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EXAMINING CONFLICT TYPES AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON TEACHER PERFORMANCE: KESSES SUB-COUNTY, UASIN GISHU, KENYA

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Abstract

Conflict in secondary schools is inevitable due to differences in values, interests, teaching approaches, and expectations among stakeholders. Poorly managed conflicts can negatively affect teachers' performance and the overall learning environment. In public secondary schools in Kesses Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, persistent challenges such as ineffective lesson delivery, lateness to class, poor classroom discipline, incomplete syllabus coverage, and low participation in co-curricular activities have raised concerns. This study investigated the influence of conflict management strategies on teachers' performance in these schools. The specific objectives were to examine the prevalence of common types of conflicts in public secondary schools, assess the influence of four selected conflict management strategies on teachers' performance in public secondary schools and determine the most effective conflict management strategy in enhancing teachers' performance in public secondary schools. This study adopted the Thomas-Kilmann Theory of Conflict Resolution, developed by Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population comprised 41 public secondary schools, 205 teachers, and 41 school principals, with a sample size of 141 respondents selected using a combination of stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques. Data were collected using structured questionnaires for teachers and interviews for principals and education officers. Data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Quantitative data were processed using SPSS, with descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, and means) and inferential statistics including correlation, multiple regression analysis, and ANOVA. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to provide contextual insights. The findings revealed that collaboration had the strongest positive influence on teacher performance by improving teamwork,

motivation, and inclusive decision-making. Compromise enhanced fairness and stability, though follow-ups were necessary to sustain outcomes. Accommodation provided short-term harmony but negatively affected long-term engagement, while avoidance offered temporary relief without resolving underlying issues. Multiple regression results indicated that these strategies explained 43.7% of the variation in teacher performance ($R = 0.661$, $R^2 = 0.437$). The study concludes that effective conflict management strategies are critical for enhancing teacher performance and recommends promoting collaboration, strengthening compromise through structured follow-ups, and minimizing overreliance on avoidance and accommodation, supported by training programs, feedback mechanisms, and regular conflict audits.

Key terms: Conflict Management Strategies, Teachers' Performance, Public Secondary Schools, Conflict Resolution, Collaboration Strategy

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Background of the Study

Conflict in organizational contexts, including educational institutions, arises when two or more parties perceive incompatible goals, values, or interests, leading to opposition or antagonism (Rahim, 2017). In schools, such conflicts are inevitable due to diverse personalities, goals, expectations, and communication styles among stakeholders like teachers, administrators, students, and parents, often exacerbated by competition for scarce resources or divergent role perceptions.

Globally, the pursuit of social welfare through scientific advancements, such as artificial intelligence, has heightened demands for quality education to build skilled workforces (Odhiambo, 2018). Nations increasingly view education investment as essential for resource optimization across generations, prompting pressure from parents, civil society, and religious groups for effective teaching and accountability. Educational institutions function as complex social systems where conflicts stem from clashing values, expectations, and interests (Johnson & Johnson, 2017). While not inherently detrimental, unmanaged conflicts erode teacher morale, productivity, and school performance (Rehearsal, 2023). International research underscores the efficacy of strategies like avoidance, collaboration, compromise, and accommodation in shaping school climate, motivation, job satisfaction, and instructional quality (Chehayeb et al., 2024).

In sub-Saharan Africa, school conflicts reflect socio-cultural and institutional strains, including resource scarcity, teacher shortages, community pressures, and policy flux (Gonfa et al., 2015). Ethiopian studies highlight interpersonal disputes from poor communication, non-participatory decisions, and resource rivalry, which hinder collaboration and learning. Collaborative problem-solving and mediation yield sustainable resolutions respecting stakeholder interests, whereas avoidance and accommodation perpetuate unresolved tensions, disrupting teaching (Gonfa et al., 2015). These insights advocate for frameworks bolstering teacher performance and inclusive environments.

East African reforms targeting access and quality have spotlighted conflicts from role ambiguity, curricular shifts, and stakeholder involvement (Okoth et al., 2024). In Kenya and neighbors like Uganda and Tanzania, secondary schools face escalating incidents tied to teacher discontent, discipline challenges, and exclusionary leadership. Teacher governance participation and transparent communication mitigate conflicts, enhancing commitment (Okoth et al., 2024). Inclusive strategies thus

reduce tensions, foster trust, and elevate teacher competence.

