



Original Article

## An Investigation of the Causes of Conflicts between Teaching Staff and Principals in Public Secondary Schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County, Kenya

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**Keywords:**

*Communication,  
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Principals,  
Teaching staff,  
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Schools.*

Communication is the nervous system of an organisation, and its success depends very much upon the coordinated efforts of people working at different levels to achieve a common goal. Conflict, on the other hand, is an expression of hostility, antagonism and misunderstanding between the staff members. Most of these conflicts occur in secondary schools, middle-level colleges, and tertiary institutions MOE (2002). The Ministry of Education report indicates that in spite of the government policies put in place, there has been an upsurge of unrest in schools, together with strikes by teachers and high rates of transfers of principals and teachers in the recent past. This paper investigates the causes of conflicts between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Kenya. This study was carried out in Rachuonyo South Sub County in Homabay County, Kenya. The objective of the study was to investigate the causes of conflicts between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County in Homabay County. A mixed methods approach consisting of a survey questionnaire and interview schedules involving 62 survey participants and 4 in-depth interviews with the principals and teachers was adopted. Quantitative data was sought using questionnaires and were analysed using Statistical Package of Social Sciences, while qualitative data from interviews with the principals were analysed by narrative analysis. The findings of the study revealed that Poor communication and competition for limited resources were the main causes of conflicts between teaching staff and principals. It was revealed further that the conflicts were purely work-related. Based on this, it is recommended that there is a need to offer training to both teachers and principals on the use of the best communication strategies for conflict management so as to help in the management of conflict in schools. In addition, there is a need to take teachers and principals for workshops and seminars on professionalism in order to minimise work-related conflicts.

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## INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the causes of conflicts between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County in Homabay County, Kenya. The paper is divided into five main sections, specifically: the background of the study, the methodology, findings, discussion, and conclusions.

### Defining Conflict and Communication

Conflicts occur when two or more parties, with perceived incompatible goals, seek to undermine each other's goal-seeking capability (McNamara, 2007). From time to time, conflicts have been in existence and are actual or perceived opposition to needs which are deemed to be inevitable. In fact, clashes of interests, values, opinions, actions, or directions often spark conflicts in every workplace, school included. With time, the causes of conflicts have expanded, and their types have likewise grown in complexity (Whetten & Cameron, 2002).

When conflicts arise, their effects are often more far-reaching than the individuals involved and can affect many associated individuals and relationships in more or less adverse ways, thus affecting school fraternity and academic achievement. Without

proper social arrangement or resolution, conflicts can result in stress, unnecessary fatigue, or tensions among stakeholders (Yambo, Odhiambo & Odera, 2014). It is on this note (Mudis & Yambo, 2015) contend that it is prudent to properly manage conflicts by using various means, including guidance and counselling, which every school should endeavour to make effective. Whereas communication is the process of sharing ideas and entails sharing messages and information with other people in a given time and place (Mensah, 2010). Communication is not just giving information, but it is also giving information that can be understood and receiving and understanding the message (Mensah, 2010). It is a means by which thoughts are transmitted from one person to another.

Communication is, thus, a fundamental intermediate amongst organisations. It gives different stakeholders a chance to air out their opinions and further their relationships. For the organisation to thrive, there is a dire requirement to contemplate the opinions of key stakeholders, for instance: students; the Ministry of Education; parents; supplier's investors; consumers; stakeholders; employees, and other community associates in the school's locality.

Scholars have thus put emphasis that the key to managing social and financial conflicts in schools well is choosing and executing the strategy that best fits the situation (Wong et al., 2016). Hence, the heightening and grasp of effective communication in conflict resolution between administrators and teaching staff are nevertheless key to conflict resolution in public secondary schools in the contemporary world (Kamande, 2016). Thus, in line with this, many learning institutions including public secondary schools, have experienced massive transfers of principals to different schools, and consequently, the causes of conflicts between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County have not been adequately and empirically investigated in Kenya.

