THE IMPACT OF GENDER DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION STYLES AMONG TEACHERS ON MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MATHIRA EAST SUB-COUNTY KENYA

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of gender differences in conversational styles in the management of workplace conflict in the public secondary schools in Kenya. The study focused on teachers working in public secondary schools in Mathira East Sub County, Kenya. Gradually, there has been a significant increase in the number of women joining the workforce in every region of the world. In line with these changes, more women become part of the expanding workforce both in the private and the public service. Public secondary schools present an appropriate opportunity to study the management of conflict by both male and female managers. There is almost parity in the number of male and female teachers in public secondary schools. Cases of conflict are on the rise in public secondary schools. The abolition of corporal punishment and the recommendation for the adoption of guidance and counseling as a measure of resolving conflicts amongst students ought to have reduced cases of conflict. However, data indicates that more schools have experienced disturbances, sometimes leading to wanton destruction of property. Discontent arising from issues related to sour relations between teachers and the school administrators has in cases led to poor work relations. Consequently, the goals and objectives of the schools have been compromised and the impact is normally realized in terms of stagnating or declining academic results. This study focused on the principal, teacher and student relationship in public secondary schools in Mathira East Sub County. The variables that were under study were: instrumental and expressive styles, conversational dominance, tentative and assertive styles and collaborative and competitive styles on their impact in determining the approach used in managing conflict and the outcome of conflict management. Both popular and empirical literature has been presented to demonstrate perceived gender differences in communication styles and conflict management. Descriptive survey design was used to collect data from 271 teaching staff in the identified public secondary schools. For its relative balance in regard to the number of men and women in the workforce, the teaching profession will be used in drawing the sample of the study. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used
stratified random sampling. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to achieve the desired representation from the two genders under study. In this study, questionnaires were developed to collect data from teachers and administrators. Using the SPSS statistical analysis tool, the researcher used ANOVA and Multiple Regression as inferential statistics to evaluate the predictive abilities of gender communication styles differences in relation to five possible preferred conflict management behaviours of public secondary school administrators towards the students. The findings of the study were that female conflict managers used expressive, tentative and competitive communication styles and were also dominant in conversations while the male managers used instrumental, assertive and collaborative communication styles. On conflict management styles, the female conflict managers used competing, avoiding and compromising styles more, while the males used integrating and accommodating more. When the conflict manager was male, the study found that after the conflict management, there were: improved relationships, ease of achieving set goals, and effective utilization of resources. However, in regard to improved team spirit and, staff and students discipline, there were no significant differences between male and female conflict managers. In conclusion, there were significant differences in communication styles used by male and female administrators especially when handling conflict at their workplaces. This is coupled with different conflict management styles applied by males and females. It is also evident that both women and men administrators sometimes show feminine communication styles and sometimes masculine styles. It is the recommendation of the researcher that there should be concerted effort to ensure gender parity as this will incorporate different perspectives and approaches that enhance and develop performance. Secondly, there should be focused training for administrators on suitable communication and conflict management styles.

**Key words:** Communication style, Compromising, Conflict management, Gender

**ABBREVIATIONS/ ACRONYMS**

G.O.K - Government of Kenya
T.S.C - Teachers Service Commission
SPSS - Statistical Package of Social sciences
ROCI - Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory
M.O.E.S.T - Ministry of Education Science and Technology
B.O.M - Board of Management
ANOVA - Analysis of Variance

**OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS**

**Accommodating:** an unassertive and cooperative behaviour where the person is attempting to satisfy the other person’s concerns at the expense of his or her own.

**Androgyny:** the possibility that both masculine and feminine behaviours reside in varying degrees in each individual.

**Assertiveness:** The extent to which one tries to satisfy his/her own concerns.

**Avoiding:** both an unassertive and uncooperative behaviour where the person tries to
sidestep conflict without trying to satisfy either persons’ concerns.

**Collaborating:** An assertive and cooperative behaviour where the person attempts to find a win-win solution that completely satisfies both people.

**Communication style:** how an individual prefers to communicate with others and how they interpret or perceive communication from others.

**Competing:** An assertive and uncooperative behaviour where the person tries to satisfy his/her own concerns at other person’s expense.

**Compromising:** an alternative behaviour between both assertiveness and cooperativeness where the person is trying to find an acceptable settlement that only partially satisfies both people’s concerns.

**Conflict management styles:** conflict management styles refer to patterned responses, or clusters of behaviour, that people use in conflict, through diverse communication tactics.

**Conflict management:** an act or process of resolving disputes between two or more parties with the view of coming to a resolution.

**Conflict resolution:** Refers to ending a dispute between parties; an approach that assumes that the dispute can be ended.

**Conflict:** The condition in which people, the things they care about, appear to be incompatible.

**Cooperativeness:** The extent to which one tries to satisfy the concerns of another person.

**Gender:** a set of qualities and behaviours expected from a male or female by the society, the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female.

**Instrumentality:** Conversation that focuses on identifying goals and finding a solution.

**Expressiveness:** Expression of emotions with a perspective to how others feel.

**Conversational dominance:** a speaker dominating others in a conversation.

**Tentativeness:** A speaker lacks the strength of their convictions about the statements or assertions they have made or are about to make.

**Collaborative style:** in a conversation, speakers build off each others’ good ideas.

**Competitive style:** in a conversation, speakers build off each others’ good ideas.

**Competitive style:** a conversation which includes contests and interruptions.

**INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Background
Ersoy (2008) points out that people spend a large part of their lives interacting with each other. They do so in small groups, in informal conversations with friends, in meetings with co-workers, and in many other contexts. Human beings are constantly involved in communication processes with others. We are engaged in these communication processes in many areas of life: at home, in school, in the community, at work, and beyond. It is through communication that collaboration and cooperation occur. Different kinds or style of communicative competence can occur and humans use their communicative strategies slightly differently for various reasons. One such major, hypothetical reason could be gender: men and women are sometimes reported to use different styles in communicating with others. Differences in communication styles may ultimately lead to miscommunication (Ersoy, 2008).

Gendered communication is worthy of exploration because it brings into sharper focus
real-world imbalances and inequalities (Lackoff, 1973). In the last two decades, research on gender and education has grown and the growth comes at a time when many women are aspiring to be managers in the education sector. As women take on management roles, men and women are curious to know about women’s communication as managers. It is critical that this area of study be explored seriously, in particular in African rural educational settings, because effective communication is important in management (Netshitangani, 2008).

Communication and conflict are interdependent, simultaneously defining each other. When conflict occurs in an organization, it is going to be recognized and also expressed through communication. It is through communication that people express their dissenting opinions, disagreement, or differences in personality. The workplace presents an opportunity to observe real interactions between men and women in the context of the many constraints as described by Kendal and Tannen (1997). A school environment has diverse values, beliefs and attitudes making it inevitable for conflicts to occur among and between students, teachers, and non teaching staff (Achoka, 1990). Therefore, the use of intervention measures in conflict management is an important element in the running of a secondary school.

Conversation is central in the communication process. Graddol and Swann (2008) point out that conversation can be regarded as a structured activity; that the talk has to be sequenced, effectively opened and brought to a close. To keep a conversation going, participants should follow certain rules for instance, on aspects like what one is supposed to say, when it is appropriate to say it, how to continue the current topic or talk on a topic, and how to relate to the turn taking system. Thus, from this perspective, conversation is a cooperative endeavor. Conversation can be the establishment and maintenance of relationship between speakers. Through talk, people can express intimacy or show respect, friendliness or hostility (Xu, 2009). Strenstrom (1994) claims that spoken interaction is a joint, here-and-now social activity which is governed by two main principles: speakers take turns and speakers cooperate. Thus, the smoothness of a conversation depends on the strategies adopted by the participants. Xu (2009) says that it is well acknowledged that males and females have different conversational strategies to accomplish interactional goals.