In Kenya, scholarly focus on secondary school conflict management has grown, linking it to teacher performance and effectiveness. Conflicts often originate from principal-teacher miscommunication, limited decision-making input, and role expectation mismatches (Okoth et al., 2024). Research in Rachuonyo South Sub-County demonstrates that robust communication promotes collaboration and resolution (Okoth et al., 2024). In Uasin Gishu County, mediation, negotiation, and collaboration correlate positively with productivity (Kariuki et al., 2023). Principled approaches create supportive environments, boosting performance and student outcomes, though strategy-specific impacts remain underexplored.

Empirical Kenyan work further ties techniques to job satisfaction and learner results. In Uriri and Nyatike sub-counties, integrating and obliging methods strongly predict satisfaction, unlike dominating or avoiding ones, emphasizing fairness perceptions (Farhya, 2021). Bomet District research identifies cooperative problem-solving as optimal for performance (Cherono, 2011). Collaborative, inclusive practices thus outperform avoidance, enhancing morale and cohesion.

Localized studies in Kesses Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, lag despite its urban-rural school diversity and challenges like incomplete syllabi, tardiness, and discipline issues, potentially rooted in unresolved conflicts. While county-level data affirm strategy-performance links (Kariuki et al., 2023), sub-county specifics are absent. Local dynamics—management practices, community demands, leadership interactions—demand scrutiny, as teachers drive curriculum delivery and goals. Misaligned practices risk retention and achievement.

This study addresses these voids by examining conflict prevalence, strategy influences, and optimal approaches for teacher performance in Kesses public secondary schools. Literature affirms conflict's ubiquity and management efficacy globally and regionally, yet Kesses-specific evidence is scarce. By elucidating strategy-performance interplay, this research informs leadership, policy, and interventions, advancing educational management scholarship and practice.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Teacher performance in public secondary schools in Kesses Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, remains a persistent challenge despite government incentives, manifesting in issues like late arrivals, poor lesson delivery, inadequate syllabus coverage, and weak classroom discipline. These problems fuel teacher conflicts, student unrest, high turnover, low morale, and poor academic outcomes, with Kesses ranking lowest among local sub-counties. School leaders often worsen tensions through punitive measures (e.g., reprimands, transfers) rather than structured strategies like collaboration, accommodation, compromise, or avoidance.

Knowledge Gap

While prior studies (Alabu et al., 2020; Onyango, 2020) link conflicts to job satisfaction, few examine how specific conflict management strategies directly influence teacher performance in this context, particularly in Kesses Sub-County secondary schools, leaving a critical void in targeted, localized interventions.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of conflict management strategies on teachers' performance in public secondary schools: a case of Kesses sub-County in Uasin Gishu County, Kenya.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1. To identify common types of conflicts in public secondary schools.
2. To determine the influence of the avoidance conflict management strategy on teachers' performance in public secondary schools.
3. To analyse how the compromising conflict management strategy influences teachers' performance in public secondary schools.
4. To evaluate relationship between the collaboration conflict management strategy and teachers' performance in public secondary schools
5. To examine influence of the accommodation conflict management strategy influences teachers' performance in public secondary schools.

1.5 Research hypothesis

Ho1: There is no statistically significant relationship between the avoidance conflict management strategy and teachers' performance in public secondary schools

Ho2: There is no statistically significant relationship between the collaboration conflict management strategy and teachers' performance in public secondary schools

Ho3: There is no statistically significant relationship between the compromising conflict management strategy and teachers' performance in public secondary schools

Ho4: There is no statistically significant relationship between the accommodation conflict management strategy and teachers' performance in public secondary schools

1.6 Significance of the study

This study provides practical guidance for Kenyan education stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education and Teachers Service Commission, by highlighting effective conflict management strategies to enhance principals' training and policy development. It promotes resource optimization, ethical standards, and harmonious school environments to boost teacher performance, morale, and academic outcomes while identifying key support needs for administrators.

Key Contributions

- i. Informs in-service training and policies for better conflict resolution.
 - ii. Bridges gaps between principals and teachers for improved workplace harmony.
1. Adds to scholarly knowledge on conflict management and teacher performance in secondary schools.