### **Background of the Study**

Communication is the process of sharing ideas. It involves sharing messages and information with other people in a given time and place (Mensah, 2010). However, for communication to be said to have taken place, there is the exchange of shared meaning which occurs between two or more parties, and feedback is obtained. Communication is not just giving information, but it is also giving information that can be understood and receiving and understanding the message (Mensah, 2010). The success of an organisation depends very much upon the coordinated efforts of people working at different levels to achieve the common goal; without communication, the very existence of the organisation is in danger

Conflict, on the other hand, is the process which begins when one party perceives that the other has frustrated or is about to frustrate (Thomas, 2009). It involves situations in which differences are expressed by interdependent people in the process of achieving their needs and goals, and it arises when a difference between two or more people necessitates a change in at least one person in order for their engagement to continue and develop. Spaho (2013) notes that in an organisation, conflict

occurs when people engage in activities that are discordant to those of their colleagues in their circle of influence. Conflict in learning institutions takes different forms; for instance: teachers seem reluctant to obey the principals, they do not seem to follow the rules or accept extra work, and they do not easily get along with their principals. On the other hand, principals adopt an authoritative approach as they pressurise teachers for an uninterrupted working of the school activities. Conflicts in schools may reduce strengths and resources such as social support and integration among teachers and all those involved in education, which ultimately increases problems in schools among students (Omboko, 2010). Thus, conflicts not only threaten school functioning but may trigger a chain of other educational and social problems, which include abuse of office, disagreement, quarrels, hostility, and violent fights, which may have a negative impact on the successful running of the school.

In the Kenyan education system, various legislation serves as guidelines for the management and administration of educational institutions. However, it appears that most educational institutions have been less successful in how to manage conflicts MOE, (2002). The Ministry of Education report indicates that in spite of the government policies put in place, Kenyan educational institutions have continued to report increased cases of conflict. In the recent past, the concern has shifted to the changing nature and increased number of organisational conflicts. Most of these conflicts occur in secondary schools, middle-level colleges, and tertiary institutions MOE (2002). Many of the conflicts are characterised by violence and wanton destruction of institutional property. Between 1980 and 2008, the number of conflicts in public secondary schools alone increased from 22(0.9%) to 300(7.5%), MOE (2008). Republic of Kenya (2001) indicates that conflicts in Kenya's secondary schools have become a major problem that all stakeholders in education should take great concern. It affects the community, the school administration,

and the government directly or indirectly. If allowed to continue, it will ruin educational institutions and education itself.

There are more and more tussles about the roles of school stakeholders in education. The role of each of these stakeholders is clearly stated in the Kenya Education Act (Cap 211 of 1980), which notes that the commission responsible for the assignment of teachers to schools on behalf of the ministry shall assign teachers to schools after consultation with the Teachers Service Commission and so far, as may be compatible with the maintenance of proper educational standards at the school and the economical use of public funds. The principals of secondary schools have a great responsibility as they give direction to their teaching staff. They are responsible for all matters pertaining to the smooth running of the school. However, some principals have inadequate skills in human resource management, such as conflict management. Conflict can affect the effectiveness of an organisation. Some of the causes of conflict in the workplace include but are not limited to; limited resources, personal differences, poor communication, and lack of motivation, among others. It is impossible to identify conflicts in any organisation (Spaho, 2013). According to Newstorm and Davis (2002), prolonged interpersonal conflicts lead to the deterioration of cooperation and teamwork; at a personal level, some people may feel defeated while the self-image of others will decline, and their personal stress level will rise.

The recent upsurge of unrest in schools, together with strikes by teachers, has put focus on the relationship between schools principals and their teaching staff and, more so, the precise causes of conflicts in regard to schools management; this is because the principal's sit at the pivot table where different stakeholders expect them to run schools on their behalf, the government through Ministry of Education and the TSC confers the mandate and power to school principals over the management of

schools and teachers, the parents expectation are that their children are in the custody of the school authority at all time, while the teachers have their expectations in terms of career development and attainment. The sponsors and board have their focus on ensuring that the school optimise its resources for the betterment of the school. Therefore, school principals' attitudes and knowledge and style of leadership will determine the survival of the school. It is against this background that this study was deemed appropriate to investigate the causes of conflict between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County in Homabay County, Kenya.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Today's learning environments need peaceful coexistence so as to achieve the organisation's goals and objectives. As people and organisations evolve, conflicts become inevitable. Public schools experience diverse forms of conflicts in the course of their operations (Kamande et al., 2016). Communication links individuals, groups, societies, and nations, but people do not always do well in communication and thus end up with misunderstandings or breakdowns in relationships (Wanjama et al., 2010). This study investigates the causes of conflicts between the teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools within the Rachuonyo South sub-county, Kenya.

