

**INFLUENCE OF DIALOGUE FACILITATION AS A STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE ON WORKPLACE HARMONY IN KAKAMEGA COUNTY, KENYA**

**Makokha Kulthum Atemba and Barrack Otieno Okello**  
School of Business, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

**ABSTRACT**

A workplace where people get along well will be more productive, with fewer complaints. Positive managing workplace programs leads to dedicate and healthier performing employees who promote demographic interactions and appreciation of cultures. There have been concerns about the workplace interpersonal conflicts and other institutional conflicts in devolved governments within the new constitutional dispensation. The objective of the study was to determine the influence of dialogue facilitation as a strategic leadership initiative on workplace harmony in Kakamega County, Kenya. The theory underpinning this study was the deprivation theory. Stratified random and purposive sampling techniques was used to select a sample size of 98 respondents. Questionnaires were used for data collection. Data analysis was done using descriptive methods and inferential statistical methods. The correlation coefficient between dialogue facilitation and workplace harmony was 0.572. The results thus show that dialogue facilitation significantly influence workplace harmony. The study thus recommends that County Government should thus increase the strategic initiatives to enhance the workplace harmony. The Kakamega County management will benefit by being able to analyze their workplace harmony initiatives for the benefit of the residents. The county management will also be able to develop strategies to enable them improve on workplace harmony.

**Keyword:** County Government, Dialogue Facilitation, Initiative Workplace Harmony, Kakamega, Strategic Leadership.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Over the years conflicts in the world have had an effect on employee performance both positively and negatively (Okotoni & Okotoni, 2003). When there is a conflict either among employees or between employees and the management, performance is affected. Conflict in itself has both positive and negative outcome. All conflict provides a dynamic opportunity for growth and transformation, and leaders should treat conflict as simply another tool of good leadership. Drucker (1998) said that 90 percent of leadership is addressing human behavior issues. A good proportion of this 90 percent involves addressing issues that have some form of conflict at their base.

A survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2008) found that managing conflict is an integral part of most HR practitioners' jobs on a daily basis. Almost half (44%) of respondents reported that they have to manage disputes at work frequently or

continually. This rises to 51% among public sector respondents. As many as one in five respondents claim to manage conflict 'continually' in organizations of between 5,000 and 10,000 employees. Conflict at work is extremely time-consuming. The survey also found that on average HR professionals spend 3.4 hours every week managing conflict at work. This rises to 3.8 hours for public sector respondents.

A survey by the American Management Association (2011) revealed that typically, managers spend at least 24% of their time managing conflict. The secret of good conflict management is simple, but the process is not (CIPD, 2008). The secret is to get the parties in conflict to discern the root issues and mutually agree on actions to be taken. Building an effective process to accomplish this goal, however, is a complex task. Leaders, to do their job well, must acquire basic conflict management skills.

A state of the work report discovered 81 percent of more than 2,000 American adults surveyed experienced workplace conflict with other departments, groups, teams, or co-workers (Task, 2014). As a result, 4 out of 10 respondents reported a loss in productivity. Conflicts are found in all industrial sectors. Major Airlines with massive resources and global network have not been spared from this challenge e.g. Delta Airline and Austrian Airlines are grappling with industrial unrest arising from collective bargaining agreements just like Air France and British Airways (Kenya Airways Limited, 2012).

The negative outcome of conflict causes the organization's unrest thus interfering with the organizational short term and long term plans. Even the management faces conflicts with many forces from outside the organization, such as government, unions and other coercive groups which may impose restrictions on managerial activities. Workers in some instance, feel intimidated by a boss or a colleague, and as many as 25% say they have been intimidated by a client (Tang & Chang, 2010). Inappropriate behavior can be partly explained by increasing diversity, assertiveness and insufficient competencies in dealing with conflicting interest and needs. Therefore, inappropriate behavior is a big problem in the workplace, both nationally and internationally.

In Kenya, at the end of January 2014, there was secondment of civil servants to the counties by the Transition Authority as the devolved units took over the control of their salaries. The workers from various ministries, whose functions were devolved, were to have their pay and human resource issues managed by the counties. The Ministry of Devolution and Planning then indicated that the national government was transferring the management of payroll to the counties. The move followed protests by health workers and unwillingness by some civil servants to be moved to counties for fear of unfair treatment. There were concerns that some counties might be forced to sack excess workers (Bigambo, 2014). For instance, a county might be having more workers in a given sector than it needs thus leading to duplication of duties.

Payroll transfer provides opportunity for rationalising lower level employees. Some counties have bloated lower level employees and some might be declared redundant (Okongo, 2015). According to the then Transitional Authority, only seconded lower level employees from the National Government had their transferred to the counties. In other words, they had been officially handed over to the counties. Moreover, lower level employees' rationalisation in the counties was also under way to determine the devolved units with excess employees (Ngundo,

2014). Therefore, it is possible that most of the conflict in the public sector organizations today stem from the restructuring of government.

