughly conducted it is usually for a short period of time and when we go there all we do is write notes rarely do we find time to share best practices." Additionally Naomi said that, "what we learn at KEMI is very minimal." These sentiments were congruent with Jackline who further mentioned that some management courses were irrelevant and inadequate to real school situations. Based on the foregoing it was evident that even though the school leaders attended courses at KEMI they still felt unprepared to deal with conflicts.

The findings in this study is constant with other studies which have indicated that despite their critical roles, most school principals lack the necessary communication skills and are therefore ill prepared to manage workplace conflicts (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010; Msila, 2012; Wamocha, Nasongo & Igendi 2012; Kiprono, 2014). Furthermore, this study contends that even though the principals and their deputies attend refresher courses, the actual practice of those school leaders who participated in this study indicates inadequate skills in conflict management. Furthermore, findings in this study indicate the senior teachers, the Heads of department like guidance and counselling have not received any training on conflict and conflict management since only principals and their deputies attend KEMI courses.

4.5.1.1. Mitigating inadequate Communication Skills

There is need for school leaders to be adequately prepared and to be equipped with adequate skills in communication and conflict management through continuous professional development courses that are tailored made for school leaders' actual practices and needs. Thus, leadership preparation programmes as well as in-service courses like KEMI should improve their courses to include communication and conflict management. School leaders need to institute processes and strategies on

communication and conflict management that promote professional in-house learning where school leaders reflect and learn from actual practice through action research.

4.5.2 Insufficient Leadership Preparation

While in a discussion with the school leaders who were participants in this study, it emerged that none of the school leaders had received any professional development course or induction before assuming their roles as principals, deputies, and heads of departments or guidance and counseling teachers. Instead as one participant puts it, "you are told to go there and see what you can do." Following this sentiment the researcher sought further clarity on what "see what you can do meant" when the participant replied, "use your intuition to solve disagreements and manage the school." In another discussion with Jackline her comment was "we don't receive any preparation to be the principal or deputy or senior teacher or any of those what is there is that you learn as you work...learn through experience."

4.5.3 Perceptions on Women Leadership and Lack of Role Models

The researcher sought audience through interviews with women school leaders who participated in this study to understand some of the challenges that they experienced as female school leaders. Findings reveal that women leaders still deal with societal perceptions that women do not make good leaders when Jackline said:

> …challenges are many especially being a woman. You stand being looked down upon like someone who cannot make wise judgment like a male leader would do and especially financial decisions…sometimes you also feel that people do not listen to you not because you are wrong but because you are a woman and not your decisions or the manner in which you say things but because you are simply a woman (Principal, school C).

Jackline's experience as a woman leader could explain why Naomi had to communicate her being a male when she landed in a co-educational school. According to Naomi:

154

There is this conflict that emerges because many of us in the community look at gender as a difference. So there are issues which emerge because people are looking as a woman and there is nothing you can do… So you find the male teachers are looking at that woman, they feel the woman cannot do much, in the community they do the same. We have some people still who (sic) have that mentality. So me I told them I stopped being a woman a long time ago I am a man (Principal, school B).

In another discussion with one of the participants it became apparent that:

….the major challenge for women is that we are just too emotional. You know ...we are not able to separate our emotions and problems from our roles so we end up mixing issues so people don't take us seriously (Principal School A)

For another participant his view was that:

another thing women face is wanting to behave like men so command respect so they become dictatorial which for me does not work in this era where people know their rights…they will tell you even if you are the principal (SNR4, school D).

Grunig and Grunig (1992) while citing Wethrel (1989) advises that women in managerial positions should use their feminine characteristics to excellently perform their roles as public relations practitioners without having to act or behave like men like done in school D. Further, the authors advise that even though men who possess feminine characteristics rarely ascend to managerial positions in order to practice the two-way Grunig's model of being cooperative and nurturing, women, because of their biological nature, should develop ways of overcoming societal discrimination and subjugation that bar them from ascending to managerial posts in an organization and practice those feminine characteristics that they intrinsically possess.

4.5.3.1. Mitigating Lack of Role Models

In this study, some participants mentioned: "…the TSC has the tendency of bringing more women on board to merely satisfy a constitutional requirement…" with a view of meeting the third gender rule. Moreover, the women leaders who were participants in this study complained of lack of women role models, hence, forcing some women

leaders to rely on male role models. However, it is proposed that incorporating more women leaders in school management should be based on skill-driven personnel who are able to model effective leadership. Thus, there is need for women school leaders to undergo training on effective pedagogical leadership as well as integrative and innovative communication skills in managing conflicts so as to mentor the required skills in the management of schools. Furthermore, there is need for mentorship programmes that incorporates sharing of experiences as well as best practices. This is congruent to Foss, Foss and Griffins (1999) that unless women themselves recount and document their experiences, it will be difficult for other aspiring women leaders and the society to learn about women leadership. Hence, it is hoped that this documentation will go a long way in informing and helping women leaders who find themselves in similar contexts and characteristics in reflecting and learning from actual practice.

4.5.4 Insufficient policies on Communication and conflict management

Based on discussions with school leaders, it emerged that apart from the code of conduct and Ethics for teachers and the Basic Education Act, there are no policy guidelines on communication, conflict and conflict management in schools. This is because in the four schools visited and with all the 40 research participants, findings indicate that there are no clear guidelines or government policies in schools on how to communicate conflict management in schools.

4.5.4.1. Mitigating the Lack of Sufficient Policies

The participants in this study indicated that there were no policy guidelines on communication, conflict and conflict management in schools. Hence, the Ministry of Education and the TSC would benefit more by formulating clear policy guidelines while at the same time come up with a hand book on communication and conflict

management. Furthermore, MoE needs to institute Continuous Professional Development courses at county level to allow school leaders to share and learn from best practices while reflecting on their own practices.

4.5.5 Lack of Trust and Openness

Based on discussions held with participants in this study, it became apparent that lack of trust and openness was among the challenges of experienced by women leaders in conflict management. For instance one participant mentioned that, "Sometimes when you try to reach out to people but they don't trust you so never open up or they want it solved according their own understanding." Another participant added that "when you don't understand one another, managing conflicts becomes a challenge."

In negotiating conflict, scholars have identified openness, trust and understanding as important symmetrical assumptions that increase credibility in which those in conflict negotiate in good faith (Hance, Chess & Sandman1988; Wilson & Putnam, 1990) while listening to the other person (Fisher and Ury, 1981:35; keltner, 1987: 386). However, trust can be problematic where people have mixed motives and so do not communicate their intentions openly.

4.5.5.1 Mitigating lack of trust and openness

Lack of trust and openness was among the challenges of communication in conflict and management mentioned in this study. This is a view that has been supported by scholars that lack of trust and openness is indeed a problem especially when people have mixed motives and so do not communicate their intentions openly (Fisher and Ury, 1981:35; keltner, 1987:386). This is rightly stated by Fisher and Brown (1988) that "other things being equal, the better the mutual understanding, the better the working relationship (p.64). Hence, the conclusion that the women principal and other participants in this study would benefit more from dialogue and cooperation that will encourage openness,

trust and understanding where people negotiate in good faith. Furthermore, it has been observed that problem solving is a skill that enables people to communicate effectively during conflict without being friends. Therefore, what is important in a working relationship is the existence of trust and openness and that people are willing to listen and understand one another even when they do not agree with their ideas.

4.6. Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has discussed main findings based on research that was conducted in school A, B, C and D. Findings revealed that the nature of workplace conflicts existent in the schools visited were caused by incompatible interests, needs, values as well as distorted information and this depended on the context in which conflicts occurred. Findings has also revealed that conflicts were communicated through grapevine, confession, formal and informal writing, meetings as well aggression; depending on the women principals' predispositions and the situations under which conflict occurred. Consequently, the women principals developed unique ways of communication in order to manage conflicts depending on their leadership predisposition and situations of conflict which ranged from coaching, nurturing, counseling, gendering, collaborating, integration, monologue and confrontation. However, the women principals were faced with various challenges such as inadequate skills, unclear guidelines and lack of documented policies, lack of trust, perceptions on women leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the key findings of this study based on data from the four schools with 40 research participants together with the literature reviewed in this area. Findings are obtained from interviews, focused group discussions as well as document analysis. The study was a holistic case with embedded units. The researcher purposed to look at the issue of utilizing communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts but was intrigued by the different experiences of women principals managing different types of secondary schools in different contexts. Therefore, the researcher studied sub-units [different types of secondary schools] situated within a larger case [Migori County]. This enabled the researcher to gain more insight into the phenomenon by analysing within sub-units separately, between different sub-units and across all of the sub-units. However, the purpose of studying the subunits was not to compare the differences or similarities that existed but to understand the women principals' experiences in utilizing communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts in the Kenyan school context.

5.2. Discussions

The researcher explored the nature of workplace conflicts experienced by women leaders, the nature of communication strategies and the ways in which the women leaders utilized them in managing workplace conflicts as well as their challenges and ways of mitigating them. This will be discussed in the ensuing sub-sections.

Findings revealed that, first, the women leaders experienced various conflicts based on their nature and this ranged from social, need, interest as well data based conflicts as explained in the ensuing sub-section.

5.2.1 The Nature of Workplace Conflicts in schools headed by Women Principals

One of the key findings in this study revealed that the nature of workplace conflicts experienced in schools headed by women principals based on the views of the participants interviewed varied from school to school depending on the type and context of school. In this study, the researcher considered the type of school to be single sex school or mixed while the context of school depended on whether the school was adequately resourced, averagely resourced or minimally resourced.

Findings reveal that while some schools had similar characteristics, it became apparent that there were differences in the nature of workplace conflicts. For instance, in school A and D, though they were both single-sex schools, they both experienced interest-based as well as need-based conflict but still differed on the nature of interest and the nature of need that caused incompatibility and disagreements. For instance in school A, the incompatibility need was between the school administration and the students while in school D the need based conflict was between the principal and the teachers. Additionally, findings reveal that while both schools had an interest based conflict, the interest still differed. For instance, in school A, the interest was based on monetary gain or loss while at school D, the interest was based on job security. Interestingly though, findings also revealed that the nature of conflicts in schools were unique depending on context. For instance, while school C and B were both mixed schools, the incompatibility in school C was structural because it was minimally developed while for school B, although averagely developed what caused incompatibilities was based on distorted information referred to as data-based conflict and this probably was because of the large population. In school A, time management caused conflict while for school D it was witch-hunting that caused the incompatibility need between the principal and the teachers.