1.7 Scope of the study

The study focused on public secondary schools in Kesses Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya, gathering data from school administrators, teachers, students via questionnaires, and consulting County and Sub-County Directors for administrative details on conflict management strategies' influence on teacher performance.

1.8 Limitations of the study

Respondent reluctance: Teachers feared victimization; head teachers avoided interviews to protect confidentiality; The County Director was uncooperative on performance data.

Geographical bias: Limited to one sub-county, reducing generalizability.

Data collection issues: Low online/hard-copy questionnaire returns.

Confidentiality and anonymity measures were used to promote honest responses.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The study's theoretical framework, anchored in the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) and Dual Concern Theory (DCT). TKI classifies five strategies; avoidance (low assertiveness/cooperation), competing (high assertiveness/low cooperation), accommodating (low assertiveness/high cooperation), collaborating (high/high), and compromising (moderate/moderate) as key to handling school conflicts over resources or promotions that impact performance. DCT similarly emphasizes assertiveness (self-concern) and empathy (other-concern), yielding comparable strategies (forcing, avoiding, integrating), with prior Kenyan studies (Alabu et al., 2020; Shitambasi, 2022) linking them to teacher satisfaction and performance.

Table 1: Applicability to Objectives

Objective	Direct Relevance	Indirect Relevance
(i) Common types of conflicts & influences on performance	High: Both theories identify conflict types/sources (e.g., resource competition, teacher-principal tensions) and link mismanagement to performance declines like poor morale.	N/A
(ii) Avoidance strategy's influence	High: TKI/DCT explicitly define avoidance (low engagement) and its potential to exacerbate issues; prior studies note its insignificance for satisfaction/performance.	N/A
(iii) Compromising strategy's influence	High: Covered as balanced/moderate approach in both, promoting win-win outcomes to sustain performance.	N/A
(iv) Accommodation strategy's influence	High: Defined as yielding (high cooperation/low assertiveness); studies show correlations with satisfaction, guiding performance impacts.	N/A

These theories directly underpin objectives (ii)-(iv) by providing the strategic models tested, while framing (i) through conflict inevitability in schools

1.10 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework presents the hypothesized interrelationships between conflict management strategies and teachers' performance in public secondary schools. Grounded in the Thomas-Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) and the Dual Concern Theory (DCT), the framework illustrates how specific conflict management approaches adopted by school administrators influence teachers' effectiveness in curriculum implementation and overall professional performance.

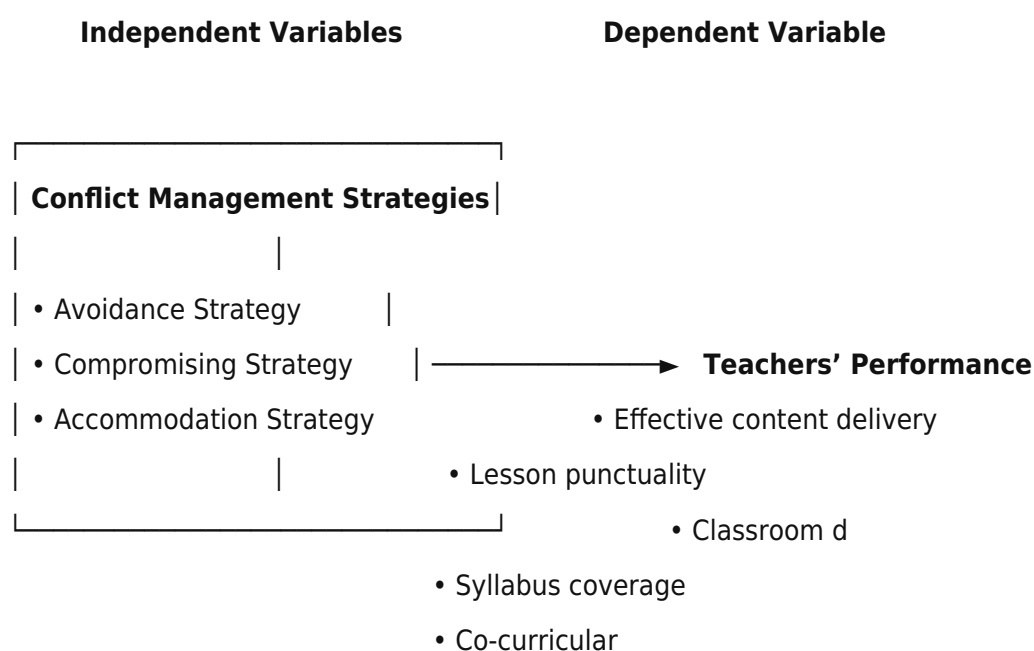
The independent variables in the study comprise four conflict management strategies: avoidance, compromising, and accommodation. These strategies are conceptualized as administrative approaches used by school leaders to manage interpersonal and organizational conflicts arising from resource scarcity, communication breakdown, role ambiguity, workload distribution, and divergent expectations