Conflict triggers strong emotions and can lead to hurt feelings, disappointment, and discomfort. It can cause irreparable rifts, resentments, and breakups (Manktelow & Carlson 2013). But when conflict is resolved in a healthy way, it increases our understanding of one another, builds trust, and strengthens our relationship bonds (Sang & Keror, 2013). Unhealthy responses to conflict are characterized by: an inability to recognize and respond to matters of great importance to the other person; explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions; the withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, and fear of abandonment; the expectation of bad outcomes, and; the fear and avoidance of conflict (Omboko, 2006).

Healthy responses to conflict are characterized by the capacity to recognize and respond to important matters; a readiness to forgive and forget; the ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing, and; a belief that resolution can support the interests and needs of both parties (Pauwels & De Waele, 2014). Successful conflict resolution requires strategic leadership. However, the influence of strategic leadership on conflict resolution in the workplace has not been subjected to thorough examination in previous research and this will be the main thrust of this study.

### **1.1 Strategic leadership**

Strategic leadership is a leadership style that is meant to provide vision and direction for the growth and success of an organization. According to Ireland and Hitt (2009) strategic leadership is a person's ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable future for the organisation. Rowe (2001) defines strategic leadership as the ability to influence others to voluntarily make day-to-day decisions that enhance the long-term organisation's viability.

In a rapidly changing world, strategic leaders face incredible pressure to deliver immediate results, do more with less and manage an ever-increasing personal workload, the pace and urgency of daily demands can make it difficult to be more than a step ahead into the future. However, in a world of changing conditions and priorities, leaders and individual contributors alike should be able to look beyond their approach to their work and responsibilities (Wheeler McFarland, & Kleiner, 2007; Serfontein, 2009). The global economy has created a new competitive landscape, in which events change constantly and unpredictably (Ireland & Hitt, 2009) and where competition is complex, challenging and fraught with competitive opportunities and threats (Drucker, 2002).

Leaders often face the continuing challenge of how they can meet the expectations of those who placed them there or the organization's goals in an atmosphere of competition and uncertainties in resourcing and employee commitment (Beatty & Quinn, 2010). Addressing these expectations usually takes the form of strategic decisions and actions. For a strategy to succeed, the leader must be able to adjust it as conditions require. However, leaders cannot learn enough, fast enough, and do enough on their own to effectively adapt the strategy and then define, shape and execute the organizational response.

According to Stumpf (2008), if leaders are to win they must rely on the prepared minds of employees throughout the organization to understand the strategic intent and then both carry out the current strategy and adapt it in real time. Building prepared minds on a large scale is critical

for companies needing to reset the strategic direction and transform the organization. Getting employees pointed in the right direction with the ability to learn and adapt concurrently helps ensure the strategy will deliver what leaders are looking for indeed. The challenge is not only producing a winning strategy at a point in time but getting employees smart enough and motivated enough to execute the strategy and change it as conditions change. This requires the leader to focus as much on the process used to develop the strategy – the human dimension, as the content of the strategy – the analytical dimension (Kouzes & Posner, 2009).

### **1.2 Workplace harmony**

Workplace harmony occurs in a situation where there is absence of unwanted conduct likely to lead to violation of dignity or creation of an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. One of the best ways to foster good relations within the workplace is to encourage dialogue and effective communication. This should not just be amongst colleagues but also between lower level employees and management. Encouraging the workforce to express ideas and views as well as suggesting improvements is a great way of achieving this. Workplace harmony can also be enhanced by establishing a good work/life balance in the organization. Things like introducing flexible working practices, compassionate leave, childcare facilities such as crèches etc. will make for good relations between lower level employees and management and will show that the company does have your best interests at heart (Durham, 2018).

An organization's capacity to manage employee engagement is closely related to its ability to achieve high performance levels and superior business results. Engaged employees will stay with the company, be an advocate of the company and its products and services, and contribute to bottom line business success. They will normally perform better and are more motivated. There is a significant link between employee engagement and profitability. They form an emotional connection with the company. This impacts their attitude towards the company's clients, and thereby improves customer satisfaction and service levels. It builds passion, commitment and alignment with the organization's strategies and goals. Increases employees' trust in the organization. Harmony is achieved in the workplace only when the leaders determine what they want their organization's culture to look like and then strategize to make it a reality. organization (Beheshtifar & Nazarian, 2013).

Organizational leaders play an important role in setting the tone for the shift towards increased diversity and inclusiveness in an organization. Open, effective communication, as well as clear channels for feedback optimizes the opportunity for discussion of issues related to inclusion and discrimination. Every organization starts from a different place and in a unique context, but all have room for improvement. (Canada HR Council, 2018).

