



EXISTING CONFLICTS AMONG STAFF MEMBERS IN SELECTED PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN TANZANIA

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Abstract:

Public secondary schools refer to the secondary schools that receive government support and its operations are controlled by the government. In recent years, several educational institutions in Tanzania have experienced conflicts among schools' staff members. This study was conducted in Dodoma City Council, which is found in Dodoma Region, Tanzania. The area was selected randomly. A sample of 110 informants was drawn. Both primary and secondary data were collected. The study revealed that, conflicts vary from one school to another but the most experienced type of conflict in public secondary schools were interpersonal conflicts which include conflict between staff members and heads of schools, staff members themselves, teachers and students' parents as well as members of school committee or village leaders. Furthermore, conflicts in public secondary schools were caused by difference in individuals' attitudes, inadequate resources, friends' influence, indiscipline on the part of schools' staff members and administrators, favoritism by the school administrators, administrative incompetence and the misuse of funds.

Keywords: secondary schools, conflict, teacher

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Secondary Education is the education which children receive in a school system after primary education and before the tertiary level. Its broad goals include the preparation of the child for useful living within the society. In specific term, secondary education is to provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for higher education (Nwachukwu et al., 2018).

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Public secondary schools refer to the secondary schools that receive government support and its operations are controlled by the government for example, posting of teachers and funding in the schools under investigation. As suggested by (Anashie & Kulo, 2014) conflicts abounds in every organization (school) and that as long as human beings interact, conflict will continue to occur.

According to (Fabunmi & Alimba, 2014) conflict is a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate the rivals. This definition reveals that the causes of conflict are struggle over values, status, power and resources. It equally indicates that conflict is a competition or opposition. Fadipe (2000) sees conflict as a form of disagreement in an establishment between two individuals or groups who have cause to interact formally or informally. Similarly, Miller and King (2005), see it as basically a disagreement over compatible goals. Conflict therefore is a process of incompatible behaviors. It may involve the interference or disruption by one person or group of persons, or in some way or ways which make another action less likely to be effective. According to Deutsch (1973), conflict inevitably means that people are working against each other, in such a manner that what one wants is incompatible with that which another wants. It could bring about competition in the pursuit of goals. What the competitor gets comes at the expense of others or the job. It is therefore counter-productive, disruptive, unnatural, and produces a deviation from the free flow of events.

Conflicts arise due to different opinion, and they may result in poor working relationship among staff members (Saleh, 2012). Conflicts are among organizational attributes and are unavoidable in any organization. Conflicts can enhance performance of the organization but if not well managed, they can affect the achievements of the organization (Kondalkar, 2007). Conflict is a necessary and useful part of organizational life. It is inevitable and an integral part of the process of change. Indeed, it is an aid to cooperation, not an obstacle. There are two sides to conflict, one is destructive and unhealthy and the other has a problem-solving base where those involved are willing to sublimate personality differences, to listen to others' views and to be open and candid to each other, to be supportive and helpful whereas the former defeats cooperation.

Certainly, Tanzania is not exempted from conflicts in its schools. A good number of conflicts have been documented in Tanzanian secondary schools. For example, in 2013 a conflict occurred at Ilboru Secondary School between students and administration, where the students beseeched the government to intervene and amicably solve the persisted conflict at the school. In this conflict, the impacts included closure of the school and dismissal of some students (The Guardian, 25, January 2013). Also, conflict between the students and the administration occurred at Morogoro Lutheran Junior Seminary in 2013. The impact of the conflict included the closure of the school and existence of hatred between teachers and students. To its extreme, the students were demanding that some of the teachers be expelled from the school. Consequently, the heads of the school resigned from his position and some of the students were suspended from studies due to their roles in inciting others to strike (Mwananchi, 20, January 2013).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The manifestations of conflict in the school climate can either be constructive or destructive in nature. When it is constructive, it creates a positive climate that will promote effective teaching and learning process. It is destructive in nature, when school climate is hostile to social activities in the school. This is the point where activities are characterized by *“lot of dissension, anger, hostility, mistrust, conflict and suspensions”* (Fabunmi & Alimba, 2014).