Conclusions are made based on the summary of findings in this study as follows: First, the type of conflicts witnessed in the schools visited are congruent to interpersonal conflicts which arise when two or more people working in the same institution have perceived differences in beliefs, values, or goals (Jameson, 1999; Barki and Hartwick, 2001). The implications, as it has been realized in this study, is that interpersonal conflicts can interfere with one's ability to perform their duties while at the same time one can elicit "strong emotions, misperceptions or stereotypes, poor communication or miscommunication thus, negative behaviours,'' which hampers the normal functions of the organization like it happened in the schools visited (Moore, 2003: 64).

Secondly, conflicts manifest whenever resources are in short supply, when positions of power are limited or when there is no agreement on the modalities of sharing or distributing resources (Hitt, Miller & Colella, 2006; Rahim, 2001). Consequently, due to shortage of resources, members of an organization usually feel that they will be disadvantaged in terms of realizing set goals. Hence, conflicts usually arise out of competition for the limited resources like it happened in some schools visited (Landau, Landau & Landau, 2001). Therefore, when participants talk about incompatibility as a result of inadequate resources and incompatible interests, they are probably talking about need based or interest based or even structural conflicts. The implications from this study is that the nature of workplace conflicts in schools headed by women principals are unpredictable. However, the nature of workplace conflicts can be classified based on their causes as need, interest, data as well as social based conflicts as revealed in this study.

Thirdly, it can be concluded that the struggle for power, employee wages or positions which had a monetary gain was the cause of conflicts in some of the schools visited. Bennett, Crawford and Cartwright (2003:145) agree while adding that usually one of the

most sought after resources are "… competitions for jobs, titles and prestige." Additionally, Chadwick (1995) explains that sometimes limited resources like finances, staffing and time are likely to cause conflicts in a school as is the case in some schools visited. Hence, when participants in those schools describe witch-hunting as a result of power struggle, they are probably referring to interest-based conflict.

Fourthly, congruent to Bradshaw's (2008) view, it can be concluded that need-based conflict can be either be physical or psychological. Hence, like other Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the desire for the teachers who were against the principal to punish the principal or Nicole's desire to protect her job probably informed their actions which ended up causing conflicts as witnessed in the schools visited. Additionally, need based conflict may be referred to as the safety and job security need (Du Preez, Campher, Grobler, Loock & Shaba, 2003). Furthermore, need based conflict may arise out of competition for power or positions in which one controls the behaviour of others (Wilmot and Hocker, 2001). Hence, when the participants in this study explain the nature of conflict that is related to structures or procedures or power dynamics, they are probably talking about structural or need based conflicts

Lastly, findings have revealed that some conflicts were as a result of distorted information arising from rumours and gossip which contributed to boycott and disagreements with the communities around the school. Dubrin (2009) support this adding that communication barriers often arise at the decoding of the message. Hence, when the woman principal describes the nature of conflict arising from a misunderstanding or a rumour at school level as witnessed in school B, she is probably referring to data-based conflict as shown in figure1 in chapter two (Bradshaw, 2008).

As a contribution to the body of knowledge in organizational communication, this study reveals the complexity of the nature of workplace conflicts particularly in educational institutions headed by women principals. Attention is drawn to convoluted and unpredictable nature of conflicts with variations in the type of conflicts as well as the context of conflicts as experienced in real life context. Conflict theory literature has extensively indicated that the management of organizational conflicts is dependent on the managers' conflict management styles as well as their communication competence (Nordy, 2018). However, little attention has been given to the manager's knowledge of convoluted unpredictable nature of workplace conflicts.

While this study resonates with Nordy's (2018) notion that the knowledge of deep structure of conflict is vital in realizing the cause of conflict and ways of solving them, it is also important that research explicates the actual nature of workplace conflicts in real life context as done in this study. Therefore, the contribution of this study to the body of knowledge in organizational communication is in bringing to the fore the convoluted nature of workplace conflicts through actual practices while highlighting the participants voices with regard to their experiences on the nature of workplace conflicts in schools headed by women principals. Additionally, as it is with most studies in this area, Nordy's study was conducted in a corporate organization. However, this study has shifted from the corporate world to empirically explicate the complexity of workplace conflicts, in a place such as school, based on verbatim experiences of secondary school women principals, hence, adds to the credibility of findings. Therefore, this study contributes to the body of knowledge in communication studies using a qualitative approach.

5.2.2 The Nature of Communication Strategies in Schools headed by Women Principals

Another key finding in this study is that the nature of communication strategies utilized varied from school to school depending on the situation, the style of leadership as well as the purpose of communication. Further findings indicate that while some participants' communication strategies were similar in one occasion, in other occasions, their communication strategies varied depending on the circumstances of conflicts. For instance, conflict was communicated informally as grapevine-based communication through gossip and rumours, in school B and school D; school A experienced downward monologue-based communication through notices; interpersonal aggression-based communication was witnessed through assault in school D. Additionally, school A and C witnessed horizontal dialogue-based communication through meetings; Upward monologue-based communication was witnessed through formal complaint, anonymous letters as well as boycott in school A and B. However, counselling-based communication was witnessed through confession in school A alone while monologue-based communication was evident through silence in school B alone and through notice in school D alone.

Findings revealed that while conflict in school B and D was communicated through grapevine in form of gossip and rumours, the causes of grapevine differed in the two schools. For instance, in school B, the cause of grapevine was as a result of distorted information regarding a student's death while at school D, grapevine was because of closed channels of communication as well as groupings in the school. Furthermore, while aggression was used as a way of communicating conflict in school A and D, the type of aggression differed. For instance, aggression in school A was an upward monologue communication from the students in form of strike [throwing stones]. In

school D, it was a downward monologue in form of assault from the principal through the security men at the gate.

Additionally, while school A and C used meetings as an avenue for dialogue to discuss concerns, in school A, the meetings were largely informal like student barazas. In school C, dialogue was majorly formal. However, it is through those meetings that conflicts were identified. Moreover, while monologue through letter writing was a means through which conflict was communicated in school A and B, the type of letters differed. For instance, school A communicated conflict through formal complaints while school B communicated conflict through anonymous letters. However, both letters indicated concerns regarding conflict.

Finally, in some schools conflict was communicated in a unique manner. For instance, school B experienced monologue through silence as a means to communicate dissatisfaction. In School A, counselling communication made it possible for confession to used as a means to reveal conflict. However, in school D, it was monologue communication by issuing of notices: for termination of service; for examination regulations; for denial of entry that facilitated the revelation of conflicts.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that conflict was communicated variously and this depended on the school leaders' perceptions and style of leadership. The contribution of this study to the body of knowledge in communication is that communicating conflict in the workplace is fluid to the extent that a one-way or two-way communication as suggested by Grunig and Hunt's excellence theory may not be applicable in all situations of conflict. Furthermore, while Grunig and Hunt have contributed in understanding the role of communication in conflict, the theory is inadequate in explaining ways of addressing convoluted communication in conflicting situations. This is because conflicts span the boundary of hierarchy as different

situations will require the application of different communication strategies. Hence, the contribution based on the study findings is that the direction of communication in conflict communication as well the management of conflict is convoluted because no direction accounts for evolution of conflicts in the work environment.

Convoluted conflict communication in the workplace has not featured anywhere in communication literature. The closest is the integrative theory of communication as propounded by Kim Young Yun (2001) which majorly advocates for adaptation and assimilation in a new cultural environment. Besides, Kim Young Yun's theory did not look at the convoluted communication in workplace conflicts. Hence, the contribution in this study is that because the nature of conflicts in the workplace are revealed in different ways, the complexity of human communication in conflict cannot be categorized as either one-way or two-way; symmetrical/asymmetrical, horizontal, diagonal, vertical or cyclic as propounded by various communication theories. Rather, the ways in which people express dissatisfaction or disagreement is convoluted and unpredictable to the extent that the utilization of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts will need a mixed-breed approach-which this study refers to as Mongrel communication. The ensuing sub-section highlights ways in which the women principals utilized communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts.

5.2.3 Ways in which Communication Strategies were Utilized by Women Principals

Another key finding in this study indicate that the women principals, who were participants in this study, had devised unique ways of communicating conflict management depending on the school leader's disposition as well as the situations in which conflict erupted. For instance, in school A, the woman principal tended to take a dialogic approach in communicating conflict management. Furthermore, findings reveal

that the woman principal was accessible and embraced open channels of communication, specifically in giving the correct information. However, at other times, the principal practiced closed channels of communication. On the whole, the woman principal employed a coaching, counselling and collaborating technique to manage workplace conflicts.

In school B, the woman principal's communication strategies in managing conflicts varied depending on situations of conflict. Hence, in Grunig's model the woman principal did not choose a particular pattern as she tended to move a long one- way and two- way asymmetrical/symmetrical continuums which is also in tandem with convoluted communication theory as depicted in this study. For instance at some point the principal in school B employed closed monologue approach while at some point she embraced an open dialogic approach to manage conflicts. Additionally, at one point she indicated masculine characteristics while other times she indicated feminine characteristics hence, in this study the woman principal employed a mixed breed technique to manage workplace conflicts – referred to as a Mongrel technique in this study.

The woman principal in school C just like the one in school A tended to be a dialogic, was accessible and embraced open channels of communication in managing workplace conflicts. Hence, her way of communication was congruent to Grunig's two-way symmetrical model of communicating conflict management. Thus, the woman principal embraced a coaching, compromising and nurturing technique to manage workplace conflicts-referred to as a collaborating technique. However, at some point the woman principal employed counselling communication to manage workplace conflicts.

Findings also reveal that in school D, the woman principal's communication strategies tended to be more closed one-way model that was inaccessible and rigid. Hence, the school leader embraced a monologue Machiavellian competing technique.

The contribution in this study, as revealed by the findings, is that the women leaders who participated in this study have developed convoluted ways of utilising communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts as follows: a mongrel communication, coaching collaborative communication, nurturing counselling communication and a Machiavellian communication.