### **1.3 Strategic leadership and workplace harmony**

The importance of effective leadership in cross-cultural management has been emphasized in the literature (Nguyen & Umemoto, 2009). Leaders are tasked with effectively guiding organizational goal achievement, while considering team member skills necessary to produce the desired output. Leadership qualities that influence goal achievement include the ability to create a clear vision, the ability to understand organizational culture, the ability to focus on performance development, and the ability to encourage innovation. Leaders have to develop several creativities through a leadership framework to build an organization of mutual respect and understanding in other words important leadership components and significant leadership

initiatives need to be identified to enhance workplace harmony and improve performance efficiency.

This however can only be achieved effectively if leaders understand behavioral patterns that contribute to the desired culture in their efforts to build unity. Establishing a welcoming environment where employees are free to engage with leaders fosters open communication with team members. This open communication allows for increased creativity and ingenuity. Successful leaders must therefore create synergy, teamwork and one cohesive atmosphere made up of the various cultural groups within the workplace (Hansen, 2002).

Communicating the rules of engagement and team member responsibilities to ensure open dialogue and exchange of ideas is among some of the creativities that leaders can put in place to ensure reduction or elimination of workplace conflict. This participatory approach will also minimize the risks of innovation while maintaining progress and harmony in the workplace. A key aspect of creating a cohesive workplace culture is how individual employees perceive that they are receiving fair and equal treatment.

Identifying employee perception of fairness begins by evaluating current employee benefits and assessing specific suggestions that are appealing to a diverse workforce. However, a study conducted by Bohlander and Snell (2007) showed that giving employees benefits that they do not need has no additional value to the company as there will be no motivational effect. Hence aside from equitable resource distribution and the perception of distributive justice among employees the benefits as perceived by employees must first consider an appraisal of their core needs to have any meaningful impact in terms of reduction in complains and antics.

The process of evaluation of employee needs and benefits is however a political process that is governed by constraints and adjustments and hence requires an open integrative negotiation process. One of the most important functions of leaders is to articulate the vision and create opportunities for team members to thrive. In doing so, leaders understand the organization's heartbeat and determine effective methods to influence employees to perform at optimum levels goal achievement negotiation is observed as an effective mechanism to positively manage workplace conflict and hence promoting workplace harmony (Saner, 2000).

Negotiation exchanges of offers a start to converge on a solution which both parties find acceptable. Negotiation applies to parties who have a need to create or maintain healthy relationships. Instead of focusing on competitive measures and winning the negotiation, parties collaborate by looking to create solutions which maximize the meeting of their interests, values and needs (Schelling, 1960).

#### **1.4 Devolved Governments in Kenya**

Devolution is the transfer of powers and resources from the national government to local units. The promulgation of the new constitution in Kenya in 2010 brought about a new system of government. After the 2013 general elections, new system of governance came into place with national government headed by the president and 47 counties headed by county governors. One of the objectives and principles of a devolved government according to constitution is to recognize the right of communities to manage their own affairs and further their development. This would give the people a sense of identity and self-empowerment. This is because they would feel recognized in their contribution to the growth of their own county. Another principle is to protect and promote the interests and rights of minorities and marginalized communities.

Hence the minorities would not feel sidelined. This would promote a sense of unity as they would not feel as though their needs have been ignored.

A total of 47 counties were created as per the constitution. Each county was to receive funding from the National government and at the same time generate funds to sustain themselves. Just like in the case of the president, the county governors were elected on the platform of the vision that they created for their county. The vision was to generate funds for their county and how they would make their county the best in the country by improving the standards of living and eradicating the issues affecting the county.

### **1.5 County Government of Kakamega**

Kakamega County is located in the Western part of Kenya and borders Vihiga County to the South, Siaya County to the West, Bungoma and Trans Nzoia Counties to the North and Nandi and UasinGishu Counties to the East. The County covers an area of 3,051.3 km<sup>2</sup> and is the second populous county after Nairobi with the largest rural population of 1,660,650 people (Commission for Revenue Allocation (CRA, 2011). The County is divided into 12 sub- counties, namely; Lurambi, Navakholo, Ikolomani, Shinyalu, Malava, Butere, Khwisero, Mumias East, Mumias West, Matungu, Lugari and Likuyani.