In recent years, several educational institutions in Tanzania have experienced conflicts among schools' staff members in schools. Such conflicts are the setbacks in the provision of quality education. The problem continues whereas a result it brings classes among individuals, withdrawing/ terminating from the work, destruction of the school properties, and failure to provide the service as it is required.

This study aims at exploring the existing conflicts, and sources of conflicts among staff members in public secondary schools. Knowing conflicts and their sources might pave way to come up with strategies in managing conflicts among staff members in public secondary schools.

2. Existing Literature and Research

A study by (Fabunmi & Alimba, 2014) identified various forms of conflicts existing in secondary schools as conflicts between management and staff, between staff and students, between the communities and schools, and interpersonal conflicts. Secondary schools are fraught with various forms of conflict which can be identified as *“conflict can occur between the student and the teacher, between a student and another student, or between the teacher and the parent”*.

As opined by (Fabunmi & Alimba, 2014), the possible conflicts that can occur in secondary schools are principal-teacher conflict, conflict between teachers and students, conflict between the community and the school, student - student conflict, teacher-parent conflict, and conflict between teachers. These forms of conflicts can be categorized as interpersonal conflict, intragroup conflict and intergroup conflict and they are caused by numerous factors within or from outside the system.

In their study (Fabunmi & Alimba, 2014) identified the following sources of conflicts; Management of finances; The elections of board Chairmen; New teachers' recruitment; New students' admissions; Materials assistance for sponsors from schools; and Students' freedom of worship. Other effects that the study found out are: discouragement of effective teaching behavior; destruction of school facilities; resulting in violent fight; encouragement of factions among teachers; inducement of stress among teachers; resulting in suspension of teacher; hatred among teachers; and poor quality of education.

A study by (Loyce et al., 2015) identified sources of conflicts as poor teacher commitment, teachers and students' indiscipline, insults, defamation of character, name

calling, false accusations, non-tolerance of differences in others, sarcasm, misconceptions, and misrepresentations among others.

3. Methodology

This section presents the methodological framework and discusses the following aspects: research approach and design, area of the study, population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection methods and instruments, and data analysis. Furthermore, validity and reliability of the data, as well as ethical considerations was also be presented in this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a survey study design which is more descriptive and explanatory in nature because it is allowing researchers to use multiple methods of data collection like documentary review, interview, focused group discussion and questionnaire. Through these tools, researchers were able to get rich information regarding the existing conflicts in public secondary schools.

3.2 Research Approach

This study employed mixed approaches in the process of data collection and analysis. However, qualitative approach dominated in this study because this approach enabled the researcher to generate enough data through direct interaction with people in the field. (Kothari, 2004), states that the qualitative approach to research is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behavior. Quantitative approach was also used to supplement the qualitative data. In this study the qualitative research and quantitative research approaches were combined for the purpose of triangulation and complementary to maximize the quality and reliability of the data that was collected.

3.3 Area of the Study

This study was conducted in Dodoma Municipal Council, in Dodoma Region. Dodoma Region is made up of seven districts, which are Dodoma Municipal Council, Kondoa, Kongwa, Chemba, Mpwapwa, Chamwino, and Bahi.

The area was selected randomly because the issue of conflicts among the staff members is commonly seen in every place or institution that has more than one person. Public Secondary schools in Dodoma Municipal Council like any other schools in any region in Tanzania is faced by the issue of conflicts among staff members. Public secondary schools in Dodoma Municipal Council were selected randomly to represent all the public secondary schools in other regions in Tanzania. The reasons and the factors above make this area to be considered ideal and rich of information as far as this study was concerned.