The term 'Mongrel' has been borrowed from the dog species to refer to a cross-breed dog with no known ancestry and does not belong to one particular breed (Moriss, 2008). With this background, therefore, mongrel communication, as used in this study, refers to utilization of various communication strategies to manage convoluted workplace conflicts. Utilization of mongrel communication to manage workplace conflicts has not featured anywhere in communication studies literature. The nearest reference is strategic integrated communication by Barker (2013) which states that an organizational leader should be prepared to meet the unpredictable future through strategic integrated communication. Integrated communication lays emphasis on creativity, proactive thinking, reciprocity and genuine dialogue as the focus of communication. Hence, initiation of dialogue and involvement of members in changing and developing the organization is taken seriously. However, as it has been realized in this study, it is not expected that all workplace conflicts will be managed in the same manner as situations of conflicts will be different depending on the type and nature of conflicts.

Moreover, while integrated workplace communication has been extensively conducted in corporate communication, very little has been researched in educational leadership communication. Thus, this study, being in the organizational communication domain, contributes to the area of study by bringing to the fore the actual practices of women principals in managing workplace conflicts at secondary school level using mongrel communication. Moreover, what has not been established, and which this study brings to the fore, is the use of Mongrel communication where some woman principals employed both feminine and masculine approaches in managing workplace conflicts. This was evident in the way some school leaders were alive to the changing nature of conflicts, hence, utilized mixed-breed approaches in managing workplace conflicts. For instance in one occasion a woman principal utilised masculine communication when she said:

> I live in a community where people still upholds their culture about women not making good leaders so I knew that was what was going on…after a short time I reported I stood firm and I told them you are not looking at a woman, me I became a man long time ago and am not a woman you will see that I am a man…I told them there is nothing they can do and in fact I told them that me I walk with a small sword if you want to fight I can also fight(Principal school B).

However, in another occasion the same woman leader utilized nurturing counselling communication to manage workplace conflicts. Thus, the term mongrel communication is used to refer to the way in which the woman principal utilized communication strategy to manage workplace conflict.

Additionally, findings reveal that apart from mongrel communication, some women leaders utilized communication strategies that were classified as either nurturing collaborative or competitive Machiavellian communication. Studies on conflict management strategies such as collaboration, competition as well as confrontation

abound in organizational conflict literature. Moreover, there seems to be no study that fails to mention collaboration when it comes to conflict management strategies. Needless to say, what is not known about collaboration, nurturing, counselling communication technique is the actual practice of these models in a natural setting such as school using a gender and communication perspective. Consequently, the contribution that this study makes is that this study highlights how women leaders utilised collaboration together with other strategies while explaining why they utilized the strategies in the way they did from their own view and in their natural context. Hence, the voices of these women leaders give the reader the immediacy of being there - as the women leaders recount their experiences of utilising the strategies. To put this into perspective, in utilising collaborative nurturing communication strategy one woman leader said:

> My being a widow also makes me very patient… This school is like my home and I am like their mother and the judgment I make I do it like a mother. This is because I want to facilitate peace (Principal, school C).

While collaboration proliferates as a strategy in conflict management, there is dearth literature in organizational communication on utilisation of nurturing counselling communication to manage workplace conflicts. The nearest reference is Netshitangani's (2014) study on earlier socialization and women school managers. Netshitangani states that because of their maternal roles, women school leaders tend to employ their mothering styles of leadership because they to view workplaces like their homes. While Netshitangani looked at the women leaders' mothering style as a leadership quality, her study did not look at how nurturing and counselling can be utilised as a communication strategy to manage workplace conflicts. Thus this study contributes to the body of knowledge in leadership and management communication while highlighting the actual practices of mothering approach in managing workplace conflicts.

Additionally, Machiavellian competitive communication was noted in the way one woman leader managed conflicts as follows:

> When the boss heard that the ministry official were on their way, and because she knew she had done something that was unlawful, she went and printed a notice and placed it on the notice board…in fact the officials were showed(sic) the notice board with the notice that read… 'TEACHERS SHOULD NOT BE IN THE SCHOOL COMPOUND DURING NATIONAL EXAMINATIONS' and this one she had cooked (sic) yet she is the one who asked the teachers to be present (HoD, guidance and counseling, school D).

Machiavellian leaders' behaviours and perspectives are manipulative in nature for the purpose of fulfilling their own interest (Christie and Geis, 2013). Hence, this study adopted Machiavellian communication as utilized by some women leaders to manage workplace conflicts. While Machiavellianism studies has existed since the time of Nicolo Michiavelli to explore Machiavellian characteristics and styles of leadership, this characteristic has minimally been used as a communication strategy in workplace conflict management. Furthermore, studies that have looked at Machiavellianism have not explored actual practices in real life contexts as done in this study, hence, making a contribution to this effect.

Going forward and as suggested by the Ahmad and Rethinam (2010) is that it is better to train the workforce on communication strategies that suit particular situations with the aim of helping people in understanding preferences and communication needs instead of understanding communication practices from a stereotypical or essentialist view point. Furthermore, there is need to desist from dichotomy thinking in utilising communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts and instead, embrace the fact that, depending on circumstances, men and women have the capacity to "reaffirm, negotiate with, and challenge the parameters of permissible or socially sanctioned

behaviour" (Mills, 2003:169). This is a view that is supported by Ogenga (2016) that while conflict, particularly with regard to terrorism, has been viewed as a male preserve with women playing victims, there is need to rethink gender violent extremism in Kenya. The implication is that both men and women are capable of utilizing both nurturing and Machiavellian behaviours in conflicts. Therefore, this study explicates the role of communication in managing workplace conflicts, specifically in educational institutions such as school from an interpretative point of view while analyzing different situations and contexts - referred to as convoluted mongrel communication, counselling nurturing communication and Machiavellian communication thereby contributing to the body of knowledge in communication studies.

5.2.4 Challenges of Communicating Conflict Management and Ways of Mitigation

The challenges experienced by women principals form part of the major contributions of this study. First, although the women principals who were participants in this study faced various challenges depending on context, most of the challenges emanating from communication and conflict management were largely skill related. This was evidenced in the manner in which the women principals interviewed majorly relied on their intuition as well as their motherly experiences to manage workplace conflicts. Besides, the women principals felt ill prepared to handle workplace conflicts. This was evident because none of the school leaders interviewed had instituted processes and strategies for managing workplace conflicts in their schools.

Additionally, even though the women leaders utilised unique communication strategies in conflict management, their approach tended to be reactive - referred to as 'fighting fights' in this study. The explanation, as revealed in this study, is that none of the women principals interviewed had received any training on communication and conflict management before assuming their roles as principals. Moreover, insufficient leadership

preparation was evident because the participants in this study felt that there was need for school leaders such as principals, deputy principals and heads of department to undergo induction as well as professional courses before they assume their roles as school leaders.

In addition, even though the four women principals and their deputies had attended refresher courses on conflict management offered at Kenya Educational Management Institute, most of the participants felt that the skills obtained from KEMI were minimal and inadequate to be used in real school situations. Hence, most of them felt that such trainings like those offered by KEMI should be practically based and in line with their needs. Furthermore, findings in this study indicate that the senior teachers, the Heads of Department like guidance and counselling have not received any training on conflict and conflict management since only principals and their deputies attend KEMI courses.

The aforementioned is similar to what has been observed in communication literature that while conflict management forms part of management practice, rarely are professionals trained on communication and conflict management yet lack of communication competence could probably be the cause of many dysfunctional conflicts in the workplaces (Gate, 2006 in Cloke & Goldsmith, 2011). This study resonates with Onguko, Abdalla and Webber (2008). In their study, Onguko et al found gaps in the areas of instructional leadership, educational media, visioning, as well as insufficient capacity for educational institutions to prepare new principals in Kenya and Tanzania. However, what was not found in Onguko et al study is lack of workplace communication skills- particularly with regard to utilisation of communication strategies in workplace conflict management. Additionally, while Onguko et al studied lack of skills in educational management, very little is known concerning workplace communication skills in the Kenyan school context. Thus, this study contributes to the

area of study in organisational communication. Interestingly though, in a span of 11 years after Onguko et al study was conducted, this study reveals that lack of skills and inadequate leadership preparation is still a struggle in the Kenyan school context.

The second contribution is that the women principals who participated in this study indicated that the perceptions regarding women leadership as well as lack of female role models was a major challenge. Furthermore, most of the women leaders in this study felt stereotyped and were viewed to be inadequate in making sound judgments like male leaders would do- especially with regard to conflict management. Hence, one woman principal in this study indicated having to behave like a man in order to gain respect. However, for another participant in this study, she felt that the major challenge was inability to employ emotional intelligence when dealing with conflicts. Additionally, women principals who participated in this study felt that lack of trust and openness and understanding hindered the ways in which conflicts are handles in schools. Hence, according to some participants in this study, women are not taken seriously when it comes to leadership and management communication.

Challenges regarding women leadership and stereotype perceptions pertaining to women leadership have been extensively researched - particularly in educational management (Rarieya, 2011; Wambui, 2010; Kariuki, 2006; Msila & Netshitangi, 2014; Gichuchu & Njeri, 2016). However, stereotyped perceptions regarding leadership communication in workplace conflict management has not been studied. Hence, this study makes a contribution in communication studies by empirically looking at the principals' experiences with stereotyped perceptions regarding workplace conflicts in actual school setting.

The third contribution as indicated by women principals who participated in this study is insufficient, unclear and undocumented policy guidelines regarding workplace conflict management. This was evident because the participants in this study felt that the Teachers Code of Conduct and Ethics as well as the Basic Education Act have not explicitly indicated ways in which conflicts should be handled in schools. While unclear and undocumented policy guidelines has been researched in health communication (Republic of Kenya, 2012), this has minimally been looked at in organizational communication in the Kenyan school context-hence this study contributes to the body of knowledge in organizational communication.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a summary of the findings that sought to explore the communication strategies utilized by women principals in managing workplace conflicts at secondary school level in Migori County. Secondly, the chapter presents conclusions based on the research questions, the findings and the contributions of this study. Lastly, the chapter gives recommendations as well as areas for further research. The aforesaid are discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

6.2. Summary of Key Findings

This section summarizes the key findings of this study based on data from the four schools visited in which forty research participants were purposively chosen for the study. Findings are obtained from interviews, focused group discussions as well as document analysis to explore the women principals' experiences in utilisation of communication strategies to manage workplace conflict at secondary school level.

Findings indicate that schools headed by women principals experienced various conflicts based on their nature. For instance, first, conflict between the principal and subordinate at school A was due to interest arising from monetary gain or loss while that between the school administration and students resulted from need to observe or not observe government directives regarding time management. Third, conflict at school B between the principal, students and parents occurred because of distorted information concerning a student's death which is referred to as data-based conflict in this study. Fourth, in school C, principal-BoM and community conflict was based on structural procedures regarding school development. Lastly, findings reveal that the principal

versus teacher conflict at school D was based on two issues: interest based on job security as well as need for a more accommodative leadership styles.