## **2.STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

A workplace where people get along well and enjoy their work will be more productive, with fewer complaints. Positive managing workplace programs leads to dedicated and healthier performing employees who promote demographic interactions and appreciation of cultures. Organizations lose an average of \$47,000 when replacing each employee with 2 years tenure or more, and approximately \$9,000 per year replacing each first-year employee (Avery et al., 2011). An organization's culture and overall financial performance have the potential to influence employees to stay or leave an organization (Beheshtifar & Nazarian, 2013). Devolution in Kenya was meant to promote social and economic development and the provision of proximate, easily accessible services to all citizens. However, it is over five years since the operationalization of the County governments as a second-tier government in the devolution process. Teething problems in the county governments threaten to impede their functions and slow down the devolution process considerably (Nyakundi, 2014). There are concerns about the workplace interpersonal conflicts and other institutional conflicts in devolved governments within the new constitutional dispensation (Juma, Rotich, & Mulongo, 2014). Issues such as wage disparities among employees in both tiers of government together with levels of subordination still remain issues among the employees who feel they do equal work and different pay or have the same job description but with more responsibilities (CRA, 2016). Lack of resolution of this conflict situation undermines the concept of devolution as a means of bringing public services closer to the people, and hamper the achievement of the new constitutional expectations and the countries long term social and economic development agenda. Studies on strategic leadership and organizational behavior, such as, Baum and Wally (2003); Ireland and Hitt (2009); Beatty and Quinn (2010), have not linked strategic leadership ingenuities as a framework through which leadership can address conflict management in the workplace. The present study thus sought to investigate how strategic leadership initiatives generates workplace harmony in devolved governance systems focusing on devolved units in Kenya.

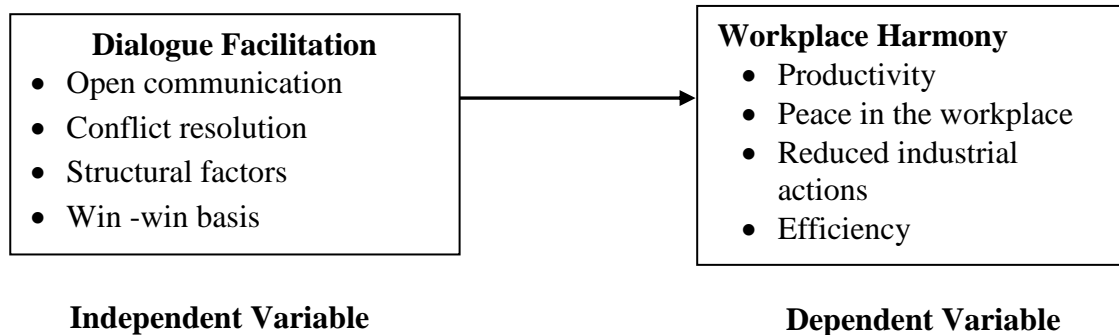
### **3.OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of the study was to investigate influence of dialogue facilitation as a strategic leadership initiatives on workplace harmony in Kakamega County, Kenya.

### **4. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** Dialogue facilitation as a strategic leadership initiative does not significantly influence workplace harmony in the Kakamega County, Kenya.

### **5. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**



### **6.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **6.1 The Deprivation Theory**

The deprivation theory is used in this study to give understanding on how different people react to violent upsets based on their individuals' beliefs. Deprivation is distinguishable into relative and absolute deprivation. Physical abuse, starvation, and poverty are seen as forms of absolute deprivation, whereas relative deprivation can be defined as the discrepancy between what one expects in life and what one gets. Both absolute and relative deprivations are causes of the deprived one's receptivity to particular (religious) messages, such as, "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (St Matthew 11:28).

In the 1950s and 1960s, much theorizing centered on the construction of typologies, as the case in deprivation theory. Charles Glock (Glock and Stark 1965) distinguished five types of deprivation, depending on the kinds of strain felt: economic, social, organismic, ethical, and psychic deprivation. Sykes (1958) when studying the situation in correctional institutions argued that institutional aggression has causes within the institution, not from the outside. This is a 'situational explanation' as it suggests that aggression occurs as a result of the environment in which these people are, and not necessarily the individuals themselves.

This occurs as a result of the 'deprivations' that the workmates experience on a daily basis. All these deprivations can lead to increased stress for workmates, and as a consequence of this, some workmates act aggressively to both reduce stress and try and gain some control over the social order imposed on them. According to Magargee (1976) the more deprived workmates are, the more aggressive incidents seem to occur, suggesting it is their environment influencing their behaviors. This theory is used in this study to provide insight into how the subjective feelings

### **7.EMPIRICAL REVIEW**

### **7.1 Dialogue Facilitation and Its Influence on Workplace Harmony**

Dialogue is a fundamental component of peacemaking. While a dialogue process may not necessarily lead to a peace process or eventual settlement of a conflict, it is a necessary pre-requisite for it. Of equal importance is the fact that a dialogue process can often have positive effects such as a reduction of violence, even if the eventual solution still remains out of reach. Dialogues can be viewed as one means – if not the classical one – of dealing constructively with conflicts (Apel, 1990).

In the sphere of classical diplomacy, skills in negotiation and dialogue have long formed part of the basic repertoire of any prudent management of industrial relations. Organizations that encourage people to raise difficult issues find that doing so leads to innovation, new goals and the changes needed to achieve them. This approach has been adopted by many of the world's largest multi-nationals, as well as law enforcement agencies, humanitarian agencies and governments (Pistone, 2007).