3.4 Population Study

The target population was heads of schools, and school staff members in public secondary schools.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

3.5.1. Sample

It was not possible to deal with the whole target population; therefore, a sample of 110 informants was drawn. This comprised of ten (10) heads of schools from ten (10) public secondary schools, ten (10) staff members from each of ten (10) public secondary schools, making a total of 10 heads of schools and 100 staff members, and ten (10) public secondary schools. The sample was obtained from reading other studies of this kind and gained the experience that they used the sample size that ranged from 75 to 100 respondents, in which the reason was to enable the researcher to gain rich and enough data to support the study.

3.5.2. Sampling Technique

Researchers employed Purposive sampling and simple random sampling techniques in selecting the required sample.

3.6. Data Collection Methods and Instruments

In this study, both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data were collected through interview, questionnaire, and focused group discussion. Secondary data were collected from journals, periodical, research publication, and official records. Instruments used in collecting data were Interviews, documentary review, questionnaire and focused group discussion.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Study

3.7.1 Validity

Validity deals with how well an instrument measure what it is meant to measure. Validity also deals with how a respondent responds to question. It depends on the respondents' attitude and mind condition and related to the respondents' ability to answer the questions asked in the instrument. Since no single data collection technique is sufficient by itself for collecting valid data, the study used multiple methods including interview, focused group discussion and questionnaire. This procedure of using data collection instrument made one instrument complement the others.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability constitutes the ability of measuring instrument to produce the same results. The reliability of the research can be achieved if someone else can repeat the research and get same results. Hence, the information that were provided by respondents like interview does not vary because of characteristics of respondent, instrument or

measurement of device itself. Researchers conducted a pilot study to test the reliability and validity of the questionnaires.

3.8 Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis involved editing, coding, classifying and tabulation of the data that was collected for the purpose of summarizing and organizing the data in such a way that they answered the questions of a given study. Data that were obtained from questionnaire were analyzed mostly by descriptive statistics where by the mean and standard deviation value were used in the interpretation of the data from the questionnaire. Also, the finding was summarized and presented in charts and graphs, so the calculations were more involved than words for the case of questionnaire data. On the other hand, the information that were obtained from interviews, focused group discussion were analyzed mostly qualitatively through thematic analysis. The collected data were analyzed manually using thematic data analysis procedures.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The research ethics were observed, including maintaining confidentiality, anonymity, and objectivity, avoiding respondents' physical and psychological harm and ensuring informed consent. Researchers explained the purpose and the usefulness of the data to be obtained from the study to potential participants selected. At the site, early to the respondents taking part in interview, questionnaire, focus group discussions, and the respondents were assured of their security, privacy, and confidentiality of the information they provided. During interviews, researchers used private rooms to make the interviewees feel free to express their views.

4. Analysis and Presentation of the Findings

4.1 Demographic Information

Data shows that 56 respondents were female staff members compared to 44 male staff members. One head of school was a female against nine male heads of schools. In addition, it was found out that (24%) staff members were aged from 20-29 years, (61%) staff members were aged from 30-39 years, (11%) staff members were aged from 40-49 years, (4%) staff members were aged over 50 years.

Table 1: Respondents, Gender, Age and marital status

Group	Number of respondents			Gender			Age				Marital status		
	Sample	Respons	Total	Male	Female	Total	20-29	30-39	40-49	Over 50	Married	Single	Total
Staff members	100	100	100	44	56	100	24	66	11	4	78	22	100
Heads of schools	10	10	10	9	1	10	0	2	7	1	10	0	10
Total	110	110	110	53	57	110	24	68	18	5	88	22	110

On the part of heads of schools, 2 respondents were aged 30-39 years, 7 respondents were aged from 40-49 years, and only 1 respondent was aged over 50 years. It appears therefore that majority of the staff members in public secondary schools in Dodoma City Council were aged 20-29 and 30-39 years while majority of the Heads of schools were aged over 40 years.