Xu (2009) adds that when gender is taken into consideration, conversations exhibit different functions to men and women. Citing Tannen (1992), Xu (2009) says to men, conversations are negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand if they can, and protect themselves from others’ attempts to put them down and push them around. But from the perspective of women, conversations are negotiations of closeness in which people try to protect themselves from others’ attempts to push them away. To women, life is a community, a struggle to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation. Tannen (1990) writes that men and women have different, but equally valid styles of communication. Women’s communication is closely related to connectivity and men’s styles reflect status type goals. The key element that guides female conversation is intimacy, whereas the key element in male conversation is independence. Men and women communicate on different levels and their communicational approaches are also different. Tannen (1990) theorized that girls and boys learn different communication styles from early childhood and characterized their speech as report talk for men and rapport talk
for women. Wood (2000) says that gender communication differences begin during childhood. From an early age, males and females are taught different linguistic styles. Communication behaviours that are acceptable for girls may not be acceptable for boys and vice versa. Many times men and women struggle when communicating with the opposite gender. Thus, one of the biggest barriers to effective communication is gender. Wood (2000) points out that the first step to overcome the gender communication barriers is to identify male and female communication patterns. It can be ascertained from the presentation in table 1.1 below adopted by Mohindra & Azhar (2012) to explain the gender communication differences in workplaces.

Table 1.1 Levels of Communication between Men and Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Men keep their problems to themselves and do not see the point in sharing personal issues.</td>
<td>Women are more likely to talk to other women when they have a problem or need to make a decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Men tend to relate to other men on one-up and one-down basis. Status and dominance are important.</td>
<td>They are more relationship oriented, and look for commonalities and ways to connect with other women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Men focus on talking and proving information rather than asking questions. They share experiences as a way of being one-up.</td>
<td>They focus on building rapport, by sharing experiences and asking questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Men can have a disagreement, move on to another subject and go get a drink together.</td>
<td>If women have a disagreement with each other, it affects all aspects of their relationship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Men build relationships while they are working on tastes with each other.</td>
<td>Getting things done at work by building relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Men move to solutions and problem solving right away.</td>
<td>Women want to talk about the problems and solve them collaboratively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>For men, asking for help reflects an inability to achieve on one’s own merit.</td>
<td>Offering help and advice is a sign of care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Men listen to the main point. They are selective Listeners</td>
<td>They listen to each and every word; they show alternatives through verbal and non-verbal cues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Levels of Communication between men and women: Mohindra & Azhar (2012).

According to Eshiwani (2009), the Government of Kenya views education as the vehicle for attaining its national development programmes and realization of goals for social equity, social justice and national development. The emphasis in provision of quality secondary school education lies in the fact that it forms a crucial phase between the world of work and the entry into colleges and university education (GOK, 2005). A number of reports have indicated that the government is spending over a third of its annual budget on education and hence the concern because education is consuming a great part of the country’s annual budget than any other public enterprise with the aim of producing holistic
responsible Kenyans. However, in the recent years, management of some secondary schools has raised concern from both the public and the Ministry of Education leading to appointment of enquiries into causes of students’ unrest and indiscipline (GOK, 2005).

In schools, the common types of conflicts usually occur between the students on one hand, and the school authority on the other. Other forms of conflict include interpersonal conflicts among staff as well as the students. Other higher levels of conflict that have been identified include those that involve the Unions of the teachers and the State Government. Punitive measures have been used in some cases in handling cases of conflict, but as Wamocha, Nasongo and Injendi (2011) have noted, these only seem to enhance feelings of dominance and consequently create a general feeling of distrust.

The management of public secondary schools in Kenya falls under The Ministry of Education Science and Technology (M.O.E.S.T). However, there is a complimentary role played by other stakeholders like the community and sponsors in the provision of moral, spiritual, and financial support to schools. This has been actualized through the composition of schools’ Boards of Management (B.O.M). Therefore, the problems associated with management in public secondary schools will be of great concern especially in the conflict management methods employed. There are various legislations, in the Kenyan educational system, which serve as guidelines for management and administration of institutions, with one administrative responsibility being conflict management. However, it is evident that most educational institutions continue to report increased cases of organizational conflict. Most affected are secondary schools, middle level colleges, and tertiary institutions (Republic of Kenya, 2002).

Fleetwood (1987) points out that attitudes toward conflict and images of conflict’s role also vary widely. Until the early 1960’s, even scholars primarily portrayed conflict as an undesirable concept to be avoided However, many scholars have changed their views concerning conflict. Conflict is now seen as having the potential for positive growth. Fleetwood, (1987) says that some people may view conflict as being a negative situation which must be avoided at any cost. Others may see conflict as being a phenomenon which necessitates management. Still others may consider conflicts as being an existing opportunity for personal growth and so try to use it to their best advantage.

Premchadani (2014) says unmanaged or mismanaged conflicts can drain the school organization of the energy it should be directing toward achievement of its goals. The effective management of conflict, then, becomes one of the most important functions of the school administrator. With increasing number of women occupying higher decision making positions in organizations, it encourages researchers to study the possible effects of gender differences in their ability to resolve conflict effectively (Premchadani 2014).

Conflicts may rise and lead to hostility, frustration, anxiety, tensions and non-productive results, or, conflict can be functionally set on and lead to a new idea, creativity, innovation and valuable final products. For this reason, it is important for all to manage conflict fruitfully by choosing appropriate conflict management styles.

Hener (2010) posits that from the varied perspectives of preventing, avoiding, managing or solving conflicts, interpersonal communication is very important. It can play multiple roles in any conflict, the first one being that it can create conflicts by itself. Panasora & Bocos (2008) as cited in Hener (2010) point out that for solving conflicts, communication uses three functions. The first is the understanding and knowing ourselves and of the
others we interact with, so we can know what to expect from them and how we can influence them and, on the other hand, to make our own position known so they can react to it. The second function of communication is about developing a consistent relationship with the others so that we could give significance to our reality - the individual socializing function. The third function refers to the dimension of communication influence and persuasion, developing further the idea of common effort and collaboration. Thus, communication and conflict are in an independent relationship; communication can engender conflicts, can escalate conflicts and also can prevent conflicts, help in conflict management and resolution activities. When dealing with any conflict or potential conflict, communication represents a very important factor (Hener, 2010).

Chaudhry, Shami, Saif and Ahmed, (2008) argue that gender is one of the variables that have received much attention in conflict research for its potential moderating effect. Korabik, Baril & Watson, (1993) argue that some researchers have sought to explore whether women do speak in a different voice than men when negotiating or handling conflict. The question therefore remains whether women communicate differently from men in similar situations. Kelly (1997) points out that situations, time, culture, customs, and gender styles affect and complicate communication.

In Kenya, several studies have been done on the area of conflicts in schools. Lagat (2013) cites: Sang (2009), Kogo (2002) and Okotoni and Okotoni (2003) as examples. However, these studies have not provided clear empirical evidence on the conflict management methods used by head teachers in secondary schools. This is coupled with the fact that empirical studies of gender differences in conflict resolution strategies in the cultural context of African nations are nearly non-existent (Manyak and Katono, 2010).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Republic of Kenya (2001) indicates that conflicts in Kenya’s secondary schools have become a major problem that all stakeholders in education should take a great concern about. Lagat (2013) points out that conflict affects the community, the school administration and the government directly or indirectly. Omboko (2010) indicates that 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. According to Newstorm and Davis (2002), prolonged interpersonal conflicts lead to deterioration of cooperation and team work. Often, conflicts in schools are mostly manifested in riots which result in destruction of property.

Kinyanjui (1977) argues that student protests have their origins in specific situations within each school. These are related to the leadership style, commitment, and the ability of the head teacher and the relationship between teaching staff and the students. All these have to do with the communication, and interaction which exists between the teaching staff, head teachers and the maturity shown by the students when dealing with issues that directly affect them. The Ministry of Education (2008) indicates that the number of conflicts in public secondary schools alone increased from 22 (0.9 %) in 1980 to 300 (7.5 %) in 2008. Ageng’a and Simatwa (2011) indicate that in the year 2008, the Ministry of Education reported that up to 254 of secondary schools in Kenya had been affected by student unrests. The unrests included arson and other violent acts. Republic of Kenya
(2001) says that students’ indiscipline in secondary schools can lead to various negative consequences, such as destruction of school property, assault, and in extreme cases death of students. Cooper (2014) notes that: in November 2012, 149 schools in the Mount Kenya region were closed two weeks prior to the scheduled end of the academic year because administrators were concerned over students’ potentially destructive actions. Kibui, Kibera and Bradshaw (2014) point out that these conflicts have persisted in Kenyan secondary schools, middle level colleges, and tertiary institutions even though there have been various legislations that serve as guidelines for management and administration of educational systems.