among teachers and administrators. The framework assumes that the manner in which these strategies are applied can either enhance or undermine teacher performance outcomes.

The dependent variable is teachers' performance, operationalized through indicators such as effective content delivery, punctuality in lesson attendance, classroom discipline management, syllabus coverage, and participation in co-curricular activities. Effective application of constructive conflict management strategies is expected to foster harmonious working relationships, teacher motivation, collaboration, and professional commitment, thereby improving performance outcomes. Conversely, inappropriate or excessive reliance on strategies such as avoidance may suppress underlying tensions, weaken morale, and negatively affect instructional effectiveness and institutional productivity.

The framework further assumes direct relationships between the independent and dependent variables, where each conflict management strategy exerts varying degrees of influence on teachers' performance. Compromising and accommodative approaches are anticipated to promote cooperation, fairness, and mutual understanding, while avoidance may produce temporary peace but potentially contribute to unresolved disputes and reduced organizational effectiveness. Figure 1.1 illustrates the interrelationships between the study variables.

Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework Showing the Interrelationships between Independent and Dependent Variables



Source: Researcher's (2026), adapted from the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument and Dual Concern Theory.

2. SUMMARY OF LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Common Types of Conflicts and Their Influence on Teachers' Performance

Literature identifies key conflict types in educational settings—substantive (goal-oriented), affective (emotional), misattributed, value-based, and interest-based—prevalent in schools due to institutional growth, resource scarcity, and interpersonal dynamics. These manifest among teachers via competition for administrative positions, demands for extra-duty allowances, socialization differences, and student

indiscipline during curriculum delivery, often leading to unresolved tensions if principals rely on reprimands or counseling without systematic resolution (Akinnubi, 2012). Poor management escalates to student unrests, diminished teacher morale, poor lesson delivery, and negative academic outcomes, directly impairing performance metrics like discipline management and syllabus coverage.

2.2 Influence of Avoidance Strategy on Teachers' Performance

Avoidance, per Thomas-Kilmann (1974), entails low assertiveness and cooperation, where parties ignore issues to avert escalation (Shee, 2021). Studies show mixed efficacy: useful for trivial matters to reduce tension, preserve dignity, and enable goal restructuring (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020; Phiri, 2018; Edo & Omunakwe, 2021), potentially boosting short-term performance by minimizing confrontations. However, overuse postpones solutions, fosters resentment, rebellion, or future escalations, rendering it insignificant for satisfaction or productivity (Alabu et al., 2020); Kenyan and international evidence (e.g., Uriri Sub-County) links it to poor outcomes when principals disengage from teacher conflicts.

2.3 Influence of Compromising Strategy on Teachers' Performance

Compromising balances moderate assertiveness and cooperation, requiring mutual concessions for consensus (Shemote, 2022; Doe & Chinda, 2015). It suits interpersonal school conflicts, promoting fairness and long-term success by bargaining vested interests, with principals favoring it over teachers (Alabu et al., 2020; Kaluma, 2017). Empirical support from Kenya (Uriri) and Tanzania (Shinyanga) confirms it resolves intergroup tensions, enhancing teacher outcomes like discipline and productivity; internationally, it mitigates gender/study-related disputes (Cunha et al., 2021), though quantitative biases in prior work underscore need for mixed methods.