These conditions could be recipe for conflict among the employees and even the organizations especially where their boundaries are not clearly delimited. Confronting conflict does have risks, however. If not properly managed, and if the result is win-lose, the process can undermine teams and can damage mutual respect, alignment, engagement and trust. However, there is every reason to believe that all conflicts can result in win-win outcomes especially where the leadership which is the principal decision-making organ in the organization is committed to the process (Lev, 2001).

The ultimate concerns of most disputes, after all, are not stereotypical perceptions, differences of opinion and varying cultural standards, but rather tangible conflicts of interest, structural factors and the struggle for power and influence. It would seem, then, that dialogues must be put in the context of the overall dynamics of conflict and conflict transformation (Mwangi & Ragui, 2013). Most scholars and practitioners will agree that protracted conflicts can only be effectively transformed through efforts which also address the structural causes and power political aspects of the conflict, in addition to the psychosocial dimensions, grievances and relationship issues (Baum & Wally, 2003). Clearly, due to their emphasis on communication and personal interaction, dialogues are primarily used as an instrument within the psychosocial conflict transformation paradigm.

According to Bercovitch et al. (2009), the organizational leader needs to raise awareness for the dialogue through the most convenient means possible. Dialogue is an important tool for conflict resolution in that, dialogue is an inclusive process that brings together a diverse set of voices to create a microcosm of the larger society. To bring about sustainable change, people have to develop a sense of joint ownership of the process and become stakeholders in identifying new approaches to address common challenges.

In a conflict, the leader must strive to bring all the parties together. Dialogue entails learning, not just talking, the process is not just about sitting around a table, but changing the way people talk, think and communicate with one another. Unlike other forms of discussion, dialogue requires self-reflection, spirit of inquiry and personal change to be present (Lev, 2001). Participants must be willing to address the root causes of a crisis, not just the symptoms on the surface. Dialogue recognizes one another's humanity. Participants must be willing to show empathy towards one another, recognize differences as well as areas of common ground, and



demonstrate a capacity for change.

To foster this kind of human interaction, a respectful and neutral setting—or “safe space”—is preferred. This requires that the leader brings the conflicting parties to a neutral area even if it means outside the work premises so that they can be free to discuss their issues as was the case when an Irish mediator brought warring Iraqi parties to a relatively peaceful and neutral Helsinki (in Sweden) and not the conflict-ridden Basra in Iraq. Dialogue also stresses a long-term perspective (UNDP, 2009). Other forms of conversation tend to focus on the symptoms rather than the root causes of problems. To find sustainable solutions requires time and patience. The process can be painstakingly slow and incremental, lasting anywhere from ten minutes to ten years—one-off interventions very often do not work to address deeply-rooted causes of conflict or to fully deal with complex issues.

Dialogue differs from other processes and compliments them in the sense that dialogue is not a one-size-fits-all strategy. It is not a panacea for resolving all the world’s crises, where there is deep political paralysis or a long history of violence. Rather, it represents just one tool in policymakers’ toolbox, a process that is flexible and adaptable to different contexts and countries, one that is especially useful when the parties to a conflict are not ready yet for formal negotiations (Lev, 2001). Moreover, dialogue requires that basic conditions be present first.

When violence, hate, and mistrust remain stronger than the will to forge a consensus, or if there is a significant imbalance of power or a lack of political will among the participants, then the situation might not be ripe for dialogue. Moreover, participants must feel free to speak their minds without fear of retribution, or rejection. Dialogue is meant to complement other forms of diplomatic or political processes, or lay the groundwork for future and more formal talks, not replace them. Sometimes dialogue occurs within more formal negotiations (Ilgaz, 2014).

The process is different from other forms of conversation. In dialogue there are no winners. Whereas the purpose of negotiation is to reach a concrete settlement, the aim of dialogue is to bridge communities, share perspectives and discover new ideas. Some of the areas where dialogue can make a difference are that dialogue can facilitate recovery from crisis. The dialogue does not necessarily heal the crisis overnight but it does help relieve tensions, develop a set of social reform options and prepare for eventualities. Dialogue can help avert violent conflict. Dialogue can help address environmental concerns (Pistone, 2007).

Problems may still remain but the dialogue process can help the conflicting parties develop a sense of confidence in their leadership and reconcile economic with environmental interests. Dialogue can assist in conflict resolution. Dialogue paves the way for greater communication and built trust between the two feuding sides. Thus, in the case where the organizational leader serves as the mediator of the conflict, he should be knowledgeable and keen about the conflict, educated enough on the underlying causes, conversant with the character of warring parties, and is aware of all those with other varying interests in the conflict (Bercovitch et al. 2009).