With the increase in the number and size of secondary schools in Kenya, the problem of leadership by school principals could obviously become more complex (Matheri, 2015). Some schools experience more conflicts than others and this may be attributed to among other things the gender of the principal and his or her level of leadership (Adesina, 1990). A report carried out by the Southern and Eastern Africa consumption for monitoring Educational Quality (2010) showed that less than 15 % of secondary schools in Kenya are administered by female principals (Matheri, 2015). Kitele (2013) notes that in Kenya, for a long time, female head teachers have been heading girls’ schools. Bosire, Sang, Kiumi and Mungai (2009) found out that students in female-headed schools had higher levels of discipline.

Research has found that women’s communication styles differ from those of men. On the one hand there are scholars who argue that women are better communicators. For instance, Adler, Lanley, and Parcker (1993) show that: women and men use language differently, with women using signals of courtesy when they talk, and show respect by listening and remembering what has been said by others. On the other hand some scholars have demonstrated the deficiencies in communication by women as compared to men. Shakeshaft (1989) shows how women’s communication style has been considered deficient and as a result women managers have been told to “talk like men” in order to succeed. Other scholars have often equated women’s communicative styles with powerlessness while equating men’s communicative styles with professionalism and power (Sandller and Hall, 1998; Kramrae, 1980; Lakoff, 1975) as cited in Netshitangani (2008). This therefore necessitated the need to investigate the impact that gender communication styles differences have on the management of conflict in public secondary schools by either gender.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General objective:
The main objective of this study was to investigate the impact of differences in gender communication styles on conflict management in public secondary schools in Mathira East District, Kenya.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:
1. To assess the impact of expressive and instrumental communication styles on conflict management in public secondary schools in Kenya.
2. To evaluate the impact of conversational dominance on conflict management in public
secondary schools in Kenya.
3. To determine the impact of tentative and assertive communication styles in conflict management in public secondary schools in Kenya.
4. To examine the impact of collaborative and competitive communication styles on conflict management in public secondary schools in Kenya.

1.4 Research Questions
1. What is the impact of expressive and instrumental communication in conflict management in public secondary schools in Kenya?
2. What is the impact of conversational dominance on conflict management in public secondary schools in Kenya?
3. What is the impact of tentative and assertive communication styles on conflict management in public secondary schools in Mathira East District?
4. What is the impact of collaborative and competitive communication styles in managing conflict in public secondary schools in Kenya?

1.5 Significance of the study.
The study was designed to determine to what extent gender conversational styles differences impact on the management of conflict and how this is reflected in organizational productivity in public secondary schools in Kenya. Tannen (1990) has pointed out that men and women have different but equally valid styles of communication. Men and women communicate on different levels and their communication approaches are also different. Netshtangani (2008) notes that in the last two decades more women have taken up management roles and that effective communication is important in management.

Gender is an issue that has been given a lot of importance going by the provisions in the Kenyan constitution section 27 (3) which says: women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities (The constitution of Kenya, 2010), while section 27 (8) says: the state shall take legislative and other measure to implement the principle that not more than two thirds of the members of elective of appointive bodies shall be of the same gender. These legislative measures, coupled with the fact that more women have joined formal workforce make it necessary to investigate gender communication differences especially on their impact on conflict management competence. The public service, as represented by the public secondary schools, is an important sector in the economy and it is therefore expected that this study will be useful not only to those in the public service but also in other organizations.

As at 2009, overall figures for recruitment of men and women in the public sector show that women made up 30.9% and men 69.1% of the workforce (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social development, 2009). For that reason the government agencies concerned with policy making and decision making, influencing the way organizations use conflict management will benefit from the findings of this study.
Managers in other organisations who have diverse workforce will also benefit from this study. This study will also add to the body of knowledge on conflicts in the public service and it therefore provides a basis for further research as a source of reference and stimulating interest.
1.6 Scope of the study:
The study focused on the assessment of perceived gender communication differences in conflict management in the public secondary schools in Kenya. The study employed the genderlect theory (Tannen, 1990) of communication and the dual concern model (Blake and Mouton, 1964; Kilmann and Thomas, 1977). The choice of the genderlect theory was informed by the fact that it clearly demonstrates the various conversational styles adopted by either males or females under similar circumstances. The conflict dual concern model was chosen to help in identifying the conflict management strategies individuals normally employ, in relation to the assertive-unassertive continuum and the high or low concern continuum.

The choice of Mathira East Sub County was informed by two reasons: first, preliminary research revealed a lack of studies on gender communication styles differences in conflict management. Second, numerous cases of conflict have been reported from schools in the region.

This study employed descriptive survey design because as Mugenda (1999) points out, survey research is probably the best method available to social scientists and other educators who are interested in collecting data for the purpose of a population that is too large to observe directly.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction
This chapter first presents a review of the empirical and theoretical literature. The theories backing the study have also been discussed. This is followed by a conceptual framework that shows the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The independent variables in the study are expressive and instrumental communication styles, conversational dominance, tentative and assertive speech styles, and collaborative and competitive styles while the dependent variable is the outcomes of conflict management. The study is informed by the fact that women constitute a significant part of the workforce. Their representation in management and other organizational levels is increasing. Consequently as ever increasing numbers of women enter into the workforce, and enter into managerial positions, the issue of whether gender communication styles differences exist in the ability to manage conflict effectively becomes an important concern.

2.2 Review of the empirical and theoretical literature
Issues to do with gender communication styles differences in the workplace have attracted a lot of interest especially in regard to the management of conflict. Both popular and empirical literature has highlighted varying positions about gender based different conversational styles and conflict management styles. This section provides the theoretical perspectives that support this study. The theories adopted will give an explanation of gender communication styles differences and conflict management approaches adopted under certain circumstances by either male or female interlocutors. Theories on gender communication differences give an explanation on perceived differences in communication and the impact this has on the interaction of men and
women in such contexts as the workplaces. Conflict being an inevitable occurrence especially in organizations, theories on conflict management shed light on what motivates interlocutors to adopt certain strategies in handling conflict and not others. This study was thus based on the genderlect theory of Tannen (1990) and the dual concern model (Blake and Mouton, 1964). There was also reference to Gilligan’s (1982; 1987) model of gender-marked conflict styles.

2.2.1 The Genderlect Theory

This theory explains how different sets of linguistic features used by males and females develop through the gender acculturation process and how these gender-linked language features function as identity markers for women or men in their social contexts. Tannen (1990) first pointed out the idea that men and women are speaking different dialects. This idea extended to the theory- genderlect theory to identify the differences between sexes, and encourage people to acknowledge and accept the language of men and women and achieve mutual respect and understanding. In the genderlect theory, Tannen (1990) concluded that the communication style of men is report-talk and instrumental approach. In contrast, the communication style of women is rapport-talk and relational approach. The theory posits that women tend to engage in rapport talk or relationship oriented talk, whose primary function is to build understanding and empathy within a wider group. By contrast, Tannen, (1990) argues that men tend to engage in report talk, or task-oriented talk, whose primary function is to produce solutions to problems. The theory further suggests that in fact, inter-gender communication is a form of intercultural communication (Tannen, 1990).

Table 2.1: List of Genderlects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose of Communicating</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To seek status</td>
<td>Report talk</td>
<td>Rapport talk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Style of Communicating  | Talk to get things done (instrumental approach) | Talk to interact with others (relational approach) |


Tannen (2006) says that genderlect refers to the study of different communication styles of men and women. According to this theory, “a male and female conversation is cross-cultural communication”. This theory states that miscommunication occurs all the time between men and women because of the different cultures they come from. The effect may be more insidious however, because the parties usually do not realize that they are in a cross-cultural encounter. (Tannen, 2006).

When Tannen compared the conversation styles of boys and girls in second grade, she felt she was looking at the discourse of “two different species”. For example, she says two girls could sit comfortably faced to face and carry on a serious conversation about people they knew. When boys were asked to talk about “something serious”, they were restless, never looked at each other, jumped from topic to topic, and talked about games and competition. These stylistic differences showed up in older kids as well. Tannen (2006)
asserts that there is no evidence that we grow out of these differences as we grow. She describes adult men and women as speaking “different words from different worlds,” and even when they use the same terms, they are tuned to different “frequencies”. Ochola and Juma (2014) point out that Tannen’s cross-cultural approach gender communication differences departs from much of feminist scholarship that claims that conversations between men and women reflect men’s efforts to dominate women. She assumes that male and female conversational styles are equally valid.