Findings also indicate that the communication strategies utilized were based on styles of leadership together with the purpose for communication and this included counselling-based communication through confession; dialogue-based communication through formal and informal meetings; grapevine-based communication through gossip and rumours; monologue-based communication through silence, anonymous letters as well as formal letters.

Third, findings reveal that the ways in which communication strategies were utilized was based on the women leaders' perceptions or dispositions and situations of conflict ranging from: coaching counselling nurturing technique through two-way communication; collaborating technique through open channels/two-way communication; mongrel technique that is masculine as well as feminine through one way-two way with open-closed channels; Machiavellian technique that is confrontational and competitive through closed one-way channel of communication.

Lastly, the challenges experienced by the women leaders in their utilization of communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts ranged from: inadequate skills on communication, conflict management and leadership; lack of documented policies as well as unclear guidelines on communication and conflict management; lack of in-house training, induction and mentorship programmes; insufficient leadership preparation; perceptions on women leadership and lack of women role models.

6.3. Conclusions

This study purposed to explore how women principals utilised communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts at secondary school level. Therefore, this study has contributed to the body of knowledge in communication studies by offering a relevant

study and analysis of the role of communication within school leadership using a gendered approach. The relevance is evident especially in the twenty-first century which places effective communication at the center of organizational learning. Moreover, developing an organizational culture that promotes organizational learning and encourages staff professional growth is the motivating force for any successful organizational leader.

Findings have revealed that the nature of workplace conflicts were convoluted and unpredictable. However the women principals, who were participants in this study, have developed unique ways of managing workplace conflicts. The women principals' ways of utilising communication strategies depended on their predispositions and situations of conflicts. Findings indicate that: first, some women principals tended to be dialogic with a collaborative, coaching, nurturing and counselling approach using a two way communication strategy. This was based on their perceptions of viewing a school as their own homes. Hence, their role was to counsel and nurture those in conflict just like a mother would do to their children.

Secondly, some women principals employed a mongrel communication with a feminine/masculine approach using one-way/two-way communication strategy. This was based on their view that management of conflicts depended on different situations. Hence, at some point they had to employ masculinity by being forceful in order to counteract the stereotype that women do not make good decisions in some conflicts. However, in some situations they employed their caring and nurturing attributes as is expected of a mother.

Thirdly, some women principals utilized a Machiavellian monologic and competitive approach using a one-way communication strategy. This was based on the belief that

conflict is unnecessary and evil, hence, should be discouraged through punishment such as dismissal.

Lastly, findings reveal that the women principals experienced a myriad of challenges such as: lack of leadership communication skills in managing workplace conflict; insufficient policies, undocumented and unclear guidelines; lack of in-house training, induction and mentorship programmes; perceptions on women leadership as well as lack of trust and openness.

To mitigate these challenges, a suggestion is made that the women principals as well as the MoE and TSC would benefit more if processes such as in-house learning are instituted in schools of similar characteristics with similar experiences in Migori County.

The contribution that this study makes is that, first, unless school leadership preparation and support is taken seriously by allowing school leaders to talk about their unique workplace conflict management experiences, most schools will continue to experience the challenges mentioned. The implication is that not discussing the nature of dysfunctional conflicts will contribute to most schools losing economically. However, allowing school leaders to share and reflect on best practices while learning from ineffective communication strategies will probably help school leaders to aspire to improve their own practices.

Secondly, unless qualitative studies is embraced in social sciences in order to understand actual practices as well as leadership communication needs as done in this study, research in the Kenyan context will still be dominated by conflict management models. The implication is that while conflict models merely quantify leadership styles of conflict management, the models do not account for people's unique experiences in

actual school context. Yet, telling stories of the plight and experiences of women and the existent power relations as done in this study will probably fill the role model gap and help school leaders to learn from actual practice hence, improve practice. Therefore, this study departs from the application of models in managing of organisational conflicts and has explored the interpretative view that is in tandem with qualitative studies.

Thirdly, the interpretative view point that is in line with qualitative approach and case study method has given the women principals and other school leaders, who were participants in this study, a chance to share their unique experiences, actual practices and needs. Studying actual practices through research has given the women leaders a voice to recount their experiences and tell their stories from an insider perspective, hence give the reader the feeling of being there. This will go a long way in informing schools with similar characteristics to reflect and learn so as to improve on their own communication practices. Therefore, this study has contributed to the body of knowledge in communication literature while explicating the role of communication in workplace conflicts at grass root level.

6.4 Recommendations

This study is multidisciplinary in nature, thus findings from this study has various implications to the following disciplines as well as organisations: Organisational Communication; Organisational Leadership; Educational Leadership and Management. The recommendations will be explicated in the ensuing paragraphs:

6.4.1 Organisational Communication

First, this study departs from other studies which have majored on the application of models to manage organisational conflicts and has instead explored the interpretative

view point that is in tandem with qualitative studies in order to understand actual practices and needs in social sciences. The study was prompted by the fact that research in the Kenyan context is dominated by conflict management models that merely quantify leadership and communication styles with minimal focus on exploration of people's unique experiences in order to learn from actual practice. However, studying actual practices through research gives the participants a voice to talk about their own experiences from their own points of view without being restricted to structured models. Studying actual practices while giving verbatim accounts also gives the reader the immediacy of being there and adds credibility to findings.

Secondly, studying actual practice as done in this study will go a long way in informing school leaders who have similar characteristics to reflect and learn so as to improve on their own practices. Therefore, this study recommends that more studies in the social sciences should explore a relativist-interpretivist paradigm that is consistent with qualitative studies in order to understand the role of communication in managing workplace conflicts at grass root level.

Thirdly, the complexity of human communication in conflict management cannot be categorized as one-way or two-way; symmetrical/asymmetrical, horizontal, diagonal, vertical or cyclic as propounded by various communication theories. Rather, the ways in which people express dissatisfaction or disagreement are convoluted and unpredictable to the extent that the utilization of communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts will need a mixed-breed approach-which this study refers to as Mongrel communication. Hence, there is need for communication scholars to extensively study mongrel communication as a communication strategy in managing workplace conflicts.

6.4.2 Organisational Leadership

First, this study has provided thick descriptions of women principals' ways of utilising communication strategies to manage workplace conflicts. Findings reveal that school leaders who participated in this study tended to be reactive and only fought fires as they erupted. This implies lack of effective strategies and processes of managing workplace conflicts. Therefore, regardless of their gender, organizational leaders need to reflect on their practices thereby reconsidering how conflict management is carried out in their organisations. Furthermore, organisational leaders would benefit more from instituting effective strategies and processes of managing workplace conflicts in their organizations.

Additionally, this study suggests that organizational leaders [regardless of their gender] will grow in practice if they collaboratively identify their strengths and weaknesses regarding their communication practices and the influence this has on the management of workplace conflicts. Moreover, working collaboratively is a way of supporting in-house strategies and processes of managing workplace conflicts within the organization by providing time for professional dialogue as well as supportive and collaborative learning environment. This is because open discussions that prevail in collaborative learning environment facilitates open discussions on managing disagreements through communication.

Findings also reveal the convoluted nature of workplace conflicts. Hence, there is need for organizational leaders to desist from dichotomy essentialist perspective. This is because it is not expected that all conflicts will be managed in the same way. Therefore there is need for organizational leaders to embrace a mongrel communication strategy in order to manage unpredictable and convoluted workplace conflicts.

6.4.3 Educational Leadership and Management

First, findings reveal that the school leaders who participated in this study mostly used their intuition to manage workplace conflicts. Additionally, based on the documents analyzed, findings revealed that there were unclear and undocumented guidelines as well as insufficient government policies regarding communication and conflict management in schools. Therefore, this study recommends that the Teachers' Code of Conduct and Ethics should be improved to include clear guidelines on communication and conflict management in educational institutions. Furthermore, there is need for the MoE to develop a handbook with clear guidelines to enhance the capacity of educational leadership and management personnel.

Secondly, as the body that is charged with the employment and promotion of teachers, the TSC should bring more skill-driven women leaders on board rather than merely satisfying a constitutional requirement of meeting the third gender rule. Additionally, the Ministry of Education that is charged with the responsibility of managing schools should institute Continuous Professional Development courses at the county level. Instituting professional development courses will prepare and induct school leaders based on real life experiences.

6.4.4 Leadership Preparation Programmes

First, findings also reveal that the women principals in this study relied on their motherly instincts and felt unprepared to manage workplace conflicts. This implies lack of skills to effectively manage workplace conflicts. Hence, this study recommends that leadership preparation programmes should include communication and conflict management as a leadership preparation tool. This will enable other aspiring leaders to

have a deeper understanding and increased awareness on the utilization of effective communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts.

Secondly, findings reveal that although the women leaders who participated in this study had undergone in-service training on conflict management, most of the participants felt that they were still not adequately prepared. This implies that the courses did not meet the women leaders' needs regarding conflict in their schools. Therefore, this study suggests that programmed continuous professional development courses offered by KEMI and other in-service programmes for head teachers and their deputies should be developed in a way that these courses meet the training needs of school leaders. Furthermore, since the women principals who participated in this study tended to utilise unique forms of communication strategies to manage conflicts, continuous development courses offered by KEMI should include sharing of best practices in managing workplace conflicts. This is because, allowing school leaders to share best practices with regard to communication in conflict management will perhaps prompt school leaders to reflect on their practices with a view to improving their practices. Hence, their schools will grow to become true collaborative learning organizations.

6.5. Suggestions for Further Research

This study has provided a starting point for further research in the field of organizational communication. First, the study could be replicated in the context of communication studies to investigate the role of communication in managing workplace conflicts in other organizations

Secondly, the study looked at conflict management as one aspect of leadership and management communication with a gender perspective. Other studies should look at other aspects of leadership and management communication.

Thirdly, the study looked at women principals, other studies should look at both male and female principals' communication strategies in managing workplace conflicts.

Moreover, these findings are a contextualized study of four schools with 40 research participants and were based on the women principals' experiences in managing workplace conflicts through communication. Hence, being a qualitative study, the small sample restricts the scope of generalization of the research findings to other settings. However, due to thick descriptions of the women principals' experiences schools of similar characteristics may reflect and learn. Therefore, it is recommended that a large scale study, probably a mixed-method with more schools and more research participants, be conducted to underscore the influence of communication on workplace conflict management.