## **8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted the survey research design. Survey research design is an efficient method for systematically collecting data from a broad spectrum of individuals and educational settings. The design is appropriate as it could be used to assess the opinions and attitude on events people and procedures (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2009). The design was deemed appropriate for this study

since it allowed for collection of a large amount of data on the study problem from a large population drawn from the County Government of Kakamega with minimum effort. It also enabled generalizations to be made on the outcome of the study. The target population of this study, therefore, comprised of management and lower level employees of the County Government of Kakamega. According to the County's Human Resource Department (2018), there are currently 5300 employees in the Kakamega County Government. The study used stratified random sampling to sample the management and lower level employees of the County Government of Kakamega. 98 respondents were sampled as the respondents of the study. The study used primary data which was collected directly from the respondents using the questionnaires. The selection of these tools was guided by the nature of data to be collected, time available and the objectives of the study. Questionnaires were tested for validity and reliability. Data obtained from the questionnaires was first cleaned and edited before being coded and subjected to further analysis. Data was then entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical analysis was done using, frequencies and percentages to describe the basic characteristics of the data. Inferential statistical analysis was also done using the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient and multivariate regression analysis.

## **9.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The researcher gave out a total of 98 questionnaires to the staff of the County Government of Kakamega. Eighty-four were returned duly completed representing a response rate of 86%. All the 84 duly returned questionnaires were found to have been correctly filled.

### **9.1 Descriptive Statistics**

#### **9.1.1 Influence of dialogue facilitation on workplace harmony**

The first objective of the study was to determine the influence of dialogue facilitation on workplace harmony. The respondents were asked to indicate the aspect of dialogue facilitation on influence on workplace harmony in the County Government of Kakamega. The results were as shown in Table 4.5.

**Table 4. 1: Aspect of dialogue facilitation and influence on workplace harmony**

| <b>Statements</b>   | <b>Responses</b> |                  |             |           |
|---|------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------|
|   | <b>Agreed</b>    | <b>Disagreed</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>SD</b> |
| The management encourages all lower level employees to openly communicate any issues they have at the workplace | 66(79%)          | 18(21%)          | 3.93        | 1.091     |
| During conflict, the management strives to bring all parties together   | 70(83%)          | 14(17%)          | 4.00        | .855      |
| The management uses strategic leadership to address underlying tangible conflicts of interest                   | 68(81%)          | 16(19%)          | 3.90        | 1.078     |

|   |         |         |             |              |
|---|---------|---------|-------------|--------------|
| The management is able to address structural factors and power struggles that lead to conflict in our organization                | 10(12%) | 74(88%) | 2.26        | .828         |
| Through strategic leadership, workplace conflict is resolved in the organization on a win-win basis for all the parties           | 72(86%) | 12(14%) | 4.10        | 1.078        |
| Through strategic leadership, dialogue is used in the organization to complement other forms of diplomatic or political processes | 68(81%) | 16(19%) | 3.86        | 1.181        |
| <b>Overall mean</b>   |         |         | <b>3.68</b> | <b>1.021</b> |

The results on influence of dialogue show that the management encourages all lower level employees to openly communicate any issues they have at the workplace had 66(79%) of the respondents agreeing while 18(21%) disagreed (mean 3.93, SD = 1.091). The standard deviation shows that the responses were spread  $\pm 1.091$  from the mean. During conflict, the management strives to bring all parties together had 70(83%) of the respondents agreeing while 14(17%) disagreed (mean 4.00, SD = .855). The management uses strategic leadership to address underlying tangible conflicts of interest had 68(81%) of the respondents agreeing while 16(19%) disagreed (mean 3.90, SD = 1.078).

Other results were the management is able to address structural factors and power struggles that lead to conflict in our organization had 10(12%) of the respondents agreeing while 74(88%) disagreed (mean 2.26, SD = .828). Through strategic leadership, workplace conflict is resolved in the organization on a win-win basis for all the parties had 72(86%) of the respondents agreeing while 12(14%) disagreed (mean 4.10, SD = 1.078). Through strategic leadership, dialogue is used in the organization to complement other forms of diplomatic or political processes had 68(81%) of the respondents agreeing while 16(19%) disagreed (mean 3.86, SD = 1.181). The overall mean on dialogue facilitation in the County Government of Kakamega was 3.68 (= agreed; SD = 1.021). This means that the respondents generally agreed with the statements on dialogue facilitation in the County Government of Kakamega.

The results agree with those of Pistone (2007) who found that organizations that encourage people to raise difficult issues find that doing so leads to innovation, new goals and the changes needed to achieve them. The results also agree with those of Ilgaz (2014) who found that dialogue complements other forms of diplomatic or political processes, or lays the groundwork for future and more formal talks.

### **9.1.2 Workplace harmony in the County Government of Kakamega**

The researcher sought to establish the level of workplace harmony in the County Government of Kakamega. The results were as shown in table 4.9.