In spite of a number of studies carried out on conflicts between principals and teachers, little is known about the causes of conflicts in relation to conflict management. Nevertheless, even in the context of learning institutions (from preliminary studies) within the study area, there are still minimal studies to address the problem under study, more specifically, in Rachuonyo South Sub-County. Hence the need to investigate the causes of conflict between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County.

## Research Question and Scope of the Study

In trying to apprehend the problem specified above, and stated in this paper, the authors of this paper pursued to address one research question:

What are the causes of conflicts between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County?

Relative to the limitations, undoubtedly, this study was constrained with regard to the content as it only focused on only one aspect of organisational management, which is conflict management. It is relatively rational that in learning institutions, especially secondary schools, there were a number of issues emerging between the teachers and principals apart from conflicts. It would consequently be more elevating to cover those issues altogether. Secondly, this study covered only one Sub-County (Rachuonyo South Sub-County) and public secondary schools in (Rachuonyo South Sub-County). It would practicably have been more informative to get cognisance of other issues emanating from communication, progress, performance, and opportunities brought up by good relationships in public and private secondary schools in the larger Homabay County. Hence, it is important to clarify that the limits unfolded in this study were inevitable in any academic research, which by its nature was limited in relation to resources and time. This setting therefore limited the study's scope in relation to methodology, context, and content. Nonetheless, the thoroughness embraced in the realisation of the chosen scope was all-inclusive to guarantee the study outcomes were academically justifiable.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Causes of Conflicts in Secondary Schools

Conflicts do not appear out of thin air (Robbins, 2005); they have causes emanating from within and outside. These causes can be managed consciously and unconsciously. Studies done by Achoka (1990) posited that one of the causes of school conflicts has

been school structural factors. For instance, the size of the school correlates with the number of disputes.

A study conducted by Yambo and Tuitoek (2014) revealed that, that interest groups with different goals will run into differences at times, especially when competing for meagre resources and wanting to attain positions of influence and decision-making. Additionally, another research carried out by Scott (2009) established that competition can take the form of two individuals trying to outperform each other. Competition is deemed a healthy way that brings out creativity and can also erupt over a struggle for a scarce commodity (Omollo et al., 2016). This could lead not only to a lack of cooperation but to open conflicts as well.

In addition, Mudis and Yambo (2012) carried out research on the causes of conflicts in schools. The study findings concluded that some of the conflicts experienced in schools sometimes emanate from the leadership of the principals, BOM chairpersons or student leaders. In addition, Deutsch (2000) opined that since people have different personalities, this has often resulted in them doing things differently, which has been deemed to be normal. These diverse personalities could create the potential for conflict among the people concerned. On the other hand, (Mondy, Sharplin & Premaux, 2010; & Mudis & Yambo, 2012) stipulates that personality differences mean the characteristics of a person and the way in which he/she expresses him/herself, which clashes with that of other people. These people tend to blame others for their miseries.

In another study, Achoka (1990) asserted that communication problems may also cause conflict. He further noted that noise, semantic differences, and insufficient exchange of information are among the difficulties involved. Any distortion of information of either the sender or the recipient may cause unnecessary conflict in a school set-up or any organisation. Scott (2005) points out that communication is seldom perfect and imperfect; besides, it may result in misperception, interpretation, and misunderstanding. Due to the

fact that the receiver may not be listening actively, he/she may simply misunderstand the sender.

Moreover, Robbins (2000) asserts that conflicts can evolve out of the individual who idolises personal value systems. The chemistry between some people makes it hard for them to work together. Further, Aldag and Kuzuhara (2002), Gross and Guerrero (2000) and Yambo (2012) assert that individual conflicts are often associated with factors such as background, education, experience, and training, which mould each individual into a unique personality with a particular set of values. However, the causes of conflict between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County in Homabay County, Kenya, remains scanty and thus need for this study.