Tannen (2006) says: “we try to talk to each other honestly, but it seems at times we are speaking different languages or at least different genderlects.” She realizes that categorizing people and their communication according to gender is offensive to many women and men. None of us likes to be told: “Oh, you are talking just like a woman or a man.” However, at the risk of reinforcing a simplistic reductionism that biology is destiny, Tannen insists that there are gender differences in the way we speak. To affirm this, Glass (2012) argues that non-verbal communication is seen as an area where gender differences in communication exist. These include facial expression, hand and arm movement, posture, position and other movements of the body, legs, or feet. In a school set up, this theory can be used to explain the role of gender communication styles differences in managing conflict. Going by the tenets of the theory, male and female teachers come from different worlds even when they use the same terms.

Tannen (2006) looks at the gender differences in conversational styles by pairing the opposites in regard to the styles employed by either males or females. The following dichotomies emerge from her discussion: report talk versus rapport talk, public speaking versus private speaking, communication directness versus indirectness, connection versus status, and cooperation versus competition. The only style Tannen (2006) examines on its own is: asking questions. This will inform this study by pairing the gender conversational differences for easier comparison and contrast.

2.2.2 The Dual concern model

The dual concern model finds its origins in Blake and Mouton’s (1964) theory that conflict in organizations is managed in different ways based on whether a manager has high or low concern for production and high or low concern for people (Cai and and Fink, 2002). Crossing these two dimensions results in five ways of handling conflict: withdrawing (low concern for both people and productivity), smoothing (high concern for people and low concern for productivity), forcing (low concern for people and high concern for productivity), problem solving (high concern for both people and productivity), and compromising (moderate concern for both people and productivity).

Thomas (1976) extended this model by proposing that a party’s desire to satisfy his or her own concerns, as well as the desire to satisfy his or her own concerns, will determine the behaviours used to pursue those concerns (Cai and and Fink, 2002). Thus the dual concern model evolves from Blake and Mouton (1964) and Thomas (1976) models. It was developed by Pruitt and Rubin, (1986).

It argues that conflict management is a function of high or low concern for self, combined with low or high concern for others. High concern for self and low concern for others results in a preference for forcing, focused on imposing one’s will on others. Forcing
involves threats and bluffs, persuasive arguments, and positional commitments. Low concern for self and high concern for others results in a preference for yielding, which is oriented towards accepting and incorporating others’ will. It involves unilateral concessions, unconditional promises, and offering help. Low concern for self and others results in a preference for avoiding, which involves reducing the importance of the issues, and attempts to suppress thinking about the issues. High concern for self and others produces a preference for problem solving, which is oriented towards an agreement that satisfies both own and others’ aspirations as much as possible. It involves an exchange of information about priorities and preferences, showing insights, and making trade-offs between important and unimportant issues (De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer and Nauta, 2001).

Some authors have suggested that intermediate concern for self, paired to intermediate concern for others results in a preference for compromising. Some see compromising as half hearted problem solving, for instance (Pruit and Rubin, 1986) while others see it as a distinct strategy that involves the matching of others’ concessions, making conditional promises and threats, and an active search for a middle ground (Van de Vliert, 1997).

Figure 2.1: Theoretical representation of the five conflict management strategies as a function of concern for self and concern for others.


2.3 Conceptual framework

Differences in gender communication styles have a significant impact on the management of conflict. Different scholars have demonstrated that men and women communicate differently. The independent variables in this study are the gender conversational differences, which ultimately determine the conflict management style one employs, and the conflict management outcomes. These could either be desirable outcomes or undesirable outcomes. This is captured in figure 2.2 below:
2.4 Review of the variables

2.4.1 Gender Communication Styles:
Wood (2009) points out that communication is a dynamic process of creating meaning through verbal and nonverbal symbols and that communication is related to sex and gender in several ways. First, communication is a primary means by which new members of a society are taught existing views of gender. Parents, siblings, other relatives, peers, and teachers talk differently to boys and girls and give positive and negative responses to children’s behaviour. Media too socialize children into gendered identities by providing models of masculinity and femininity (Wood, 2009). Second, as performative theorists assert, we use communication to express, or perform gender. We know which clothes will be seen by others as masculine or feminine; we understand which postures are regarded as appropriate and inappropriate for men and women; we realize that certain words and tones of voice are regarded as more acceptable for men and others as more acceptable.
for women (Wood, 2009). Third, communication challenges, and, changes social views of gender. We can use communication to challenge existing views of men's and women's nature, behaviours, and rights. For example the movement for women's suffrage in USA, included nonverbal (marches) and verbal (speeches, written documents) communication that challenged and ultimately changed the view that women were not entitled to rights such as voting, owning property, and pursuing higher education (Wood, 2009). Finally, according to Wood (2009) communication enacts naming, which is a critical means of making issues related to gender visible. Such terms as feminine mystique, sexual harassment, and second shift, in regard to the experiences of men and women, are terms that have been coined to describe phenomena related to sex and gender.

Style essentially refers to a way of doing things. Norton (1977) defines communication style as the way one verbally and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken, interpreted, filtered, or understood. Gray (1992) suggests that men and women are so different in their approaches to communicating that they are from different planets: they have different needs, goals and values in the way they communicate. The main differences Gray (1992) identifies between communication styles of men and women are: men are goal-oriented; they define their sense of self through their ability to achieve results. Women on the other hand are relationship-oriented as they define their sense of self by their feelings and by the quality of their relationships. Also men and women differ in their communication styles when they are faced with resolving a crisis or coming to a mutual conclusion. When attempting to resolve a problem, men follow their natural tendency to offer a solution while women seek empathy and understanding and are naturally inclined to offer unsolicited advice (Gray, 1992).

Wood (2011) discusses the characteristics of feminine speech as well as those of masculine speech. She argues that the most important aspects of female communication revolve around the establishment and maintenance of relationship with others. The other feminine communication styles include establishing equality, supporting others, promoting participation, responsiveness, being personal and disclosing information, and tentativeness. While females are concentrated on learning about their communication partners, masculine speech is geared more toward accomplishing concrete goals, exertion of control, perseverance of independence, entertaining and enhancing status. Men use communication to develop a higher status among peers by accomplishing instrumental objectives, communicating on command, being direct and assertive, abstractness, and no emotional response (Wood, 2011).

2.4.1.1 Expressive and Instrumental styles of communication

Expressive communication involves the expression of emotions and has perspective that is sensitive to how others feel. Expressive talk is verbal communication that expresses feelings and is used to build relationships. Instrumental style of communication on the other hand focuses on identifying goals and finding a solution (Mohindra and Azhar, 2012). Researchers like Tannen (1990) identify males as using instrumental style of communication. Olson and Jefrain (2000) say that generally, males are more interested in having rational discussions and solving problems while females are more interested in expressing emotions and feeling, being listened to and provided with support.

Tannen (2002) says that women seek human connection, whereas men are concerned mainly with status and independence. Tannen (2002) categorizes male and female
conversation as rapport talk and report talk respectively. Rapport talk is the typical conversational style of women which seeks to establish connection with others. The primary function of rapport talk, or relationship oriented talk is to build understanding and empathy within a wider group.

Tannen (2002) says report talk is the typical monologic style of men, which seeks to command attention, convey information, and win arguments and that the primary function of this task oriented talk is to produce solutions to problems. Tang (2014) citing Wood (2011) says women use communication as a tool to enhance the social networks with others and create relationships. Gray (1992) adds that, to gain the rapport with others, women would talk about people, relationships, or topical problems and issues which they are facing. Basow and Rubenfield (2003) found in a research that women tend to be more expressive and polite than men in conversation, especially in situations of conflict. Men were found to be more assertive than women, and tend to be specific, logical, and powerful. Men are also more likely to offer solutions to problems in order to prevent further discussions. Eagly (1987) points out that, men are more independent and unemotional in conversations.