Lastly, since this study was conducted in public schools, a comparative case study of public and private schools on the same topic is recommended for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon.

6.6. Chapter Six Summary

In summary, this chapter has presented the summary of key findings that sought to explore communication strategies utilized by women principals in managing workplace conflicts at secondary school level. Secondly, the chapter has presented discussions based on findings as well as the literature reviewed in this area. Thirdly, the chapter has presented conclusions while pointing at the contributions this makes using interpretative constructionist view point as follows: This study resonates with other studies on the nature of organisational conflicts which have been categorised as need-based; interest-based; data-based as well as social-based conflicts. Additionally, in exploring the nature of communication strategies utilised in schools headed by women principals, findings in this study revealed counselling-based, coaching-based, mongrel-based and aggression-

based communication have not been researched in communication studies. Furthermore, the ways in which the women principals utilised communication strategies such as: collaboration, coaching, counselling, Mongrel and Machiavellian communication strategies in the management of workplace conflicts have been minimally studied by communication scholars in Kenya. Additionally, it was discovered that challenges such as lack of skills, insufficient leadership preparation, unclear and undocumented policies have not been researched in organisational communication literature in the Kenyan context, hence, this study makes this contribution. Lastly, this chapter has highlighted the implications based on findings while giving recommendations to various disciplines as well areas for further research.

REFERENCES:

Adhiambo, R., & Simatwa, M. (2011). Assessment of conflict management and resolution in public secondary schools in Kenya: A case study of Nyakach District. *International Research Journal 2* (4), 1074-1088.

Antonioni, D. (1998). Relationship between the big five personality factors and conflict management styles. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 9* (4), 336-354.

Aula, P. & Siira, K. (2010). Organizational communication and conflict management systems: A social complexity approach. *Nordicom Review, 31*, 125-141.

Bailey, M. J. (1989). *Mediation as a Female Process.* Paper presented at the National Conference on Peace and Conflict Resolution, Montreal, Canada.

Barash, D. P., & Webek, C. P. (2002). *Peace and conflict studies*. Thousand Oaks, London: SAGE Publications.

Barker, R. (2013). Strategic integrated Communication: An alternative perspective of integrated marketing communication? *South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research, 39*(1), 102-121.

Baxter, L. A. (2015). A tale of two voices: Relational Dialectics Theory. Means to understand soft power. *SAGE Journals 7*(1)70-84.

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative Case Study Methodology: Study Design and Implementation for Novice Researchers. *The qualitative report, 13*(4), 544-559.

Bradshaw, G. (2008). *Conflict management for South African students: Theory and application*. Cape Town: New Voices Publishing.

Berdal, M. (2005). Beyond greed and grievances: And not too soon a review essay. *Review of International Studies, 31*(4), 687-698.

Bickmore, K. (1997). *Teaching conflict and conflict resolution in school: Extra-Curricular considerations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Blundel, R., Ippolito, K., & Donnarumma, D. (2013). *Organisational communication: Perspectives, principles and practices* (4th ed.). Harlow: Pearson.

Black, D. (1990). *The elementary forms of conflict management*. New York: Plenum Press.

Bogdan, R., & Bicklen, S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and practice* (5th ed.). New York: Pearson Education, Inc.

Borg, M. J. (1992). Conflict Management in the modern world-system. *Sociological Forum, 7*(2), 261-282.

Bradley, H. (1999). *Gender and power in the workplace*. London: Macmillan.

Brandt, D. C., & Pierce, K. J. (2000). When is verbal abuse serious? The impact of relationships variable on perception of severity. *UW-La Crosse JUR, III,* 7-78.

Brewer, N., Mitchell, P. & Weber, N. (2002). Gender role organizational status, and conflict management styles. *The International Journal of Conflict Management*, *13* (1), p. 78-94.

Broom, B. J., & M. J. (2012). Culture Communication and Peacebuilding: A Reflexive Multi-Dimensional Contextual Framework. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communications 54* (9), 245-269. 9.

Cancel, A. E., Cameron, G. T., Sallot, L. M., & Mitrook, A. M. (1997). It depends: A contingency theory of accommodation in public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research 9*(1), 31-63.

Cheldelin, S. I. (2011). *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Christie, R., & Geis, F. L. (2013). *Studies in Machiavellianism*. Elsevier Science

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching Thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The psychologist, 26*(2), 120-123.

Cloke, K., & Goldsmith, J. (2011). *Resolving conflicts at work: Ten strategies for everyone on the job.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2013). *Research Methods in education* (7th ed.). London: Routledge Falmer.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches* (4rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Crotty, M. (2005). The foundation of social research: Meaning and perspective in research process. Thousands Oaks, CA: SAGE

De Bono, E. (1985). *Conflicts: A Better Way to Resolve Them.* London: Harrap.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2013). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2017). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Di Paola M. F., & Hoy, W. K. (2001). Formulation, conflict and change: Constructive and destructive consequences in schools. *International Journal of Educational Management 15*(5), 238-244.

Doucet, O., Poitras, J., & Denis C., (2009). The impact of leadership on workplace conflicts. *International Journal of conflict management, 20,*340-354.10.1108/10444060910991057.

Du Brin, A. J. (1994). *Human relations: A job oriented approach*. Reston, Virginia: Reston Publishing Company Inc., Apprentice Hall Company.

Eagley, A. H., & Steffen, V. J. (1986). Gender and aggressive behaviour: a meta-analytic review of the social psychological literature. *Psychological Bulletin, 100,* 309-330. EBSCO Host 3 June 2015. Web.

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Graebner, M. E. (2007). "Theory building form cases: opportunities and challenges," *Academy of Management Journal, 50*(1), 25-32.

Family Health International (n.d). *Participant observation module 2 in qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide.* Family Health International.

Filley, A.C. (1975). *Interpersonal Conflict Resolution.* Glenview IL: Scott, Foresman.

Fomin, A. G., & Yakimova, N.S (2015) Communication strategies in conflict discourse: cross-cultural experimental research Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 236 (2016) 65 – 70 http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0.

Foss, K. A., Foss, K. S., & Griffin, C. L. (1999). Feminist Rhetorical Theories. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.

Francis, B. & Skelton, C., (2001).Men teachers and the construction of heterosexual masculinity in the classroom, Sex Education, 1, pp.1-17.

Gallagher, T. (2017). Shared education in contested spaces: How collaborative networks improve communities and schools. Journal of Educational Change 18(1), 167-134.

Gichuchi, W., & Njeri, C. (2016). Devolution and women decision making in Leadership in Kenya: Policy Brief. Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.

Griffin. E., Ledbetter. A., & Sparks. G. (2014). *A first look at communication theory: (Conversations with communication theorists),* Hawthorne, CA: McGraw-Hill Education.

Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Wintson.

Grunig, J. E., & Grunig, L. A. (1992). Models of public relations and communication. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Eribaum Associates, Publishers.

Hamish F., & Dickie-Clark (1986). The Making of a Social Theory: Anthony Giddens' Theory of Structuration: Reviewed work(s) Source: Sociological Focus, 19, (2), Special Issue: *Contemporary Sociological Theory:Functionalist and Interactionist Perspectives.* pp. 159-176.

Hanson, E. M. (1991). *Educational Administration and Organizational Behaviour.* Boston: Simon and Schulster Inc.

Havenga, W., (n.d) Gender age differences in conflict management within small businesses, *Journal of Human Resource Management 6*(1). pp. 22-28

Hener, G., (2010): Communication and conflict management in local public organizations, *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences,* No 1 30E/2010, pp. 132-141.

Herriot, A., Crossley M., Juma M., Waudo J., Mwirotsi M., & Kamau A. (2002). The Development and Operation of Headteacher Support Groups in Kenya: A Mechanism to create pockets of excellence, Improve the provision of Quality Education and Target Positive changes in the Community, *International Journal of Educational Development, 22*(4), pp. 509-526.

Hitt, M. A., Miller, C. C., & Colella, A. (2006). *Organisational behaviour: A strategic Approach.* Hoboken: Wiley.

Hocker. J., & Wilmot, W. (2013). Interpersonal conflict (9th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Hodgetts, R. M. (1993). *Modern human relations at work.* Forth Worth Philadelphia: The Dryden Press, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publisher.

Hotte, R., & Pierre, S. (2002). Leadership and Conflict Management Support in a Cooperative Telelearning Environment. *International Journal on E-Learning, 1*(2), 46-59. Norfolk, VA: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE). Retrieved June 29, 2018 from https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/15103.

House, R.J., & Rizzo, J.R. (1972). Conflict and ambiguity as critical variables in a model of organizational behaviour. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance,* 7: 467-505.

Hughes, I. (2000). *How to keep a research diary.* Action Research E-Reports. From http://www.fhs.usyd.edu.au/arow/arer/005.htm.

Infante, D. A., & Wigley, C. J. (1986). Verbal aggressiveness: an interpersonal model and measure. *Communication Monographs, 53,* 61-69.

Institute for Security Studies (2008). Violence spreading in the Kenya schools retrieved from:

http://www.reliefweb.inst/rwbnsf/db900SID/FBUO-7KLBER?

Ivancevich, J. M., & Matteson M. T. (2002). Organisational Behaviour and management. California, CA: McGraw Hill Higher Education

Jehn, K., & Bendersky, C. (2003). Interpersonal Conflict, *Research in Organizational Behaviour*, *25*, 187-242.

Jwan, O. J., & Ongo'ndo, C.O. (2011. *Qualitative research: An introduction to principles and techniques*. Eldoret, Kenya: Moi University press.

Jiang, M., & Buzzanell, P. (2013). Qualitative research on communication and conflict. *In J. Oetzel & S. Ting-Toomy (Eds). The Sage handbook of conflict communication (pp.67-98) (2ⁿᵈ ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage*

Kariuki, W. (2006). 'She is a woman after all': Patriarchy and Female Educational Leadership in Kenya,'*Postamble*, *2*(2), pp. 65-75.

Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (2002). Towards a dialogic theory of public relations. *Public Relations Review 28*(1), 21-37.

Kent, M. L., & Taylor, M. (1998). Building dialogic relationships through the World Wide Web. *Public Relations Review 24* (3), 21-37.

Kibui, A., Bradshaw, G., & Kibera. L. (2014). Conflict mitigation in enhancing discipline in Kenya's secondary school. *DBA Africa Management Review, 4* (2), 1-13.