**Table 4. 2: Workplace harmony**

| Statements   | Responses |           |             |              |
|--|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
|  | Agreed    | Disagreed | Mean        | SD           |
| As a result of strategic leadership in conflict resolution in the organization, our annual lower level employees' turnover rates are declining | 65(77%)   | 19(23%)   | 4.31        | .975         |
| There is better coordination of activities in our workplace now due to use of strategic leadership in conflict resolution                      | 56(67%)   | 28(33%)   | 3.60        | 1.170        |
| There is more consultation in the workplace on problem solving leading to improved performance   | 48(57%)   | 36(43%)   | 3.62        | 1.035        |
| The employees' levels of productivity have been increasing   | 62(74%)   | 22(26%)   | 3.86        | 1.026        |
| There are fewer industrial actions at the workplace nowadays   | 64(76%)   | 20(24%)   | 4.21        | .951         |
| The organization has managed to create a peaceful working environment for us all   | 62(74%)   | 22(26%)   | 4.05        | .909         |
| <b>Overall mean</b>  |           |           | <b>3.94</b> | <b>1.011</b> |

As a result of strategic leadership in conflict resolution in the organization, our annual lower level employees' turnover rates are declining had 65 (77%) of the respondents agreeing while 19(23%) disagreed (mean 4.31= agreed, SD = .975). There is better coordination of activities in our workplace now due to use of strategic leadership in conflict resolution had 56(67%) of the respondents agreeing while 28(33%) disagreed (mean 3.60= agreed, SD = 1.170). There is more consultation in the workplace on problem solving leading to improved performance had 48(57%) of the respondents agreeing while 36(43%) disagreed (mean 3.62= agreed, SD = 1.035).

Other results were the employees' levels of productivity have been increasing had 62(74%) of the respondents agreeing while 22(26%) disagreed (mean 3.86 = agreed, SD = 1.026). There are fewer industrial actions at the workplace nowadays had 64(76%) of the respondents agreeing while 20(24%) disagreed (mean 4.21 = agreed, SD = .951). And the organization has managed to create a peaceful working environment for us all had 62(74%) of the respondents agreeing while 22(26%) disagreed (mean 4.05 = agreed, SD = .909). The overall mean on workplace harmony in the County Government of Kakamega was 3.94 (= agreed; SD = 1.011). This means that the respondents generally agreed with the statements on workplace harmony in the County Government of Kakamega.

The results agree with those of Onsarigo (2007) who established that it is better to expose and resolve conflict before they damage people's relationships or even before they degenerate into

violence which undermines institutional stability and performance. The study concluded that social conflicts in educational institutions demand moral authority and leadership integrity to resolve them. If not resolved, they can have a destabilizing effect on institutional performance in all learning processes. Workplace harmony leads to increased employee productivity, reduced industrial actions.

## 9.2 Correlation Analysis

In this subsection a summary of the correlation analyses is presented. It seeks to first determine the degree of interdependence of the independent variable and also show the degree of their association with the dependent variable separately. These results are summarized in Table 4.9 below.

**Table 4. 3: Correlations between the independent and the dependent variables**

|           |                 | Dialogue facilitation   |
|-----------|-----------------|---|
| Workplace | Pearson Corr.   | .572*   |
| harmony   | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000  |
|           |                 | ** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). |
|           |                 | * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  |

At the 0.05 significance level ( $r=0.572$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), there is a statistically significant relationship between dialogue facilitation and workplace harmony in Kakamega County, Kenya. It is thus inferred that dialogue facilitation predicate workplace harmony in the County Government of Kakamega. Dialogue facilitation has a positive relationship with Workplace harmony in the Kakamega County, Kenya.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the research findings, the study concludes that dialogue facilitation contributes to increase in workplace harmony in the County Government of Kakamega. Correlation analysis on dialogue facilitation and workplace harmony in the County Government of Kakamega showed that workplace harmony was strongly and positively correlated with dialogue facilitation by a correlation coefficient of 0.572. Dialogue facilitation is very important and it brings positive agreements between employer and employees. Unilateral actions by the employer are also discouraged as everything will be agreed collectively. Effective dialogue facilitation machinery makes the workers feel motivated as they can approach the management on various matters and bargain for higher benefits. The study recommends that the County Government of Kakamega continues to improve on its strategic leadership regarding conflict resolution, increase the efficiency with respect to coordination of activities, enhance consultation in the workplace on problem solving as these will lead to improved performance in terms of the employees' levels of productivity and reduction in industrial actions, and creates a peaceful working environment for all the employees.