Mohindra and Azhar (2012) say that research indicates that men and women socialize differently and consequently, have diverse styles of speaking. This is termed by Tannen (2002) as report talk for men and rapport talk for women. Rapport talk is indirect style containing the following features: use of quantifiers, apologizing, taking blame, thanks, maintaining an appearance of equality and downplaying qualifications, considering the other person and relationship, downplaying authority. Report talk on the other hand includes the following features: direct requests, longer talk at meetings, ritual fighting, teasing and banter, giving advice to solve problems rather than showing support, mixing business and non-business talk, rarely giving praise or compliments, and downplaying doubts (Mohindra and Azhar, 2012).

Compared to men, women have been described as more polite speakers (Holmes, 1995). Coates (1989) describes women as more cooperative. Fishman (1978) say women compared to men perform the bulk of interactional work that maintains a conversation. Troemel-Ploetz (1991) says that women are more likely to use discourse strategies that reduce inequalities in status and power and that emphasize solidarity. They attenuate criticisms and avoid reproach as well as give compliments and express appreciation. Mason (1994) came to the conclusion that women are more cooperative, sensitive, and concerned about the feelings and relationships with others.

On their part, men have been characterized as less cooperative contributors to the conversation of others, and they are eager to hold the floor and control the topic of conversation (Fishman, 1977). Men tend to use language to establish status and to gain or convey information and their conversations are organized around mutual activities rather than relationships (Aries and Johnson, 1983).

In a literature review, Block (1983) discussed many findings of connections exhibited in childhood between gender and styles of expression and relating to others. One finding was that for males, control over external events and competition, are the most salient
issues. In group interactions, boys view the group as a collective entity, emphasizing solidarity, loyalty and shared activities while at the same time struggling to display dominance and expertise. In general, boys tend to form extensive, yet non-intimate relationships (Block, 1983). These communication tendencies follow boys into adulthood. Tannen (1990) states that men employ conversation styles that are competitive and fact-oriented and to preserve independence and avoid failure.

Females on the other hand, display very different strategies. In Block's (1983) literature review, she found that females emphasise interpersonal relations, communion, conservation of societal values, human relationship, and expressiveness. In group interactions, girls perceive the group as an intimate network, emphasizing the sharing of confidences and support. Similar to the case with males, these communication styles follow females into adulthood. Females are the more empathetic gender and can more accurately discern emotions from non-verbal cues than males (Block, 1983).

2.4.1.2 Conversational Dominance

Coates (2004) says conversational dominance is the phrase used to refer to the phenomenon of a speaker dominating others in interaction. Brown (1993) points out that interactional antagonism is carried out to a large extent in breakdowns and manipulations of the turn taking rules. When a speaker is described as dominating conversation, it usually means that he or she is in some way breaking the underlying rules of the turn-taking model where one speaker speaks at a time, and speaker change recurs. Stenstrom (1994) says that what people say in a turn may start a conversation and may keep it going or terminate it. Zimmerman and West (1975) conducted a qualitative study and identified two sorts of turn-taking irregularities that they labeled as overlaps and interruptions. Overlaps are instances of slight over-anticipation by the next speaker where the next speaker begins to speak at the very end of the current speaker's turn, overlapping the last word. Overlaps are often caused by the use of minimal responses which often signal involvement in the conversation (Xu, 2009).

Stenstrom (1994) points out that there are three most obvious reasons for interruptions in a conversation: speaker B is under the impression that speaker A has nothing more to say; speaker B feels he or she is well informed and speaker A need not elaborate on the topic; speaker B wants to speak at a particular point in the ongoing talk before it is too late. All these reasons can lead to competitive talks and tend to break the symmetry of the conversational model: the interrupter prevents the speaker from finishing his or her turn, at the same time gaining a turn for him or herself. Interruptions are regarded as the most ambiguous linguistic strategy that helps to achieve dominance, since to interrupt someone is to deprive them of the right to speak (Xu, 2009).

Xu (2009) notes that in mixed-sex conversation, it is men who tend to dominate. They dominate conversations by interrupting, hogging the floor and even controlling the topic development. Zimmerman and West (1975), based on their analysis of eleven mixed sex conversations, say only two of the total forty-eight interruptions were caused by women and women used no overlaps. Thus, men infringe women’s right to speak, especially women’s right to finish a turn, while women are concerned not to violate the man’s turn.
but to wait until he’s finished. However as Xu (2009) points out, most researchers drew the conclusion that men interrupt more than women by recording conversations and counting instances of interruption without taking into account factors such as the topic being discussed, the intentions of the speakers, the reactions of the speakers to each other and the effect the interruption has on the conversation. Tannen (1990) and Cotes (1989) also say that instead of showing dominance, the use of an interruption in certain contexts can be a way for speakers to show involvement and closeness in a conversation. Therefore, like other conversational features, interruptions should be interpreted in context. Intentions and effects are not always the same (Xu, 2009).

Mintz (2014) says that in most early studies on dominance in every day interactions, dominance is measured by the distribution of various interactional features among speakers. Each of these features is strictly quantifiable, meaning that each can be counted, measured, and compared. These features include overall number of turns taken, frequency of interruptions and overlaps, and amount of topic control (West and Garcia, 1988; West and Zimmerman, 1983) as cited in Mintz (2014).

Itakura (2001) describes conversational dominance as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of sequential, participatory, and quantitative dimensions, all of which must be analyzed to determine who the dominant participant in a particular interaction is. He describes sequential dominance as one speaker’s tendency to control another speaker’s actions with respect to the direction of the interaction, similar to topic control. If a speaker initiates a new topic and receives positive responses, he or she is said to have successfully controlled or dominated that particular interaction. Participatory dominance refers to one speaker’s ability to restrict the speaking rights of others, mainly through overlap or interruption. Quantitative dominance refers to the level of contribution by any given speaker in terms of the number of words spoken by each participant and the length of each participant’s turns (Mintz, 2014).

### 2.4.1.3 Tentative and Assertive speech styles

McQuiston and Morris (2009) say tentativeness implies that the speaker lacks the strength of their convictions about the statements or assertions they have made or are about to make. Hyde (2005) argues that women are more likely to exhibit tentativeness in their communication patterns by using tag questions, disclaimers, and hedges. Lakoff (1975) highlighted the use of the tag question as an illustration of tentativeness. She claimed that women use more tag questions than men, who in turn by using tag questions less, appear to be more assertive (Broadbridge, 2003). Siegler and Siegler (1976) also found that tag questions were more commonly associated with women’s language illustrating people’s attitudes towards women’s speech and its tentativeness. Men on the other hand, use more directive statements.

Hannah and Murachver (1999) say evidence is found that women use more tag questions than men or that they use them more with men than with women. Thus, as Carli (1990) notes, tag questions are interpreted as a device showing submission or tentativeness. Holmes (1984) however says tag questions can be used to express uncertainty, to soften the force of a speech act, to encourage participation, to express solidarity, and to express
politeness. McQuiston and Morris (2009) add that while some may interpret tentativeness as uncertainty, others would see it as an attempt to foster interpersonal communication, to gain additional information, or to build a better understanding with their communication partner.

Lakoff (1973) says men communicate in an assertive manner because they occupy the dominant position in the social hierarchy and in contrast she proposed that women communicate in a more tentative and polite manner because they occupy the subordinate position in the social hierarchy. Leaper and Robnett (2011) say that there are four forms of tentative language that Lakoff (1973) identifies: expression of uncertainty, hedges, tag questions, and intensifiers. Expressions of uncertainty occur when speakers use disclaimers, for instance, “I’m not sure if this is right,… or qualifiers, for instance, “His performance was somewhat disappointing.” The second form is the use of hedges, which involve the use of prefatory remarks such as “I guess…” or modifiers such as “kind of…”.

Lakoff (1975) suggested that women use hedges to downplay their authority. Lakoff (1975) described them as a feature of women’s language which makes their language less direct.

The third form is the use of tag questions. These are queries seeking confirmation of an immediately preceding declarative statement. Lakoff (1975) proposed that women deploy tag questions to avoid being perceived as overly assertive when making a statement. Saki (2009) citing Lakoff (1975) and Coates (1996) describes that tag questions and rising intonation questions are used for functions such as: to express uncertainty, to act as a facilitative or positive politeness device by providing an addressee with an easy entrance into a conversation, to reflect concern for the addressee’s feelings, to force feedback from the addressee and keep the conversation moving, to act as a “boosting device” to provide extra reassurance, to invite other speakers to participate in conversation, to check that what is being said is acceptable to the addressee.