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed method approach with the aim of helping the researcher with concrete confirmation for clarifying a problem using more than one technique to address a problem, besides trying to resolve problems using numbers and words (Creswell, 2003). The mixed approach uses quantitative and qualitative techniques for collecting and analysing data in either a sequential or parallel manner (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). The amalgamation of qualitative and quantitative approaches offered a more thorough understanding of a research problem than either approach alone (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Creswell, 2014). The reasonableness of triangulation presumes that together qualitative and quantitative methods be combined to provide a broad interpretation of the phenomenon under study, hence the foundation of mixed methods (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

Usually, mixed research studies offer diverse prospects for augmenting both descriptive power and quality of data (Johnson et al. 2007; Tashakkori/Teddlie 2003; Axinn/Pearce 2006; Bryman 2008). They add to a deeper and wide understanding of social phenomena. Thus, for the

purpose of this study, qualitative data from interview schedules were sought from four principles and quantitative data was obtained from the questionnaires from 62 teachers. And thereafter, data was mixed in relation to the research objective.

## Location of the Study

This study was carried out in the Rachuonyo South Sub-County region of Kenya in the sampled public secondary schools. Rachuonyo South Sub-County was selected based on the fact that it was not possible to conduct the study in all secondary schools in the Republic of Kenya. Although this study could be carried out elsewhere in the republic of Kenya, Rachuonyo South Sub-County was ideal for this study because of the: high rate of transfer of principals and teachers in the recent past; and also, the time and resources available for this study would not allow the study to be conducted beyond one Sub County due to their scarcity.

According to the Teachers' Service Commission, Staffing Status for Secondary Schools in Rachuonyo, south sub-county (July 2020), there are 34 public secondary schools in the Sub County.

## Target Population

Target population is defined by Orodho (2009) as the total number of individuals, elements, or groups to be studied. Hence the target population for this study was all the public secondary school teachers and their 34 principals in Rachuonyo Sub-County. Principals served as key informants, while the teachers served as main respondents. According to the Teachers' Service Commission Staffing Status for Rachuonyo South Secondary Schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County (July 2020), the commission has 620 teachers in the 34 public secondary schools; two of the schools are exclusively for girls, one for boys, and the rest mixed.

### Sampling Technique

The aim of this study was to investigate the causes of conflict between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County of Homabay County, Kenya.

Sampling is the process of selecting and studying a subset of a population to obtain information regarding a phenomenon (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). On the other hand, sampling is described as the process carried out to select the research participants from a study population. The study adopted Purposive and stratified sampling. The teachers' respondents were selected by the use of stratified random sampling, which guaranteed equal chances of participation and also the selection of samples using set criteria. While the four principals were purposefully sampled as they were key informants for the study. In the purposive sampling method, the researcher chose suitable settings, events or people based on the information they can provide, unlike further sources (Maxwell, 1997; Teddlie & Yu, 2007).

### Sampling Size

In arriving at the sample size for this study. We adopted both probability and non-probability sampling (mainly purposive and stratified sampling). We adopted non-probability sampling to obtain a qualitative sample of the four principals from sampled public secondary schools in Rachuoyo South Sub-County respectively. And this suited this study because the intention of the study was not just to make generalizations but rather on in-depth information (Creswell, 2003). To arrive at the suitable size of the teacher respondents, 10% of the 620 teachers employed by TSC in Rachuoyo South Sub-County respectively, as applicable, which was 10% of (620 teachers), making a total of 62 respondents in public secondary schools in Rachuoyo South Sub-County. Mugenda (2003) asserts that 10 per cent of the accessible population is enough for a descriptive study

$n = N * 10/100$ , where  $n$  denotes the sample size.

$N =$  population size, where  $n = 620 * 10/100 = 62$

The 10% sample size was operational for the management of questionnaires as well as their analysis. In addition, Kothari (2004) confirms that a good sample should be one that justly represents a realistic level of confidence. Kothari (2009) further points out that 10% of the target population is enough sampling representative for a study.

### Research Instruments

In getting data, we primarily adopted questionnaires. Questionnaires were used to generate quantitative data from teachers' respondents on the fact that they were senders and recipients of information in public secondary schools in Rachuoyo South Sub-County and hence could provide diverse perspectives on conflict (Somekh & Lewin, 2005). This enabled the researcher to obtain answers to questions with specific responses. The questionnaire was preferred based on: its convenience, reliability, and validity in achieving the study's objective. Additionally, it enabled the researcher to get data on the communication strategies in conflict management among teachers and principals in their respective schools.

### Data Analysis

The data presentation for this study was systematic and descriptive in nature. The quantitative data analysis consisted of numeric measures. Bar graphs and tables were used in presenting quantitative data through frequencies and percentages besides interpretations of data guided by the research objective and analysed via SPSS.