On the case of marital statuses, it was found out that 78 (78%) were married staff members while 22 (22%) were single staff members and 10 (100%) heads of schools were married. It can therefore be shown that majority of the staff members and heads of schools in public secondary schools were married compared to single teachers.

Table 2: Education Levels of the Respondents

Respondents	Level of education				
	Master's	Bachelor's degree	Diploma	Certificate	Form four
Staff members	16	72	0	12	0
Heads of schools	3	6	1	0	0

Table 2 above shows that there are 16 staff members with master's degree, 72 with bachelor of education degrees, and 12 staff members with certificate. Likewise, there were 3 (30%) heads of schools with Master's degree, 6 (60%) and 1 (10%) with Diploma in education. It can therefore be concluded that staff members and heads of schools had the minimum qualifications to enter their professions or carriers.

Table 3: Experience of the respondents (in frequency)

Respondents	Years in teaching profession							
	0-5		6-10		11-15		Above 15	
Staff members	30	30	49	49	14	14	7	7
Heads of schools	0	0	2	20	3	30	5	50

Table 3 shows that most of the heads of schools had been in leadership for more than 15 years, while few heads of schools had been in leadership for more than 6-10 years. On the other hand, most of the staff members in public secondary schools had been working in their positions for more than 6-10 years (49%), while few staff members have been in their working positions for more than 15 (7%) years.

Table 4: Most common conflicts in Public secondary schools

Types of staff members' conflict	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Inter-personal conflicts	49	49.0	49.0	49.0
Intra-personal conflicts	28	28.0	28.0	77.0
Inter-organizational conflicts	19	19.0	19.0	96.0
Intra-organizational conflicts	4	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Looking at the data in Table 4 above, it is evident that inter-personal conflicts are a serious problem in public secondary schools. This type of conflicts occurred between staff members and parents, among staff members themselves, teachers and heads of schools, teachers and students, even between schools and within schools. Even during the interviews, heads of schools had the following to say:

“In this school, conflicts exist, I provide you one example whereby last year our school had a conflict with a certain nearby school because the head of such school used to send his staff members to convince our students to shift to their school because it is the only school with higher performance in academic as compared to other schools including theirs. So, when we discovered that thing, we came into conflict with that school.”

In addition to that another head of school from a particular school said *“recently we are in conflict with the people around the school who are our neighbors due to the boundaries where the government has built the school in their plot promising to repay them back but still did not pay them, so they demand to be given back the plot or be paid”*. (Interview, heads of schools July 2021).

The finding in Table 5 indicates that 31 (31%) cited the causes of conflicts to be attitude, 13 (13%) cited friend’s influence, 5 (5%) indicated misuse of funds, 24 (24%) indicated that the cause is inadequate resources, 7 (7%) respondents said administrative incompetence, 9 (9%) cited favoritism by the school administrators, and on the other hand 11 (11%) cited the cause to be the indiscipline on the part of school’s staff members and administration.

Table 5: Causes of staff members conflicts in public secondary schools in Dodoma City Council

Causes/ Factors	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Attitude	31	31.0	31.0	31.0
Friend's influence	13	13.0	13.0	44.0
Misuse of funds	5	5.0	5.0	49.0
Inadequate resources	24	24.0	24.0	73.0
Administrative incompetence	7	7.0	7.0	80.0
Favoritism by the school administrators	9	9.0	9.0	89.0
Indiscipline on the part of school's staff members and administration	11	11.0	11.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

It can therefore be shown that the causes of staff member’s conflicts in public secondary schools include differences in individuals’ attitudes that make people to perceive things differently, followed by inadequate resources that leads to ineffectiveness on the part of heads of schools in managing staff members’ conflicts, friends’ influence towards various issues, indiscipline on the part of school’s staff members and administration, favoritism by the school administrators, administrative incompetence as well as misuse of funds.

During interviews, respondents had the following to say on causes of staff members conflicts in public secondary schools.