The final form is the use of intensifiers. These refer to adverbs such as very, so, or really used in a way that adds little content to a statement. For instance, “That report was so hard.” Lakoff (1975) says intensifiers mitigate the directness and strength of an assertion. O’Barr (1982) refers to this kind of language as powerless speech. He defines powerless speech as being characterized by a higher frequency of hedges, intensifiers, hesitations, and gestures, whereas powerful speech should be low in these. Weson (2005) citing Bradley (1981) and Lakoff (1975) says that the use of powerless speech style is more characteristic of women’s speech than of men’s, with differences in speech style resulting from, and reinforcing, sex stereotypes. Hence, the way men speak maintains images of being assertive, self-confident and definite whilst women’s speech conveys them as non-assertive, vague and lacking in confidence.

2.4.1.4 Collaborative and Competitive styles

Coates (2004) says people in a collaborative discussion build off each others’ good ideas, working together to create something good and this is done by supporting other speakers and using language in a way that emphasizes their solidarity with the other participant. People who use the collaborative style make sure other participants do not feel outside or
useless, so even people whose ideas were not used will feel that their ideas were considered fairly as everybody took time to understand their point. Coates (2004) points out that the use of minimal responses is a significant part of a collaborative floor. Minimal responses are a support that listeners give to speakers by verbal or non-verbal speech. These are forms such as *yeah, I agree, right, nodding, smiling and body language*, which are uttered by a listener during a speech event to signal a certain level of engagement with the speaker. They indicate that the listener is paying attention and is interested in hearing more. Minimal responses are mostly used by women and are more frequent in collaborative floors than in singly developed floors.

Coates (2004) also discusses the differences in minimal responses between men and women and agrees that women make greater use of minimal responses to indicate support for the speaker and that is why listening is highly valued by women. Further, men use minimal responses, but in a different form, which is called delayed minimal responses and their function is to signal a lack of understanding or lack of interest in what the current speaker is saying. Coates (2004) says that these differences in minimal responses between men and women occur because women tend to speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy, whereas men speak and hear a language of status and independence.

Johnson (1997) says another significant strategy which forms part of a collaborative floor is overlap. Tannen (1992) defines an overlap as, when a second speaker begins speaking at what could be a transition-relevant place such as the end of a clause. Coates (2004) says overlaps are instances of slight over-anticipation by the next speaker. Instead of beginning speaking in the middle of the current speaker’s turn, the next speaker begins to speak at the very end of the current speaker’s turn, overlapping the next word. Some overlaps are considered cooperative because usually they will indicate just a few words of encouragement or elaboration on the topic and not a full sentence about a different subject. Overlap occurs mostly in all-female talk and when it occurs much of it is clearly supportive (Tannen, 1992). Women are more collaborative in their communication tendencies. Women use the collaborative style more because they prefer giving support rather than showing status, they want to compromise rather than make conflict. The reason why women use a collaborative style is because they like to create more intimacy and show that all people are the same and are feeling equally close to each other (Tannen, 1992). Coates (1996) says minimal responses are one strategy female speakers use in conversation to give support and show solidarity between conversational participants and this shows why female speakers use the collaborative communication.

Tannen (1992) says that competitiveness has been stereotypically associated with masculinity, meaning that men are more competitive in their communication tendencies. This is because competition is an important aspect of dominant versions of masculinity. The characteristics of competitive style are when one seeks fulfillment and involvement with others through asymmetric or competitive relationships, with the key goals of independence, physical action, problem solving, personal competence, and dominance (Tannen, 1996).

Coates (2004) says competitive style could be explained as a conversation which includes contests, battles and gladiatorial. The reason why men are connected to the competitive style is because they mostly like to use monologues, one-at-a time floor-holding patterns,
and in this way they can play the expert in the conversation. Monologues give individual speakers advantaged access to an uninterrupted floor and these results in a more gladiatorial style of talk. Johnson (1997) says interruption is a strategy which is also connected to the competitive style, and it is seen as very assertive and more masculine. Competitive interruptions are typically high in pitch and amplitude, and speakers often use competitive interruptions to gain control and dominance in conversation. In mixed-gender conversation, men tend to interrupt women and this can be seen as a violation of the current speaker’s turn at talk, especially of their right to speak. Interruptions are made because men are more likely to take the dominant role in the conversation. Men would like to compete for the right to speak in order to control the topic of conversations (Johnson, 1997).

Coates (2004) argues that in a man’s world, conversations are negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand and prevent others from psychologically putting them down or pushing them around. Status is also very important for men and this is connected to independence. Independence is key because a primary means of establishing status is to tell others what to do, and taking orders is a marker of low status. However, Coates (2004) notes that even though most of the time men use competitive communication in mixed-sex conversation and all-male conversation, it can happen that men also choose collaborative communication where speakers know each other well, and have shared knowledge.

2.4.2 Conflict

Wilmont and Hocker (2001) state that conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and, interference from others in achieving their goals. According to Rahim (2002), conflict can further be defined as an interactive process demonstrated by a degree of incompatibility, disagreement or dissonance at an individual, group or organizational level. In an organization, conflict may occur between two individuals, within small groups and work teams, or between groups (De Dreu and Van de Vliert, 1997). Organizational conflict occurs, as actors engage in activities that are incompatible with those of colleagues within their network, members of other organizations, or unaffiliated individuals who utilize the services or products of the organization. It is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (Rahim, 2002).

Rahim (2010) says workplace conflict can be categorized on many bases; hence there are many types of it but Riaz and Junaid (2011) argue there are two main types. The first is affective conflict which Guetzkow and Gyr (1954) and Amason (1996) say arises when two entities, individuals, groups, organizations become aware that their feelings and emotions are incompatible. It was also named as relationship conflict by Jehn (1997) and as emotional conflict by Pelled, Eisenhardt, and Xin (1999). This type of conflict is negatively associated with affective reactions, and has a positive relation with turnover intentions. The second type is substantive conflict which Guetzkow and Gyr (1954) say emerges when organizational members disagree on their tasks or job content issues. Jehn (1997) and Pelled et al., (1999) refer to it as task conflict. Amason (1996) calls it cognitive conflict.
Riaz and Junaid (2011) say that along with these two main types of conflict, there are many other types of workplace conflicts like conflict of interest where each of the parties prefers different rather incompatible solutions to a problem (Rahim, 2001). Another type is conflict of values which occurs when two social entities differ in their values or ideologies on certain issues. Then there is role conflict which occurs when a role occupant is required to perform two or more roles that are incongruent, opposing or even mutually exclusive activities (Rahim, 2010).

Conflict occurs through the communication of a variety of issues including differences of opinion, procedural problems and disagreements over approaches to work oriented tasks (Friedman, Todd, Curral & Tsai, 2000) in Brusko, (2010). Communication is the driving force behind conflict resolution and by exploring conflict management strategies a greater insight into this type of communication can be obtained (Brusko, 2010). It is important not only for leaders within the organization but for all employees to demonstrate the appropriate conflict management styles.

2.4.2.1 Conflict management

Conflict management is the long term management of intractable conflicts. As a process, conflict management involves the application of knowledge, skills, tools, techniques, and systems to define, visualize, measure, control, report and improve processes with the goal to a harmonious environment of co-existence. Conflict management concerns an on-going process, as opposed to conflict resolution which refers to the resolving of a dispute to the approval of one or both parties. It refers to a way to solve conflict between individuals who have disagreed over certain issues, settling conflicts or grudges between different people by uniting them, managing of disagreements or misunderstandings among parties (Ramani and Zhimin, 2010).

Fisher (2000) says conflict management is prescribed not only as a mechanism for dealing with difficult differences within an existing social system, but also as an approach that can facilitate constructive social change towards a responsive and equitable system. Conflict management is what people who experience conflict intend to do, as well as what they actually do. It refers to the strategies implemented by members aimed at reducing or solving a conflict (Van de Vliert, 1997). Rahim (2002) suggested that conflict management strategies should involve recognition of the different types of conflict which may have a positive or negative impact on individual or group performance.