### Ethical Considerations

According to Cooper et al. (2001), ethics in research are the norms or standards of behaviour that guide the research. Ethical consideration seeks to ensure that research practices do not infringe on human rights as well as the cultural norms and values of a

society (Mugenda, 2003). In relation to ethics, an introductory letter from postgraduate studies at Rongo University Kenya was sought, and a research permit from NACOSTI (National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation) to proceed to the field to collect data. We further sought permission from the appropriate organisational authorities in the public secondary schools in Rachuonyo Sub County to gain access to the geographical sites and respondents before data collection. An informed consent form for participants was likewise developed before engaging them in research Creswell (2009), owing up to the fact that their rights would be protected, assuring the study's respondents' anonymity, and keeping their names confidential.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The objective that guided the research was to investigate the causes of conflict between teaching

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by gender and age**

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	37	59.7	59.7
	Female	25	40.3	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	
Age	25-29 yrs	14	22.6	22.6
	30-40 yrs	38	61.3	83.9
	41-50 yrs	9	14.5	98.4
	51-59 yrs	1	1.6	100.0
	Total	62	100.0	

**Source:** (Researcher 2021)

From *Table 1* above, the majority of the respondents were male (57%), whereas (40.3%) were female. Hence an indication that there was gender disparity which can be explained by the Teachers' Service Commission staffing status for Homabay County Secondary schools.

The above *Table 1* shows that the majority of the respondents were male (61.3%) aged between 30 to 40 years, followed by (22.6%) of respondents aged between 25-29 years. While respondents, 14.5 % and 1.6%, aged 41-50 and 51-59 years, were an indication of the freeze in direct employment of civil servants by the government of Kenya in the

staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County in Homabay County, Kenya.

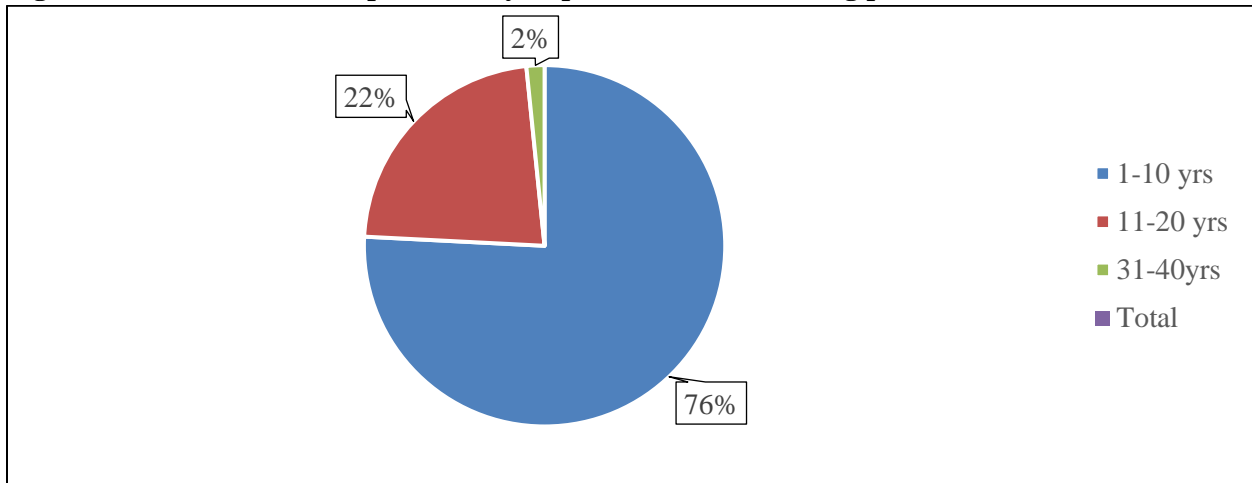
### Demographic Information of Respondents

The study sought to establish: gender, age, and length of service in the teaching profession. A total of sixty-two questionnaires were administered. Four interviews were conducted among key informants. The interviews were important as they helped the researcher to validate the data provided by the sampled teachers who responded to questionnaires. All the interview schedules were successfully conducted, and the questionnaires were filled, translating to a hundred percent rate owing to the fact that prior appointments with the respondents were made and observance of ethical issues.

early 90s. This concurred with (Mondy, 2010) that the government's guarantee of employment to graduates from tertiary institutions was discontinued due to its unsustainability as a result of a declining economy, the freezing of recruitment and the introduction of civil service retrenchment under the influence of the donor community. This further reveal that the majority of the teaching workforce is middle-aged, and the continued recruitment of teachers every year in recent years has opened opportunities for the younger generation below thirty years to join the profession hence a high number among the respondents.