Kiprono, J., (2014). Existence and Levels of conflict resolution programmes in secondary schools in Eldoret East District, Kenya. *Journal of organizational Psychology & Education Studies 3*(5) 412-414.

Kim, Young Yun (2001). Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kirchoff, N., & Adams, J.R. (1982). *Conflict Management for Project Managers.* Drexel Hill: Project Management Institute.

Klenke, K. (2016). *Qualitative research in the study of leadership,* Midlothian: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Kokeyo, C. A. (2011). *School leaders' perceptions of clinical supervision: A qualitative case study of a Kenyan secondary school*, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing.

Kombo, D. K., & Tromp, L. A. (2006*). Proposal and thesis writing: An introduction.* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa.

Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research.* (5th ed.). Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

Landau, S., Landau, B., & Landau, D. (2001). From conflict to creativity. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Laws of Kenya: *The constitution of Kenya, (2010).* Nairobi: National Council for Law Reporting with the Authority of the Attorney General.

Levine, S. (2009). *Getting to resolution: Turning conflict into collaboration*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Litchman, M. (2014). Qualitative research in education: A user's guide (3rd ed.). CA: SAGE publications, Inc.

Makaye, J., & Ndofirepi, A. P., (2012). Conflict Resolution between Heads and Teachers: The case of 4 schools in Masvingo Zimbabwe, *Greener Journal of Educational Research 2* (4), pp.105-110.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2nd ed.). Oxford: SAGE.

Mayer, B. (2015). *The conflict paradox: Seven dilemmas at the core of disputes.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source book*. (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications Inc.

Miles, B. M., Huberman, M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods source book and the coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Thousands Oak, CA: SAGE.

Miller, K. (2003). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth publishing.

Miller, K. (2015). *Organizational communication: Approaches and processes* (7th ed.). Stamford, Connecticut: Cengage Learning.

Ministry of State and Public Service, Gender and Youth Affairs in Kenya (2010). Nairobi: Government Printer.

Mitchel, B., & Gamlem, C. (2015). *The Essential Workplace Conflict Handbook: A quick and handy resource for any manager, team leader, HR professional and anyone who wants to solve disputes and increase productivity*. Colombia: Career Press, Incorporated:

Mogel, L. (2002). "*Making it in public relations: an insider's guide to career opportunities",* Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.

Morejele, P., Chikoko P., & Ngcobo, N. (2013). Do women have to grow muscles in order to manage schools? Evidence from some South African school principals. *The Anthropologist 15* (2). Retrieved from: https://doi.org/10.1080/09720073.2013.

Morris, D. (2008). The ultimate dictionary of over 1,000 dog breeds. Trafalgar square

Moore, C. (2003). *The mediation process*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Msila, V. (2012). Conflict management and school leadership. *Journal of communication, 3*(1), 25-34.

Msila, V. (2013). Obstacles and opportunities in women in school leadership. A literature study. *International Journal of Educational Studies, 5*(4), 463-470.

Msila, V., & Netshitangai, T. (2016). Women and leadership: Learning from an African philosophy. *In V. Msila., & M. T. Gumbo (Eds). Africanising the curriculum: Indigenous perspectives and Theories* (pp 83-97). Stellenbosch: Sun Press.

Mugenda, O. M., & Mugenda, A. G. (2012). *Research methods: Quantitative and Qualitative approaches*. Nairobi: Acts Press.

Mullins, L. J. (2010). *Management & Organizational behaviour* (9th ed.). London: Prentice Hall.

Mumby, D. k. (2013). *Organizational Communication: A critical approach*, Thousand Oaks: SAGE publications.

Nebe, J. M. (2012). *Civil Conflict Management of Post-Election Violence 2007/2008 in Kenya: Lessons learnt and the way forward,* Germany: University of Trier.

Neher, W. (1997). Challenges of change, diversity and continuity: Organizational Communication. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Netshitangani, T. (2014). Situated account: Qualitative interviews with women educational managers. *Journal of social anthropology, 5*(2), 235-246.

Nhema, F., & Zeleza, P. T. (2008). *The resolution of African Conflicts: The management of conflict resolution and post conflict resolution*, Oxford: James Currey LTD.

Nordy, H. (August 2018). Management and Conflict Resolution: Conceptual tools for securing cooperation and organizational performance. DOI:10.5772/intechopen.72132. Available from:

https://www.intechopen.com/books/organisational conflict

Ntahori, and Ndayiziga, (2003). *Gender, Peace and Conflict*. London: SAGE Publication.

Ogenga, F. (2016). Beyond Material Interventions: Rethinking the role of gender, media and the politics of female violent extremism in Kenya. *A policy brief: Southern Voices for Peacebuilding, 9*, 1-4.

Ogosia, K. (2009). Why students went on rampage. Nairobi: Kenya Daily Nation.

Onguko, B., Abdala, M & Webber, C. F. (2008). Mapping principal preparation in Kenya and Tanzania, *Journal of Educational Administration, 46*(6), 715-726.

Pitman. N. Y., Turner, S., & Weed, F. (1983). *Conflict in Organizations.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Punch, K. F. (2005). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Tosi, H.L., Rizzo, J.R., & Carroll, S.J. (1986). *Organizational Behaviour.* New York:

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Portello, J.Y. & Long, B.C. (1994). Gender orientation, ethical and interpersonal conflicts and conflict handling styles of female managers. *Sex Roles*, 31, 683-701.

Punch, K. F. (2005). *Introduction to social research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.

Putnam, L. L., & Poole. M. S. (1987). Conflict and negotiation. In F. M. Jablin & L. L.
Putnam, L.L. (nd.). *Handbook of organizational communication: An interdisciplinary perspective.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Putnam, L.L. (1988). Communication and interpersonal conflict in organizations. *Management Communication Quarterly*, vol. 3.

Putman, P.G. (2015). Managing conflicts and diversity during implementation of programmes and other changes. *Derailed Organizational Interventions for Stress and Well-Being,* 119-126.

Rahim, M. A. (2017). *Managing conflict in organizations.* New York: Routledge.

Rahim, M.A. (2002). Towards a theory of managing organizational conflict. *The International Journal of Conflict Management, 13*(3), 206-235.

Ramani, K., & Zhimin, L. (2010). A survey on conflict resolution mechanisms in secondary schools: A case of Nairobi Province. *Educational Research and Reviews, 5*(5) 242-256.

Rarieya J. F., (2011). Becoming women school leaders in Kenya: Challenges and possibilities. *JENda Journal of Culture and African Studies, 19,* 25-43.

Rosengren, K. E. (2006). Communication: Introduction. CA: SAGE Publications.

Republic of Kenya, (2000). Ministry of Education Science and Technology: Report on he causes, effects and remedies of students' discipline and unrest in secondary schools -Sagini Report. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.

Republic of Kenya, (2001). Ministry of Education Science and Technology: Report of the task force on students' discipline and unrest in secondary schools -Wangai Report. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.

Republic of Kenya, (2008). Ministry of Education Science and Technology: Report of presidential committee on students' unrest and indiscipline in secondary schools. Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation.

Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative Inquiry in TESOL*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Richmond, V. P., McCroskey J. C., & McCroskey L. L. (2005). *Organizational Communication for Survival: Making Work, Work*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Stake, R. E (2010). Qualitative research: Studying how things work. New York:NT

Saeed et al (2014). Leadership styles: Relationship with conflict management styles *International Journal of Conflict Management 25*(3) DOI: 10.1108/IJCMA-12 2012-0091.

Saiti, A. (2015). Conflicts in schools, conflict management styles and the role of the school leader: A study of Greek primary school educators. *Journal of Educational Management, 43*(4), 582-609.

Shadare, A. O., Chidi, O. C., & Owoyeni, O. A. (2010). Gender influences of managerial style and Conflict management effectiveness in work organizations in South-West, Nigeria. *International Journal of Business Administration, 2*(1).

Spaho, H. (2013). Organizational communication and conflict management. *Journal of management 18* (1), 103-118.

Sutschek, L.B. (2001). Conflict resolution style and experience in management: Moderating the effects of gender. *Journal of Conflict Management*, 11, 110-122.

Suzuki, M. & Hayashi, Y. (2001). Conflict management and organizational attitudes among Japanese: Individual and group goals and justice. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology,* 4, 93-101.

Tannen, D. (1990). Gender differences in conversational coherence: physical alignment and topical cohesion. *Conversational organization and its developments* (pp. 167-206). Norwood (NJ): Ablex.

Tannen, D. (1990). *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation.* New York: William Morrow.

Task Force Report (2012). The realignment of the education sector to the constitution of Kenya, 2010. Nairobi: Government Printer

Taylor, A., & Hardman, M. J. (2004). War, Language and Gender. *Special issue of Women and Language, Vol. 27*(2).

Thomas, K. W. (1992). Conflict and conflict management. In M. Dunnette (2nd ed.). *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology.* Chicago: Rand McNally.

Thomas, K. W. (1992). Conflict and Conflict management. *Journal of organizational Behaviour, 13* (3). pp 265-274.

Thomas, K.W., & Kilman, R.H. (1974). *Conflict Mode Instrument.* Tuxedo, New York.

UNESCO (1995). Agenda for Gender Equality. *In UNESCO (1995). Women's Contribution to a Culture of Peace,* France: The women and a Culture of Peace Programme UNESCO.

Unterhalter, E., (2006). Gender, Education and Development. In C. Skelton, B. Francis & L. Smulyan (Eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Gender and Education,* pp.93-108. London: Sage Publications.

Wamocha L. M., Nasongo, J. M., Injendi, J. (2012). Intervention measures in conflict management in boarding secondary schools in western Kenya. Journal of current research of social sciences *4*(2), 103-108.

Wood, M. (1993). Gender and moral voice: From woman's nature to standpoint theory. *Women's Studies in Communication, 15*, 1-24.

Wood, M. (2001). A critical response to John Gray's Mars and Venus portrayals of men and women. *The Southern Communication Journal, 67*(2). 201-211.

Wood, M. (2005). *Gendered lives.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Yin, R. K (2009). *Case study research design and methods: Applied social research methods* (4th ed.). London: SAGE Publications.

Zucker, D. M. (2009). How to do Case Study Research: Teaching research methods in social sciences 2 Retrieved from https://scholarworks.umass.edu/2

APPENDICES

Appendix A1: interview guide for the woman principal & the deputy

Introductory Remarks

Since you are in charge of school management, your input will be very valuable to this study. This is why am interested in discussing this with you today. However, you are free to answer only those questions you feel comfortable with. You are assured of maximum discretion.