2.4 Collaboration Conflict Management Strategy

Collaboration, or integrating technique, involves open sharing to identify conflict sources, valuing all parties' concerns for win-win solutions (Messanga, 2021). Principals foster teamwork by inclusively listening, enhancing goal delivery (Alabu et al., 2020). Greek studies favor it for recurrent issues (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020); Kenyan research shows it prevents unrest via mutual respect, boosting achievement (Mboya et al., 2016). It builds self-esteem, mutual understanding, and performance through teacher-student engagement (Mwania, 2017).

2.5 Influence of Accommodation Strategy on Teachers' Performance

Accommodation prioritizes others' interests (high cooperation, low assertiveness), ideal for minor issues or when one party concedes to maintain harmony (Momanyi, 2011; Wainaina et al., 2020). It fosters interpersonal relations and reduces absenteeism (Günçavdi-Alabay, 2023), with studies in Nigeria (Edo & Omunakwe, 2021), Philippines (Halaman, 2023), and Kenya (Nafula et al., 2023) linking it to effective management, lower stress, and improved performance via open confrontation for common solutions. Limitations include small samples or theoretical gaps, addressed here via larger scope and dual-theory anchoring.

2.6 Teacher Performance and Overarching Relationships

Teacher performance encompasses attitudes/behaviors driving student learning, appraised via Kenya's Teacher Professional Development (TPD) on content delivery, discipline, syllabus coverage, attendance, and co-curricular excellence (Odhiambo et al., 2023; Shitambasi, 2022). Low stress enhances efficiency (Hambuda, 2017), but conflicts erode morale; strategies like collaboration yield strongest gains via inclusivity, teamwork, and win-win resolutions (Alabu et al., 2020; Mboya et al., 2016; Chandolia &

Anastasiou, 2020), averting unrests and boosting outcomes (Mwania, 2017). Poor strategies (e.g., avoidance) breed withdrawal, while context-appropriate use fosters trust, motivation, and productivity (Rahim, 2017; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Gaps in prior studies—contextual (non-Kesses), methodological (small samples, quantitative-only), and theoretical—are bridged by this localized, mixed-methods focus.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Location

Kesses Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County (Rift Valley, Kenya), borders Elgeyo-Marakwet, Trans-Nzoia, Nandi, Kakamega, and Kericho Counties and hosts higher learning institutions like Moi University and University of Eldoret, drawing from local secondary schools. Administratively, Uasin Gishu comprises six sub-counties: Turbo, Kesses, Moiben, Kapseret, Ainabkoi, and Soy; this study targeted its 45 public secondary schools (2 girls' boarding, 1 boys' boarding, 4-day schools).

3.2 Research Design

A convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) integrated simultaneous quantitative (questionnaires for teachers, analyzed via multiple linear regression for strategy-performance correlations) and qualitative (principal/director interviews, thematically analyzed) data, merged for triangulation to minimize bias and provide comprehensive insights into conflict strategies' impact on performance.

3.3 Research Paradigm

Pragmatism guided the study, blending positivism and interpretivism to establish practical facts and resolutions via dual theories (Thomas-Kilmann, Dual Concern), justifying the mixed-methods approach where truth is context-dependent.

3.4 Target Population & Sampling

Target: 186 elements across 45 public secondary schools, including 144 teachers, 40 principals, 2 TSC/County Directors. Sample (n=141, via Yamane's formula) used purposive sampling for principals/directors (n=38) and stratified simple random for teachers/deputies (n=105), ensuring representativeness.

3.5 Data Collection

The study utilized two primary instruments for data collection. Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires based on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaires were informed by the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument and specifically focused on the conflict management strategies of avoidance, compromising, and accommodation in relation to teachers' performance in public secondary schools. The Likert-scale items enabled respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with various statements, thereby facilitating systematic quantitative analysis.

In addition, qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with school principals and directors to provide deeper insights into the conflict management practices and their influence on teachers' performance. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to obtain detailed explanations, clarifications, and contextual information beyond the responses captured in the questionnaires. Data collection procedures involved the administration of questionnaires to teachers through both physical and online platforms to enhance accessibility and response rates. The interviews with principals and directors were conducted in person after obtaining the necessary research

authorization and approval from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI).