**Figure 1: Distribution of Respondents by Experience in the teaching profession**



Source: (Researcher 2021)

From *Figure 1*, on length of service in the teaching profession majority of the respondents (n=47, 75.81 %) had worked for 1-10 years and (n=1, 1.61%) of the respondents had worked between 31 and 40 years, while (n=14, 22.58%) of the respondents had worked between 11 to 20 years. This was a clear indication that most of them were middle-aged and had benefited from the continuous recruitment of teachers by the Teachers’ Service Commission.

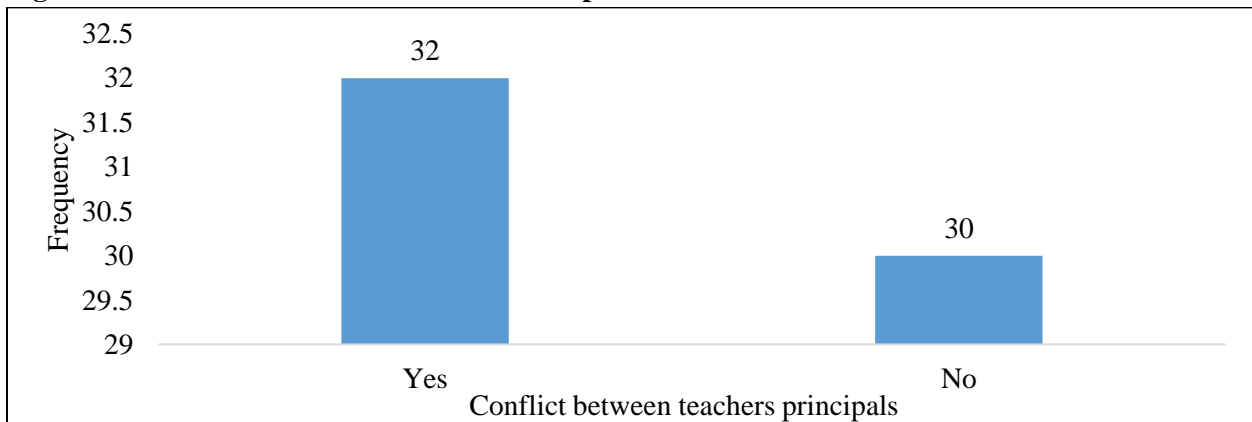
**Existence of Conflict between Self (Teacher) and Principal**

From *Table 2* above, the majority of respondents (51.6%) confirmed that conflict existed in their schools between teachers and their principals. This confirmed (Bidya, 2009; Verma’s 1998) assertion that conflict is a normal occurrence in society.

**Table 2: Existence of conflict between teachers and school principals**

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	32	51.6	51.6
No	30	48.4	100.0
Total	62	100.0	