## REFERENCES

American Management Association (2011). Conflict 101: A Manager's Guide to Resolving

- Problems So Everyone Can Get Back to Work. American Management Association, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Apel, G. (1990). *Negotiating Your Way from Confrontation to Cooperation*, revised second edition, Bantam
- Avery, D., Volpone, S., McKay, P., King, E., & Wilson, D. (2012). Is relational demography relative? How employment status influences effects of supervisor subordinate demographic similarity. *Journal of Business & Psychology*, 27, 83- 98.
- Baum, R., & Wally, S. (2003). Strategic decision speed and firm performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 24(11): 1107–1130.
- Beatty, K., & Quinn, L. (2010). Strategic Command Taking the Long View for Organizational Success. *Leadership In Action*, 30(1), 3-7.
- Beheshtifar, M., & Nazarian, R. (2013). Role of Occupational Stress in organizations. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research In Business*, 4(9).
- Bercovitch, J., & Richard, J. (2009). *Conflict resolution in the twenty first century: Principles, methods, and approaches*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.
- Bigambo, J. (2014), *Governance, Human rights and Development in Africa*, A journal on Ugatuzi Kenya
- Bohlander, G. & Snell, S. (2007). *Managing Human Resources*, (13th Ed.). London: Academic Internet Publishers (AIPI).
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIDP) (2008). *Leadership and the management of conflict at work*. Survey report October 2008
- Drucker, .F. (2002). *Innovation and entrepreneurship*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Drucker, P., & Stone, N. (1998). *On the profession of management*. Boston, MA. Harvard Business School Publishing
- Glock, H. & Stark, T. (1965) *Games, Strategies, and Managers"* Oxford University Press.
- Ilgaz, Z. (2014) Conflict Resolution: When Should Leaders Step In? *Academy of Management Journal*, 51 (4): 651–671.
- Ireland, D. & Hitt, A. (2009). Achieving and maintaining strategic competitiveness in the 21st century: the role of strategic leadership. *Academy of Management Executive*, 13(1), 43–57.
- Juma, O., Rotich, K., & Mulongo, S. (2014). Devolution and Governance Conflicts in Africa: Kenyan Scenario. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 4(6), 1-10.
- Kenya Airways Limited (2012). *Labour Reorganization Programmme*.
- Kouzes, S., & Posner, B. (2009). Non-Conventional/Illegal Political Participation of Male and Female Youths. *Human Affairs*, 22:405–18.
- Lev, B. (2001). *Intangibles: Management, measurement and reporting*. Washington, Brookings Institution.
- Magargee, R. (1976) *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace* (A. A. Knopf) 440.
- Manktelow, J., & Carlson, A. (2013) *Resolve conflicts effectively*. [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com)
- Mugenda, O. (2009). *Research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*, Nairobi: Africa Centre for technology statistics (ACTs).

- Mwangi, C. & Ragui, M. (2013). Effects of work place conflicts on employee performance in the air transport industry in Kenya. *Prime Journal of Business Administration and Management (BAM)* 3(6), 1083-1089
- Ngundo, M. (2014). Devolved Governments in Kenya: A Case Study of their Establishment in Machakos County. Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Nairobi
- Nguyen, N. T. B., & Umemoto, K. (2009). Understanding leadership for cross-cultural knowledge management. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 2(4), 23-35.
- Nyakundi, F. (2014). The effects of role conflicts on service delivery by county governments: case study of Kisii County. Unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Nairobi
- Okongo, G., (2015). Factors Influencing the Implementation of County Government Mandates in Kenya; A Case of Bungoma County Unpublished Thesis, University of Nairobi
- Okotoni, O. & Okotoni, A. (2003). Conflict Management in Secondary Schools in Osun State Nigeria. *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 12(1): 23-38.
- Omboko, P. (2006). Management conflicts in Kipkaren division school: A report presented to stakeholders' forum in education in Kipkaren, Kipkaren Salient.
- Pauwels L., & De Waele, M. (2014) Youth Involvement in Politically Motivated Violence: Why Do Social Integration, Perceived Legitimacy, and Perceived Discrimination Matter? *JCV*. 8 (1)
- Pistone, H. (2007) A multi methods examination of the benefits and detriments of intra-group conflict" *Journal of industrial relations*. 14(4) 220-320
- Rowe, W. (2001). Creating Wealth in Organizations: The Role of Strategic Leadership. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 81-94.
- Sang, F. K., & Keror, I. K. (2013) Assessment Of Factors Influencing Management Conflicts In Church Sponsored Public Secondary Schools In Kenya. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 2(6), 45-56
- Serfontein, J. (2009). The impact of strategic leadership on the operational strategy and performance of business organisations in South Africa. DBM thesis, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch.
- Schelling, T. C. (1960) *The Stratew of Conflict*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stumpf, S. (1988). Leadership and beyond: The need for strategic management skills. *Advances in Strategic Management*, Vol. 5.
- Sykes, G. (1958). *The Society of Captives*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Tang, Y. & Chang, C. (2010). Impact of role ambiguity and role conflict on employee creativity. *African Journal of Business Management*, 4(6), 869-881.
- UNDP, (2009). *Why dialogue matters for conflict prevention and peace building*. UNDP, New York
- Wheeler, S., McFarland, W. & Kleiner, A. (2007). A blueprint for strategic leadership. *Strategy and Business*, 49: 1–13.