“...In my school conflicts are always there between staff members themselves, head of school and other staff members, the school and people around the school, students’ parents and the teachers and sometimes teachers and students, where such conflicts arise due to various factors, for example failure of the staff members to fulfil their responsibilities like when teachers refuse to write the lesson plans, scheme of work and also I have encountered several misunderstanding with my staff members due to coming later to school without clear reasons... (Head of school, July, 2021)

Another respondent said the following:

“...Recently in my school most of the conflicts arise because of the shortage of school funds (capitation) for school’s activities. Conflicts between head of school and teachers occur during extra activities like examination invigilation which requires money especially when the money has not been given to them as the allowance...” (Head of school, July, 2021)

Other respondents commented that,

“...conflicts in our schools are due to absenteeism of some staff members at the working place and when they are asked they tend to get hot tempered and thus misconduct, can also arise due to indiscipline like dressing code, shaving style, drunkenness of the staff members around the school area and outside it, and also failure of the staff members and students to adhere to the school rules and regulations.” (Head of school, July, 2021)

Likewise, during the group discussions other respondents had the following to say on the causes of staff members’ conflicts in their respective school:

“...Most cases of staff member’s conflicts in our schools are due to personal stress where staff members go to the working place with much stress thus when they are told something they rise up and thus misunderstandings, failure to fulfil the responsibilities by staff members, punishment of the students by teachers thus parents can riot toward the situation, in adequate resources like teaching and learning materials, chairs and tables, indiscipline cases, growing a sense of mistrust among staff members, lack of transparency on the issue of financial and resource allocation and also the issue of school boundaries...” (Group discussions, July, 2021)

5. Discussion of the Findings

5.1 Types of Conflicts Existing among Staff Members in Public Secondary Schools

Regarding the types of staff members' conflicts in schools, the findings revealed that the major common types of conflicts are inter-personal conflicts, intra-personal conflict, inter-organizational conflicts as well as intra-organizational conflicts.

Inter-personal conflicts are dominant in public secondary school due to the differences in attitude among the individuals. Due to this some conflicts arise between heads of schools and other staff members, staff members themselves and sometimes students' parents. This situation always happens when an individual decides to do or act in particular ways that he or she feels to be right, but another person sees it to be wrong. For example, a teacher can punish a student for doing a certain thing that can lead to failure, but the student's parent can perceive it negatively thus resulting into misunderstanding.

5.2 Causes of Conflicts

Concerning the causes of staff members' conflicts in public secondary schools, the findings revealed that staff members' conflicts are caused by various factors including individual differences in attitude, friends' influence, misuse of funds, inadequate resources, administrative incompetence, favoritism by the school administrators and the indiscipline on the part of schools' staff members and administrators.

Regarding the individual differences in attitude, the findings showed that most of the conflicts arise because staff members vary in the way they perceive issues, thus every individual can decide to do or act the way he or she feels to be right while the other perceives it differently. Thembinko and Tichaona (2013) portrayed that the individual differences can result in conflicts in arguing matters, thus the leader must be neutral and consider everyone's perception and find out its truth.

6. Conclusion

Effectiveness of heads of schools' copied strategies is very important in running the school activities smoothly.

Major common types of conflicts are inter-personal conflicts, intra-personal conflict, inter-organizational conflicts as well as intra-organizational conflicts. Inter-personal conflicts are dominant in public secondary school due to the differences in attitude among the individuals. Due to this some conflicts arises between heads of schools and other staff members, staff members themselves and sometimes students' parents. This situation always happens when individual decides to do or act in particular ways that he or she feels to be right, but another person sees it to be wrong.

Findings revealed that staff members' conflicts are caused by various factors including individual differences in attitude, Friends' influence, misuse of funds, inadequate resources, administrative incompetence, favoritism by the school

administrators and the indiscipline on the part of schools' staff members and administrators.

6.1 Recommendation

Public secondary schools must come up with strategies in managing conflicts.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interests.

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