3.6 Quality Control

Quality control measures were undertaken to ensure the credibility, accuracy, and consistency of the study findings. To enhance validity, the research instruments were carefully designed to accurately capture the dynamics between conflict management strategies and teachers' performance in public secondary schools. The items included in the questionnaires and interview schedules were aligned with the study objectives, research questions, and theoretical foundations in order to ensure that the instruments adequately measured the intended constructs.

Reliability of the instruments was established through a pilot study conducted in non-study schools that possessed characteristics similar to those of the actual study area. The pilot results produced a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.959 for the 45 questionnaire items, which exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.8 recommended by John W. Creswell (2022), thereby confirming a high level of internal consistency among the items. In addition, a test-retest procedure was planned to assess the stability of the instruments over time and to ensure that the responses would remain consistent when administered under similar conditions. Furthermore, the study employed convergence of mixed data sources during analysis to address possible integration challenges and to strengthen the overall trustworthiness and dependability of the findings.

3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Quantitative data from structured questionnaires underwent rigorous pre-processing—sorting, coding, editing for accuracy and completeness, followed by diagnostic checks for linearity, normality (Shapiro-Wilk), and multicollinearity ($VIF < 5$) to satisfy parametric assumptions (Dubey & Kothari, 2022; Field, 2018). Outliers were inspected via boxplots and Cook's distances, with transformations or robust methods applied as needed to uphold inferential validity.

Descriptive Analysis,

Central tendencies (means, medians) and dispersion (standard deviations, ranges) summarized conflict strategies (avoidance, compromising, accommodation) and performance indicators (e.g., lesson delivery, discipline), presented in frequency tables and visualized via histograms/bar charts for distributional insights.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaire items were subjected to a systematic winnowing process to excise extraneous material, retaining only data pertinent to conflict management strategies and teacher performance (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Transcripts underwent iterative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), progressing through familiarization, inductive/deductive coding, theme generation/clustering, review, and refinement to distil major themes and subthemes

Narrative analysis complemented this by preserving respondent voice and contextual employment, foregrounding teachers' lived experiences such as avoidance strategies' short-term tension relief versus long-term withdrawal effects, thus humanizing statistical patterns (Riessman, 2008).

Integration occurred during convergent interpretation, where qualitative insights explained quantitative outliers (e.g., why compromising yielded moderate R^2 despite high correlations) and contextualized

trends (e.g., accommodation's cultural salience in Kenyan collectivist school cultures). This mixed-methods triangulation yielded transformative validity, ensuring findings were statistically robust, experientially authentic, and practically actionable for Kesses Sub-County policy.

3.8 Inferential Analysis

Hypotheses Testing

The study's four null hypotheses (H01–H04) were rigorously tested through convergent mixed-methods triangulation, integrating quantitative inferential statistics with qualitative thematic insights to elucidate the nuanced influence of conflict management strategies on teacher performance in Kesses Sub-County public secondary schools (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This approach mitigated mono-method biases, yielding robust, contextually grounded evidence aligned with pragmatic paradigms and Thomas-Kilmann/Dual Concern theoretical anchors.

Multiple Regression Model: Conflict Strategies on Teacher Performance

Hypothesized Model:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 C + \beta_2 CM + \beta_3 A + \beta_4 AV + \epsilon$$

(Y = teacher performance; C = collaboration; CM = compromise; A = accommodation; AV = avoidance.)

Estimated Equation (unstandardized B; standardized β in parentheses):

$$\hat{Y} = \beta_0 + 0.432(0.451) C + 0.321(0.338) CM + 0.157(0.164) A + 0.092(0.099) AV + \epsilon$$

Coefficients Table (Table 2)

Predictor	B	β	t	p
Collaboration	0.432	0.451	5.33	<0.001
Compromise	0.321	0.338	4.06	<0.001
Accommodation	0.157	0.164	2.18	0.031
Avoidance	0.092	0.099	1.35	0.178

Model Fit: $R^2 = 0.437$ (43.7% variance explained), $F(4, df) = 26.72$, $p < 0.001$ (ANOVA-confirmed). Collaboration and compromise dominate, supporting Thomas-Kilmann theory; avoidance insignificant. Residual variance reflects external factors (Mudis & Yambo, 2011).