Rahim (2000) says the management of organizational conflict involves the diagnosis of, and intervention in, conflict. It involves designing effective strategies to minimize the dysfunctions of conflict and enhancing the constructive functions of conflict in order to enhance learning and effectiveness of an organization.

De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, and Nauta (2001) argue that, although an infinite number of conflict management strategies may be conceived of, conflict research and theory tends to converge on Dual Concern Theory (Pruitt and Rubbin, 1986). It argues that conflict management is a function of high or low concern for self, combined with high or low concern for others.

2.4.2.2 Conflict Management Styles

Conflict management style refers to specific behavioral patterns that one prefers to employ when addressing conflict situations. It involves patterned responses, or clusters of behaviour, that people use in conflict, through diverse communication tactics (Copley,
Somech Desivilya, and Lidogoster, (2010) point out that most studies on conflict management strategies at the individual level have adopted the dual concern model, which was originally proposed by Blake and Mouton (1964) and later adopted with some modifications by several scholars, among them Pruitt and Rubin (1986), Rahim (1983) and Thomas (1976). The basic premise of this model is that the mode an individual employs in managing conflict derives from two underlying motives: concern for the self and concern for the other party (Somech et al. 2010). The first dimension explains the degree, high or low, to which an individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns. The second dimension explains the degree, high or low, to which an individual seeks to satisfy the concern of others. Combining these two dimensions yields five specific styles of handling conflict: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising (Somech et al. 2010).

Figure 2.3: Conflict management styles.

**CONFLICT STYLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern about own outcomes</th>
<th>Concern about other's outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Obliging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compromising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dominating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) in Cai and Fink (2002)

Somech et al. (2010) say a second approach to conflict management styles is by Tjosvold (1989). That this theory rests on the fundamental assumption, advanced by Deutsch (1973), that the way in which individuals perceive their goals in relation to those of their counterparts govern both their attitudes and their actual interactions in conflict situations. That is, according to these perceptions, individuals communicate cooperative or competitive intentions to the other party in the conflict (Somech et al. 2010). Cooperative and competitive conflict management strategies reflect different levels of cooperativeness or concern for others. The cooperative style involves a high level of concern for the self as well as for the other party. Somech et al. (2010) says that this style has also been described as a problem-solving, collaborative, integrating, solution-oriented, win-win or positive-sum style. The competitive style in contrast, involves a high level of concern for the self but a lower level of concern for the other party. It is also known as a competing, controlling, contending, win-lose, or zero-sum style (Rahim, 2001) as cited in Somech et al. (2008).

Vestal, (2011) notes that in line with Kilmann and Thomas (1977) model, Rahim (1992) devised five styles of handling interpersonal conflict that are based on two basic dimensions: concern for self and concern for others.
Table 2.2 The Conflict Handling Styles by Kilman and Thomas (1977) and Rahim (1992)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Integrating</td>
<td>High concern for self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>Obliging</td>
<td>Low concern for self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High concern for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competing</td>
<td>Dominating</td>
<td>High concern for self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low concern for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Low concern for self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td>Compromising</td>
<td>Intermediate position in concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>for self and others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Vestal (2011)

Wangari (2013) explains on the strategies above as follows: accommodating is sacrificing one's concerns to satisfy the other party's. It essentially entails giving the opposite side what it wants. It often occurs when one of the parties wishes to keep the peace or perceives the issue as minor. Avoiding is sidestepping or postponing the conflict, satisfying neither person's concerns. This strategy seeks to put off conflict indefinitely. By delaying or ignoring the conflict, the avoider hopes the problem resolves itself without a confrontation.

Collaborating is trying to find a solution that completely satisfies both one's concerns and the other's. It works by integrating ideas set out by multiple people. The objective is to find a creative solution acceptable to everyone. It thus calls for a considerable time commitment not appropriate to all conflicts. Compromising is looking for an acceptable settlement that only partially satisfies both one's own and the other person's concerns. It calls for both sides of a conflict to give up elements of their position in order to establish an acceptable, if not agreeable, solution. Competing is trying to satisfy one's own concerns at the other's expense. It operates as a zero-sum game, one side wins and the other loses. This strategy works best in a limited number of conflicts, such as emergency situations.

2.4.2.3 Conflict management outcomes

Nel (2009) points out that, different perspectives of conflict exist and have evolved over the years. There are three general views of conflict that exist: the traditional, human relations and the interactionist view. The traditional view of conflict is the oldest and assumes that any form of disagreement is harmful and should be completely avoided. The human relations view of conflict perceives conflict as a natural occurrence among all groups and, as a result, conflict should be managed and not disregarded. The interactionist approach to conflict argues that conflict can be a positive influence within a
group setting and denotes that some conflict needs to occur if a group is to perform effectively. According to the interactionist school of thought, conflict can be categorized as either functional or dysfunctional (Nel, 2009). Functional conflict refers to any form of conflict that supports the goals of the group and improves group performances. In contrast, dysfunctional conflict refers to any form of conflict that thwarts group performance (Amason, 1996).

Salleh and Adulpakdee (2012) argue that conflict may involve individual or group disagreements, struggles, disputes, quarrels or even physical fighting. It ranges from work issues of irresponsibility, power, authority and ethics to interpersonal matters like misunderstandings, differences of opinion, and poor communication. Conflict can be harmful to employee satisfaction and job performance if it becomes excessive and unmanageable.

Some conflict researchers believe the relationship between task conflict and performance to be positive, while others believe it to be negative. De Dreu & West, (2001); Jehn, (1995) argue that task conflict increases group members’ tendency to scrutinize task issues and to engage in deep and deliberate processing of task-relevant information. This fosters learning and the development of new and sometimes highly creative insights, leading the group to become more effective and innovative. Task conflict can have positive effects on team performance. This has been supported by Amason & Schweiger (1997); Simons & Peterson, (2000); Van Der Vliert & De Dreu, (1994), as cited in De Dreu & Weingart, (2003).

Relationship conflict is almost always dysfunctional whereas low levels of process conflict and low to moderate levels of task conflict are functional (Nel, 2009). Conflict is a dynamic process that does not appear suddenly, but takes some time to develop and passes through several stages (Spaho, 2013). Williams (2011) says that early process models like Pondy (1967) included multiple stages of conflict, which reflected the sequential and dynamic nature of conflict. Pondy’s process model included five stages: latent conflict, perceived conflict, felt conflict, manifest conflict, and the conflict aftermath.

Nel (2009) says that perceived conflict involves the cognitive aspect of conflict where either or both parties may recognize that there is conflict. Felt conflict represents the affective aspect of conflict, and manifest conflict represents the behavioral display of conflict. Perceived, felt, and manifest conflict are thought of as the core processes of conflict. The conflict aftermath represents the effects of conflict.

The conflict processes have however evolved, with more focus being placed on perception as the main core process with felt or manifest conflict becoming less important. This focus on perception informed one of the typologies of conflict that is used widely in the literature to study conflict: task and relationship conflicts (Williams, 2011). Task conflict is less threatening to one’s personal identity, involves less intense, negative emotions, and tends to motivate team members to search for optimal judgments and decisions.

Relationship conflict on the other hand is difficult to settle to mutual satisfaction. Tension and frustration rooted in discrepant personal norms and values, political preferences and sense of humour is difficult to reduce, simply because it requires changing issues fundamental to one’s personal identity and acquired in the course of an entire life (DeDreu and Van Vianen, 2001).
When task conflict was considered in conjunction with the behaviours used to manage it, findings showed that task conflict can be either harmful or productive. In groups that passively managed task conflict, the conflict harmed group performance, while in groups that actively managed the conflict, it was beneficial to their performance. The suggestion of these findings being that, groups with a great deal of disagreement can still be satisfied with their working experience if the conflict is managed in an agreeable manner, that is with collaboration or accommodation (DeChurch and Marks, 2001).

Ageng'a and Simwata (2011) argue that different conflict management strategies may lead to either desirable or undesirable outcomes depending on their effectiveness or ineffectiveness respectively. Effective conflict management may result to desirable outcomes such as enhanced discipline, effective management of time, team spirit, achievement of set goals, and good relations. This will give good value to the stakeholders. However, when an ineffective management is used, undesirable outcomes such as strikes, destruction of property, poor performance, emotional stress, misallocation of resources, and frustration may arise thus making the situation worse.