**Figure 2: Existence of Conflict between Principal and Self.**



Source: Researcher, 2021

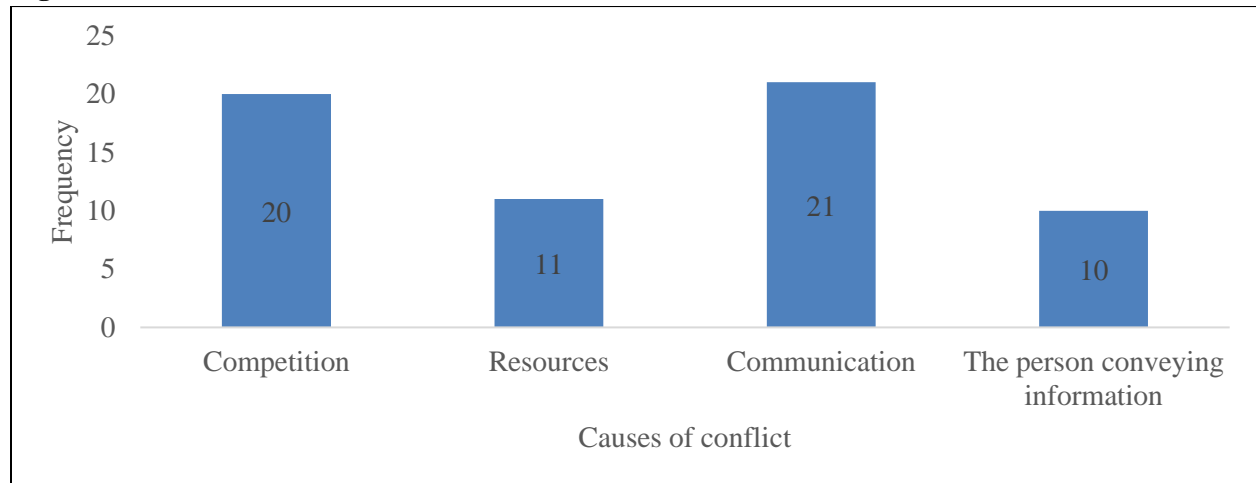
Figure 2 shows that (n=32, 38%) of the respondents had experienced conflict with their principals. This further confirms the earlier affirmation that whenever there is an interaction between individuals or groups of people, conflict is inevitable, and this is normal. This concurs with the findings of (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2002) that conflict is an old phenomenon and, in fact, as old as mankind and these days, have been causing concerns to all stakeholders in education and other employers alike. Moreover, (Mudis & Yambo, 2015) clarify that some of the conflicts experienced in schools sometimes emanate from the leadership of the principals, board of members, chairpersons, or

student leaders. Hence the justification for the existence of conflicts between teachers and principals in schools.

### Causes of Conflict

There are various reasons which can cause conflict in an institution, for instance, competition, resources, and communication, among others. However, Verma (2009) says communication breakdown is the most common and evident cause of conflict. To verify this, this study sought to establish the causes of conflicts between teachers and principals in schools. The figure below shows the findings.

**Figure 3: Causes of conflict in the institutions**



Source: Researcher, 2021

Overall, and based on the findings presented in Figure 3 above. We established that (n=21, 33.9%) of the respondents agreed that the conflict witnessed or encountered in their school with their principal was an outcome of problems in communication. As reported in the findings, semantic differences, distortion of information by either the sender or the recipient and insufficient exchange of information were some of the problems faced in communication, thus justifying (Achoka, 1990; Verma, 2009; Wanjama et al., 2010 & Spaho, 2013) assertions. Another key finding was that communication is rarely perfect; besides, deficient communication

may end up in misperception, misinterpretation and misunderstanding thus leading to conflict.

In addition, from an in-depth interview with the four sampled principals. The study reveals that although communication was established to be the main cause of conflict in schools, competition for meagre resources, performance, positions of influence and decision-making emerged as additional causes of conflicts in schools. As much as the competition was found to be healthy for it brings creativity, it can also erupt over a struggle for scarce resources, which eventually leads to conflict. The research findings agree with Omboko's (2010) finding that there is no single cause of conflict.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, this paper investigated the causes of conflicts between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub County in Homabay County, Kenya. While this study was limited to public secondary schools in one Sub County, the key finding is that conflict between teachers and principals occurs since every time people interact, conflict manifests. Based on the findings of this study, communication was found to play a key role in conflict management as it could either elicit fuel or scale down conflict in a workplace.

Based on this, it is feasible to conclude that communication is important in any organisation and relationship generally. The correct choice of communication strategy, effective communication, and involving teaching staff in decision-making would help in the management of conflict in the workplace and thus help in minimising conflicts in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County, Homabay County, Kenya.

Likewise, the frequency of interaction between principals and teachers needs to be increased to boost staff morale. The interactions should allow people to express their concerns freely without intimidation because when people feel intimidated, some decide to remain silent, yet silence could communicate either negatively or positively when in conflict.

## Recommendations

In relation to causes of conflict between teaching staff and principals in public secondary schools in Rachuonyo South Sub-County in Homabay County, Kenya. We recommend that there is a need to offer training to both teachers and principals on the use of the best communication strategies for conflict management in order to help in the management of conflict in schools. Additionally, there is a need to take teachers and principals for workshops and seminars on professionalism to reduce work-related

conflicts. Moreover, there is a need to embrace a range of communication strategies in conflict management apart from over-relying on meetings.

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