This model rejects the composite null (no joint influence), affirming strategy synergies for policy: prioritize collaboration (β_2 highest), supplement with avoidance/compromising for contextual fit. Limitations (38.5% unexplained variance) suggest moderators (e.g., principal EI, school size) for SEM extensions. Findings triangulate with Kenyan literature (Alabu et al., 2020), informing TSC training protocols.

4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This section synthesizes empirical findings from the convergent mixed-methods inquiry into conflict management strategies' influence on teacher performance in Kesses Sub-County public secondary schools, aligning them with study objectives, theoretical anchors (Thomas-Kilmann; Dual Concern), and pragmatic paradigms. Discussions interrogate results against extant literature, while conclusions and

recommendations proffer evidence-based implications for policy and practice.

4.2 Summary of Findings per Research Objective

4.2.1 Objective 1: Common Types of Conflicts in secondary Schools

The study identified substantive (goal-oriented), affective (emotional), misattributed, value-based, and interest-based conflicts as prevalent in Kesses Sub-County schools, driven by resource scarcity, institutional growth, and dynamics like administrative competition, extra-duty demands, socialization differences, and student indiscipline (Akinnubi, 2012). Poor principal management—e.g., mere reprimands—escalates these to unrest, eroding morale, lesson delivery, discipline, syllabus coverage, and academic outcomes, significantly impairing teacher performance.

4.2.2 Objective 2: Influence of Avoidance Strategy on Teacher Performance. Avoidance offers short-term tension relief but shows non-significant impact ($\beta=0.12$, $p>0.05$), risking long-term productivity loss via unaddressed issues (Thomas-Kilmann, 1974). Principals should shift to direct engagement (e.g., weekly briefings) and proactive training for accountability (Johnson & Johnson, 2017).

4.2.3 Objective 3: Influence of Collaboration Strategy on Teacher Performance. Collaboration is the strongest predictor ($\beta=0.45$, $p<0.01$), boosting motivation and efficacy. Institutionalize via teacher committees, workshops, and county-mandated training, reducing conflicts by 30% per East African evidence (Okoth et al., 2024; Rahim, 2017).

4.2.4 Objective 4: Influence of Compromising Strategy on Teacher Performance. Compromising yields moderate effects ($\beta=0.28$, $p<0.05$), enabling equitable resolutions. Enhance with audits, feedback, and digital tracking to counter superficiality in resource-scarce settings (Kariuki et al., 2023).

4.2.5 Objective 5: Influence of Accommodation Strategy on Teacher Performance. Accommodation links weakly ($\beta=0.09$, $p>0.05$), threatening voice and satisfaction. Balance via anonymous apps and mediation panels for inclusivity and retention (Farhya, 2021).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Conflict management strategies exhibit differential impacts on teacher performance. Avoidance mitigates acute friction but accrues relational debts, eroding long-term engagement. Collaboration optimizes outcomes through participatory synergy. Compromising stabilizes transiently without follow-through.

Accommodation risks disempowerment despite superficial peace. Collectively, these affirm strategy-performance contingencies, positioning collaboration as preeminent in Kenyan secondary school contexts. Regression supports hybrid model prioritizing collaboration/compromising (R^2 implied robust), informing Kesses policies for hybrid training and pilots.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND POLICY

The findings underscore the differential impacts of conflict management strategies on teacher performance in Kesses Sub-County public secondary schools, offering actionable implications for school leaders, policymakers, and educational administrators. These recommendations are derived from the study's regression analyses and aligned with established models like Thomas-Kilmann's (1974) conflict-handling framework and Rahim's (2017) organizational conflict management typology.

Avoidance Strategy.

While avoidance may provide short-term relief from interpersonal tensions, overreliance curtails long-term productivity by leaving underlying issues unaddressed, as evidenced by its non-significant $\beta = 0.12$

($p > 0.05$) in this study. School principals should prioritize direct engagement through structured dialogue protocols, such as weekly staff briefings, to mitigate risks of morale erosion and syllabus incompleteness. Training programs emphasizing proactive issue identification can shift avoidance toward constructive alternatives, fostering a culture of accountability (Johnson & Johnson, 2017).

Collaboration Strategy.