1. Please briefly share with me your professional as well as academic background (probe for number of years in leadership in the current school and other schools)

   Number of years in service and number of years as a principal

   Number of years as a principal in the current school; other schools

   How many schools headed

   Age bracket (20-30 years; 31- 40; 41-50; 50 and above)

   Academic: highest level of education (Diploma; B.Ed; M. Ed; PhD)

2. Please tell me the kind of training you have undergone to become a head teacher (probe for training related to conflict management; educational mgt or workshop in conflict mgt and communication).

   a) Have you attended any refresher course on communication and conflict management?

   b) If yes? What areas did you learn and what effect has it had if any on your day to day management of conflict in the school.

   c) Kindly explain to me what conflict means to you in a school set-up?

   d) In your understanding what would you say conflict management is? (Probe for the understanding of conflict and conflict management)

3. a) Have you experienced any workplace conflict in this school? If yes briefly explain to me the type of workplace conflict experienced (probe for types in terms of individual and group conflict; within and outside concerning the school; between students; teachers; parents; BOM and other stakeholders)

   b) In your view what are the causes of the conflicts mentioned above.

c)   Briefly explain to me how you manage the type of conflicts mentioned (probe for style and procedure: protocols or guides, school policy [who should do it, when, what are the roles of the principal] time, feedback, what aspect is dealt with, how feedback is delivered).

(Probe for management of conflict between administration and teachers; between teachers; teachers and students; teachers and parents

(d) Why do you manage conflicts the way you do?

e) Are there other people other than you who handle the conflicts mentioned above? If yes what are their roles?

f) Have you ever invited a speaker to talk to the students, teachers or stakeholders about conflict and conflict management?

If no why and if yes was there any impact of this talk on conflict management?

(g) Do you believe that your being female influence the way you manage conflict, if at all?

h) If no why and if yes how?

**Appendix A2: Interview guide for HOD (Guidance And Counselling*)*

Introductory Remarks

Since you are in charge of guidance and counseling, your input will be very valuable to this study. This is why am interested in discussing this with you today. However, you are free to answer only those questions you feel comfortable with. You are assured of maximum discretion.

1. Please, briefly share with me your professional as well as academic background (probe for number of years in leadership in the current school and other schools)

    Number of years in service and number of years as a senior teacher

    Number of years as HoD in the current school; other schools

    Age bracket (20-30 years; 31- 40; 41-50; 50 and above)

    Academic: highest level of education (Diploma; B.Ed; M. Ed; PhD)

2. Please tell me the kind of training you have undergone to become the HoD. Was it related to conflict management; educational management or workshop

    a) Have you attended any refresher course on communication and conflict management?

    b) If yes? What areas did you learn and what effect has it had if any on your day to day management of conflict

    c) If no why?

3. a) Kindly explain to me what conflict means to you in a school set-up?

    b) In your understanding what is conflict management (probe for the understanding of conflict and conflict management)

4. a) Have you experienced any workplace conflict in this school? If yes briefly explain to me the type of workplace conflict experienced (probe for types in terms of individual and group conflict; within and outside concerning the school; between students; teachers; parents; BOM and other stakeholders)

    b) In your view what are the causes of the conflicts mentioned above.

c) Briefly explain to me how you manage the type of conflicts mentioned (probe for style and procedure: protocols or guides, school policy [who should do it, when, what are the roles of the principal] time, feedback, what aspect is dealt with, how feedback is delivered).

(Probe for management of conflict between administration and teachers; between teachers; teachers and students; teachers and parents

(d) Why do you manage conflicts the way you do?

e) Are there other people other than you who handle the conflicts mentioned above? If yes what are their roles?

f) Have you ever invited a speaker to talk to the students, teachers or stakeholders about conflict and conflict management?

If no why and if yes was there any impact of this talk on conflict management?

(g) Do you believe that your being female influence the way you manage conflict, if at all?

h) If no why and if yes how?

i)   In your opinion what do you consider as the best ways of minimizing conflicts (probe for the case of teachers, students, workers, board of management)

j) Explain to me some of the challenges you face as you manage conflict the way you do above?(probe for challenge with teachers, students, parents; BOM)

k) Are there challenges that are as result of your being female? If yes which ones do you consider to be as a result of your being female?

I)   What do you suggest as ways of mitigating the challenges mentioned?

Are there any government policies regarding conflict and management?

(Probe   for   policies   on   teacher/student;   teacher/teacher;

teacher/administration; teacher/parent)

Appendix A3: Interview Schedule for Senior Teacher

Introductory Remarks

Since you oversee all that happens in the school, your input will be very valuable to this study. This is why am interested in discussing this with you today. However, you are free to answer only those questions you feel comfortable with. You are assured of maximum discretion.

5. Please tell me your name and briefly share with me your professional as well as academic background (probe for number of years in leadership in the current school and other schools)

   Number of years in service and number of years as a senior teacher

   Number of years as a senior teacher in the current school; other schools

   Age bracket (20-30 years; 31- 40; 41-50; 50 and above)

   Academic: highest level of education (Diploma; B.Ed; M. Ed; PhD)

6. Please tell me the kind of training you have undergone that is related to conflict management (probe for training on educational management or workshop; conflict management and communication skills).

   a) Have you attended any refresher course on communication and conflict management?

   d) If yes? What areas did you learn and what effect has it had if any on your day to day management of conflict

7. a) Kindly explain to me what conflict means to you in a school set-up?

   c) In your understanding what is conflict management (probe for the understanding of conflict and conflict management)

8. a) Have you experienced any workplace conflict in this school? If yes briefly explain to me the type of workplace conflict experienced (probe for types in terms of individual and group conflict; within and outside concerning the school; between students; teachers; parents; BOM and other stakeholders)

   d) In your view what are the causes of the conflicts mentioned above.

   e) Briefly explain to me how you assist the principal to manage the type of conflicts mentioned (probe for style and procedure: protocols or guides,

school policy [who should do it, when, what are the roles of the principal] time, feedback, what aspect is dealt with, how feedback is delivered).

(Probe for management of conflict between administration and teachers; between teachers; teachers and students; teachers and parents

(d) Why do you manage conflicts the way you do?

Appendix A4: Focus Group Interview Schedule For Prefects

Introductory Remarks

Since you assist in school governance as student governing council in this school, your input will be very valuable to this study. This is why am interested in discussing this with you today. However, you are free to answer only those questions you feel comfortable with. You are assured of maximum discretion.

1. a) Kindly explain to me what disagreement means to you in a school set-up?

2. Have you experienced any form of disagreement (probe for disagreement between students; students and teachers; students and prefects; student and administration; student and support staff). If yes who were involved?

3. What caused the disagreements mentioned above?

4. a) Briefly explain to me how you manage the type of conflicts mentioned (probe for style and procedure: protocols or guides, school policy [who should do it, when, what are the roles of the principal] time, feedback, what aspect is dealt with, how feedback is delivered).(Probe for management of conflict between administration and teachers; between teachers; teachers and students; teachers and parents

   (d) Why do you manage conflicts the way you do?

   e) Are there other people other than you who handle the disagreements mentioned above? If yes what are their roles?

   f) Are you trained on ways of resolving disagreements as students governing council? If yes please explain

   Is there any item on school rules that guide you whenever there is a disagreement?

   II)   In your opinion what do you consider as the best ways of minimizing conflicts (probe for the case of teachers, students, workers, board of management)

III) Are there challenges in resolving disagreements? If yes please explain.

   IV)   What do you suggest as ways of mitigating the challenges mentioned?

Appendix B: Document Analysis Protocol

Content	Purpose of the document	Section of the document relevant to the study	Analysis of document related to: meaning, type, cause of conflict, process of conflict management and role of principal
Log book			
Punishment book			
Minutes			
School Rules			
Teachers' code of conduct and Ethics The basic Education Act			

Appendix C: Ethical Clearance

P.O. BOX 103-40404
RONGO, KENYA
Email: dean-infocoms@ruc.ac.ke
Tel no: 0770308264

15th April, 2014

Dear Carolyne Kokeyo

REF: DECISION ON DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY PRESENTATION

Following the presentation of your proposed research topic for the degree of Doctor Philosophy at the School of Information, Communication and Media Studies held on the 2nd of April 2018, I am pleased to inform you that the Graduate School Committee has accepted your proposed research into full candidature.

You are hereby advised to submit four bound copies of your proposal of 30 pages by 28 April, 2018 to the Chair, Infocoms Postgraduate Committee. You are also expected to submit the first chapter of your thesis to your assigned supervisor(s) one month thereafter.

Best Regards,

Chairman, Infocoms Postgraduate Committee

Appendix D1: Research Permit

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MS. CAROLYNE ADHIAMBO
KOKEYO-ODERA
of RONGO UNIVERSITY, 0-40404
RONGO,has been permitted to conduct
research in *Migori   County*

on the topic: *MANAGING WORKPLACE*
CONFLICTS THROUGH COMMUNICATION
THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN
PRINCIPLES IN SELECTED PUBLIC
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MIGORI
COUNTY

for the period ending:
26th November,2019

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/18/28451/26468
Date Of Issue : 27th November,2018
Fee Recieved :Ksh 2000

....
Applicant's
Signature

....
Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation

209

Appendix D2:Letter Of Authorization from NACOSTI

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

Telephone:+254-20-2213471,
2241349,3310571,2219420
Fax:+254-20-318245,318249
Email: dg@nacosti.go.ke
Website : www.nacosti.go.ke
When replying please quote

NACOSTI, Upper Kabete
Off Waiyaki Way
P.O. Box 30623-00100
NAIROBI-KENYA

Ref: No. **NACOSTI/P/18/28451/26468**   Date: **27th November, 2018**

Carolyne Adhiambo Kokeyo-Odera
Rongo University
P.O. Box 103-40404
RONGO

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on *"Managing workplace conflicts through communication the experiences of women principles in selected Public Secondary Schools in Migori County"* I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in **Migori County** for the period ending **26th November, 2019.**

You are advised to report to **the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Migori County** before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit **a copy** of the final research report to the Commission within **one year** of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.

DR. STEPHEN K. KIBIRU, PhD.
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Migori County.

The County Director of Education
Migori County.