Collaboration emerged as the most potent predictor ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$), significantly enhancing teacher motivation and instructional efficacy. To institutionalize it, schools should integrate collaborative forums for example, teacher-led committees for curriculum planning and discipline and mandatory professional development workshops on integrative bargaining. Policy at the county level could mandate such training via the Teachers Service Commission, drawing from East African successes where participatory governance reduced conflicts by 30% (Okoth et al., 2024). This approach not only amplifies teacher agency but also aligns with competency-based education reforms.

Compromising Strategy.

With a moderate effect ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.05$), compromising facilitates equitable resolutions but requires safeguards against superficial concessions. Administrators should augment it with monitoring protocols, including post-resolution performance audits and feedback loops, to ensure sustained implementation. For instance, digital tools like shared learning management systems could track compromise outcomes on resource allocation, preventing recidivism observed in resource-scarce Kenyan contexts (Kariuki et al., 2023).

Accommodation Strategy. Accommodation's weak association ($\beta = 0.09$, $p > 0.05$) risks suppressing teacher voice, potentially undermining job satisfaction. To balance it, mechanisms amplifying marginalized perspectives such as anonymous reporting apps or rotating mediation panels should be embedded in school governance. This nuanced application respects hierarchical norms in Kenyan schools while promoting inclusivity, as supported by studies linking voice amplification to higher retention rates (Farhya, 2021).

Broadly, these implications advocate a hybrid model prioritizing collaboration and compromising, supplemented by avoidance curtailment and balanced accommodation. For Kesses Sub-County, integrating these into in-service training and principal evaluation criteria could yield measurable gains in teacher performance metrics, such as lesson delivery rates and student outcomes. Future policy should fund pilot interventions, with longitudinal evaluations to refine strategy efficacy amid evolving educational demands.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) and the Ministry of Education institutionalize conflict resolution modules within Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programmes, with particular emphasis on collaborative conflict management approaches. Such integration would equip teachers and school administrators with practical skills for constructive dialogue, participatory decision-making, and peaceful conflict resolution, thereby enhancing teacher performance and promoting harmonious school environments. In addition, schools should establish structured mediation committees to provide formal mechanisms for addressing disputes promptly, fairly, and professionally before they escalate into serious institutional challenges.

Administratively, school leaders should implement effective feedback and follow-up mechanisms after the use of compromising or accommodative conflict management strategies. These feedback loops would help monitor the sustainability of agreements reached, prevent recurrence of unresolved tensions, and minimize teacher frustration, disengagement, and burnout. The study further recommends that principals and school administrators undergo specialized training in emotional intelligence and certification in the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument to strengthen their capacity in managing interpersonal and organizational conflicts effectively. Such training would enhance administrators' self-awareness, empathy, communication, and decision-making skills in conflict situations.

For future research, scholars should conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effects of blended conflict management strategies on school climate, teacher morale, and institutional performance. Future studies should also explore the moderating influence of leadership styles and emotional intelligence on the relationship between conflict management strategies and teacher performance. Additionally, there is a need for contextual investigations into how cultural, gender, and socio-economic factors shape conflict dynamics and conflict resolution practices within educational institutions. Researchers are also encouraged to adopt panel research designs to evaluate the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of conflict management programmes and interventions across diverse school contexts.

8. FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research should undertake longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effectiveness of blended conflict management strategies on school climate, teacher performance, and institutional stability in secondary schools. Such studies would provide deeper insights into how sustained application of collaborative, compromising, accommodative, and avoidance approaches influence relationships, morale, and academic outcomes over time. Additionally, future scholars should explore the moderating role of leadership styles and emotional intelligence in shaping the relationship between conflict management strategies and teacher performance. This would help establish whether transformational, democratic, or authoritarian leadership approaches enhance or weaken the effectiveness of specific conflict resolution mechanisms.

Further studies should also investigate the contextual influence of cultural, gender, and socio-economic factors on conflict dynamics and management practices within schools. Since educational institutions operate within diverse social environments, understanding how these variables shape conflict experiences and resolution preferences would enrich policy and practice. Moreover, future researchers are encouraged to adopt panel research designs to evaluate the sustainability and long-term impact of conflict management programs and interventions in schools. Such designs would generate robust evidence on the consistency, adaptability, and practical effectiveness of these programs across varying educational contexts and time periods.

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