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation is ISO9001:2008 Certified

210

Appendix D3:Letter Of Authorization from the Ministry of Education

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
State Department of Education

Telephone: (059) 20420
Fax: 05920420
When replying please
quote

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
MIGORI COUNTY
P.O. Box 466-40400
SUNA – MIGORI

REF: MIG/CDE/TRN/1/VOL.II/112

DATE: 1st April, 2014

CAROLINE ADHIAMBO KOKEYO

P.O. BOX 818 – 40400

SUNA

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "Conflict Management". I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Migori County for a period ending 31st December, 2014.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit one hard copy and a soft copy of the research report/Thesis to this office.

Thank you.

Harrison Indimuli
For:COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
MIGORI COUNTY

Appendix E1: Information Sheet For The Principal

Carolyne Adhiambo Kokeyo
Rongo University
School of Information, Communication and Media studies
Rongo University College,
P. O. Box 103-40404
Rongo

3rd June 2015

The Principal,
School A; B; C; D
Migori

Dear Madam,

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN YOUR SCHOOL

I am a doctoral candidate at Rongo University pursuing doctoral studies in Communication. I request to conduct a study in your school in the area of communication and conflict management. The title of the study is: "**Managing workplace conflict through communication: the experiences of secondary school women principals in selected school in Migori county** ''. The purpose of the study is to explore your experiences, as the principal, in employing communication in conflict management.

To do this study, I will need to do the following: interview you as the principal, the deputy principal, the HoD guidance and counselling and the senior teacher. I also need to hold a focus group discussion with six prefects in your school. Further, I will analyze the following documents: school policy document, punishment book and minutes taken while managing conflict. The length of the study is eight weeks.

I will need to audio record the interviews, the focus group discussions and take field notes on what I shall have observed. However, you are free to answer only those questions you feel comfortable with. You are assured of maximum discretion on content of the interviews, the audio tapes and the field notes. The information obtained will be exclusively used for my study. In the final report of this study I will not identify the name of the school nor the participants. Participation is voluntary and the participants

have a right to withdraw from the research at any point for whatever reason they may deem.

I hope you will grant me permission to conduct the study in your school. I promise to work within the school timetable. If you require further details contact me through cell phone or via email.

Carolyne Kokeyo

Cell phone: +254723426007

Email Address: carolynekokeyo@yahoo.com

adhiambokokeyo@gmail.com

Appendix E2: Information Sheet for a Qualitative Research Project

Introduction

I, Carolyne Kokeyo a doctoral student at Rongo University pursuing doctoral studies in Communication, request to conduct a study in your school in the area of conflict and management. The title of the study is: **"Managing workplace conflicts through communication: the experiences of secondary school women principals in selected school in Migori County "**. The purpose of the study is to explore women principals' experiences of employing communication in conflict management. Since you are a school leader I would like to invite you to join this research study.

Background Information of Study

As our country is striving to reform our education system and improve student results, school leadership is high on the education policy agenda. What must not be ignored is the fact that the men and women who run schools are overburdened. Further, the role of school leaders has changed radically as countries transform their education systems to prepare young people to function in today's world of rapid technological change and economic globalization. One of the new roles that the school leaders are being asked to play is to not only manage workplace conflicts but also prepare young people to deal with conflicts. This is because schools are bound to experience conflicts and communication breakdown; especially in the 21st Century where stakeholders are aware of their rights.

Conflict can be defined as an interactive process manifested in disagreement between people or a group of people based on incompatibility of ideas or principles or interests (Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 6th Ed.). Conflict can be substantive (based on performance) or affective (based on relationship). Whether substantive or affective, conflict can be categorized as inter-organizational or intra-organizational (within the organization). This study looks at interpersonal conflict within the workplace. Interpersonal conflict can occur at the departmental level, work team or individual level. Interpersonal level within the organization involves disputes between peers as well as supervisor-subordinate conflict. Conflict Management is a communicative process of "handling grievances" by first understanding the type and the cause of conflict with a

view to bringing the problem to an end, preventing it from spreading and complicating the problem (Black ,1990:43). Conflict management involves minimizing the negative outcomes of conflict while promoting the positive outcomes with the aim of improving organizational learning (Rahim 2002).

Purpose of Research

The study seeks to explore women principals' experiences of managing conflicts through communication in selected schools in Migori County.

Procedures

In this study I will ask a few questions about your view on the type of conflict that has been experienced, the process of managing conflicts through communication, what you consider as ways of minimizing conflicts and the challenges you have faced in the school while managing conflicts. During interviews I will also request to audio tape this discussion which will later help me to reflect. This will take about an hour of your time. I will also look at the documents you use for conflict management such as school policy, punishment book and minutes taken during conflict management.

Possible Benefits and Risks

There is no risk involved in this study except your valuable time. There is no direct benefit to you also. However, the results of the study may help formulate guidelines for conflict management to improve communication practices in your school. However should you request for a workshop, I will be more than willing to organize for one in your school.

Right of Refusal to Participate and Withdrawal

You are free to choose to participate in the study. You may refuse to participate without any loss of benefit which you are otherwise entitled to. You may also withdraw any time from the study without any adverse effect or any loss or benefit which you are otherwise entitled to. You may also refuse to answer some or all the questions if you don't feel comfortable with those questions.

Confidentiality

The information provided by you will remain confidential. Nobody except principal investigator will have an access to it. Your name and identity will also not be disclosed at any time. However the data may be seen by Ethical review committee and may be published in journal and elsewhere without giving your name or disclosing your identity.

Available sources of information

If you have any further questions you may contact Principal Investigator (Carolyne Kokeyo), Department of INFOCOMS, Rongo University, Rongo on cell phone number +254723426007

Appendix E3:Participant Consent Form

Authorization

I have read and understand this consent form, and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate, but I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable federal, state, or local laws.

I have read the participant information sheet and the nature and purpose of the study has been explained to me by Carolyne Kokeyo, a doctoral student at Rongo University. I understand that I will be audio recorded during two interviews for not more than an hour each. I am aware that I can withdraw from the research study without penalty.

I also understand that the audio recording will specifically be used to capture the questions asked and the responses given accurately which the researcher needs to replay later for reflections.

During the study, I shall be available for the interviews will be willing to give information to facilitate the study. I understand that while the information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified anywhere in the study by my real names.

Name: _____ signature: _____ date: _____

Appendix F1:School Policy Documents

ii) *FIGHTING*
All student-student differences should be settled in the right channel and NOT through fighting, exchange of words, physical confrontation or mob justice. Any student found or reported in such cases will be suspended pending the Board of Management's decision.

iii) *ALCOHOL AND DRUGS*
At no time in school should a student take alcohol or found in possession of alcohol, smoke cigarettes, cocaine or any other hard drug. A student found in possession of the same will be suspended pending the Board of Management's decision.

iv) *DEFIENCE/DISOBEDIENCE TO AUGHORITY*
All students must respect all adults in the school as well as fellow students and prefects. Any form of disobedience WILL NOT BE TOLERATED.

v) *NOISE MAKING*
This is totally prohibited in the school compound. A student found making noise will be given measured work. If the behavior persists then the parents will be summoned.

vi) *GROOMING*
All students are expected to be smart and neat all the times. Students with long hair are allowed to use black hair bands.
Make ups e.g nail polish, lipstick and eye pencil e.t.c aren't allowed in school.

vii) *ABUSIVE LANGUAGE*
No student is allowed to use abusive language in school. Any student found guilty shall be given measured work.

viii) *TRUANCY*
All students are expected to attend all classes.

ix) *SLEEPING IN CLASS*
Sleeping in class is not allowed.

x) *BULLING*
No student is allowed to bully another student. Any student found guilty shall be suspended pending Board of Management decision.

xi) *UNLAWFUL DEMONSTRATIONS/STRIKE/RIOT.*
No student is allowed to participate in unlawful demonstrations/strike/riot. Any student found participating in unlawful demonstration/strike/riot shall be suspended pending Board of Management's decision.

xii) *VANDALISM/DESTRUCTION OF SCHOOL PROPERTY.*
Any student found guilty shall be suspended pending Board of Management's decision.

6

Appendix F2: Minutes

<u>Min 7 10/2015 Missing Lessons</u>

After a careful investigation on the matter coming to us concerning the conduct of a staff member regarding missing lessons, it was agreed that the member be issued with a warning concerning the same failure to which the staff member would face disciplinary action. Hence a meeting was convened on the same. The teacher before the BoM, principal and the disciplinary action became extremely rude and could not own up to his actions. It was agreed that the teacher be called again to discuss the same issue

Chairman.............................   Secretary.......................

Date ....   Date ....

Appendix F3: Confession

(F3)

I promise to change
and to reduce alcohol
intake. I want to
change to be a good
teacher and to take
care of my family
Please give me a
chance.

Yours faithfully

Museveni

Appendix G: Confession

Tukakula, Baada ya kula, saa nikaanza tu kuji
nafanya nini shule, nikaambia kavendor me n
sitai lala shule, nikatoka ka. mtu anaenda t
Hapo sasa nikaanza tu kujiongeleslsa. Sa nasi
sa hii wall ndogo inaeza nishinda kupita, by
time soldier mwingine alikua uko chini ya
Anita dorm, akamulika torch, nikasema tena,
huyu mtu anamulika nani nani na torch.
Nikatoka hapo nikaenda kwa Beril kisia ku
key ya charline juu yangu nilisahau nyumbani
kista akaniambia charline akuacha ke
si tukaenda pump, ao teria nikamwambia, naez
pita ile gate adi niende nyumbani. Sai.
Akasema "gate man anaeza kukuchapa" nika
"Aii sa huyu mtu araeza nikataza kupita g
mimi naeza pitaa na akuna kitu anaeza
si kista akacheka tu akasema, we unarog
leo. si tukaremka akaenda class yao
pia nikaenda yetu, nikakaa kiasi alafu niki
pesa kwa bag na bank slip, nikaambia.
kavendor, mtu akimulizia mwambie nimeenda
kuleta key yangu nyumbani si nikatoka nika
wall ya choo nikaenda, nikapata bodo
nikapanda, alafu nikaenda adi kwa king
mum akaptgia charline akaniletea phone, u
nguo nikachange akanichkea Uniform. Tukapi
beshte wetu flani inaitwa Bob, tukamwambi
anichutrue niende nilale kwao ju
na charline walisea walisema nikilala k
parents wao watani suspect. Si Bob akakan
akanichutrua, sa kata iyo usiku sikulala
ata sikua na usingizi.