2.4.3 Gender

Sang, Masila & Sang (2012) refer to gender as a set of qualities and behaviours expected from a male or female by the society, the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female, the relationship between men and women, girls and boys, and attributes, opportunities, and relationship socially constructed and learned through socialization processes. Taylor and Hardman (2004) in Copley (2008), posit that gender must be seen more than an individual’s sex; it must be seen as a characteristic of some languages, sets of expectations for individuals' behaviours, attitudes and feelings; sets of social structures created and recreated through human interactions; complex webs of relationships; ideology; interactive outcomes of perceptions and self presentations, thus always in progress and in relations.

Wood (2009) points out that, researchers in the 1970s defined gender as a social construction. It is the social meaning attached to sex within a particular culture and in a particular era. Gender influences the expectations and perceptions of women and men, as well as the roles, opportunities, and material circumstances of women’s and men’s lives. Wood (2009) adds that the western culture recognizes two genders, masculine and feminine. Some cultures however recognize more than two. By the late 1980s, many researchers found that defining gender as socially constructed didn’t accomplish much as they had originally thought (Wood 2009). West and Zimmerman asserted that gender is not something people have but rather something they do. Wood (2009) further argues that we express or perform, conventional gender through every day practices such as dominating (masculine) or deferring (feminine) in conversations; offering solutions and judgments (masculine) or empathy (feminine) when a friend discloses a problem. Conversely, we resist conventional views of gender if we act in ways that are inconsistent with the sex and gender society assigns to us. Thus, Mullany (2000) says language and gender theorists have recently turned their attention to the notion of gender as a performative social construct. Butler (1990) believes that masculinity and femininity are not traits that we inherently have, rather they are effects that we perform by the activities
we partake in. According to Bem’s (1974) Sex Role Inventory, gender can be different from physiological sex. Sometimes women take on masculine gender roles and men take on feminine gender roles. This then brings up the issue of androgyny. Sargent, (1981) argues that androgyny is understood in two different, if related ways: as possessing an equal amount of feminine and masculine traits: or as combination of the male and female. These ideas hinge in the same concept: the existence of a third combined – gender category. Sargent (1981) points out that androgyny suggests the possibility that both masculine and feminine behaviours reside in varying degrees in each individual, rather than so called feminine behaviour being assigned to women and masculine behaviour to men. Bem (1974) defines the androgynous person as one who combines masculine independence and feminine playfulness and nurturance.

2.5 Empirical review/studies
A study by Palomares (2004) adds evidence to the argument that men and women behave in verbally different ways. The researcher argued that men use certain male-linked language features, such as directives, more frequently than women, who use female-linked language features, such as references to emotions. Palomares (2004) utilized the 16 language variables that define gender linked language, as proposed by Mulac, Bradac and Gibbons (2001), and surveyed 210 college students, who responded to e-mail messages. Bem’s (1981) sex role inventory was used to measure participants’ orientation toward femininity, masculinity, and androgyny. Sixteen research assistants transcribed the e-mail messages and categorized them with respect to gender the gender variables. The researcher the calculated the average number of instances that certain language indicators were used within each transcript. The results showed that women with high gender identity, and identified strongly with femininity, used significantly more female language and less male language than gender schematic men with high gender salience. Men who reported a strong connection to their gender identity, however, did not use significantly more male language than men who did not adhere strongly to gender roles. Overall, support was demonstrated for gender-linked language as being dependent on sex; however, the results also showed that salience and schematicity must be taken into account to show that a difference exists.

Mulac, Bradac, and Gibbons (2001) studied specific language features that distinguish men and women, finding 16 language features that are indicative of either male or female communication styles. Within the male style of speech, directness, comprised of judgments, directives, and certainty verbs, was the central feature identified. In contrast, women were characterized by their indirect style-specifically through the use of uncertainty verbs for instance, ‘I’m not sure’, hedges, like, ‘It’s sort of okay’, and questions. Mulac et al. (2001) argue that this difference was due to the fact that women, through their socialization process, learn to be polite and to avoid threatening forms of interactions, which most commonly is reproduced through indirect speech. The researchers thus predicted that male language is relatively direct, succinct, and instrumental, whereas women’s style is indirect, elaborate, and affective. In their study testing gender differences with regard to direct versus indirect language, Mulac et al. (2001) sampled 152 college students, 103 women and 49 men. With regard to
procedures, four sets of sentences were formed, each containing one instance of the 16 variables shown previously, to distinguish gender. Participants rated each of these sentences on a 7-point scale with regard to the characteristics of direct versus indirect and succinct versus elaborate, among other characteristics. The results showed that 15 to 16 language features supported the researchers’ predictions, with male language being more direct than females’ style.

Michaud and Warner (1997) conducted a survey in reaction to Tannen’s (1990) claims that women and men differ in communication style, and particularly in the way they respond to trouble talk. Michaud and Warner (1997) argue that Tannen’s research on gender differences in communication style has primarily made use of naturally occurring discourse. Michaud and Warner (1997) developed a communication styles survey to assess self-reported behavioral and emotional responses in trouble talk situations. This survey was administered to a total of 384 participants who were Caucasian college students. 145 were men and 239 were women. Statistically significant gender differences consistent with Tannen’s (1990) predictions were found.

A study by Holmstrom (2009) interprets the communication values of men and women based on whom they are interacting with, whether it is someone of the same or opposite sex. This research found that “women’s greater value for affectively oriented skills in both same sex and cross sex friendships is explained, in part, by their greater femininity”. According to this study, women value affectively oriented skills / expression of emotion, more than instrumentally oriented skills / competitive, which explains why women are less content with their cross-sexed relationships than men. There were, however, no differences in men’s instrumental skills values and those of females (Cinardo (2011)).

A study by Basow & Rubenfeld (2003) examined effects of gender and gender typing on communication styles. A sample of 172 college students was used. There were 62 males and 110 females. Participants were asked to rate the likelihood of giving certain responses to a friend’s problem as well as the likelihood of feeling certain emotions when a friend gives them advice or sympathy for their own problems. They found that on average, women use more expressive, tentative, and polite language than men do, especially in situations of conflict. Men on the other hand, are viewed as more likely than women to offer solutions to problems in order to avoid further seemingly unnecessary discussions of interpersonal problems (Merchant, 2012).

Although the majority of the studies conducted demonstrate that men and women use language differently, Kim and Bresnahan’s (1996) study showed that people’s sex did not have a significant effect on their language choice and that males and females were relatively homogeneous in their conversation styles. The researchers designed a study comparing how conversational constraints—specifically, requesting, are used by men and women. They also posed the issue that if men and women use these constraints cross-culturally, this is a global, gendered language problem. A total of 972 undergraduate students residing in the United States, Japan, and Korea, were chosen for the study, with 56 percent of the sample being women. For the request variable, Kim and Bresnahan (1996) used six scenarios that described a wide range of request goals, for instance, asking the time, passing the salt, etc, to test the differences between men and women’s language use. Participants were asked to rate how they would advance these requests on a 7-point scale, ranging from direct to indirect. The findings yielded no statistically
significant differences with regard to gender or an interaction effect between culture and gender with regard to differences in language use. The researchers thus concluded that the true intention or motive of any utterance (strategy) cannot be determined from an examination of linguistic form alone.

Ahmad and Rethinam (2010) conducted a study to test the propositions relating to communication by Gray (1992). The sample comprised of employees from the headquarters of the Malaysian Postal Service Company. Questionnaires were sent to 300 employees, that is 150 executives and 150 non-executives. An equal number of questionnaires were sent to males and females at the executive and non-executive levels. The 150 non-executive employees were selected using stratified random sampling. The results were not supportive of the propositions by Gray (1992), therefore disputing the much touted communication differences between men and women. Women and men portray several differences in how they offer advice or suggestions, give commands, share opinions, or show authority (Ahmad and Rethinam, 2010).

Studies of interpersonal conflict management have utilized a theoretical framework comprised of two underlying motives- concern for self and concern for others (Desivilya and Eizen, 2005) in Furumo, Buxton, Pillis, Higa and Furumo (2014). Two styles, integrating (high concern for self and others) and compromising (moderated concern for self and others), are known as cooperative conflict management styles (Rahim, 1983). Other styles include, dominating (high concern for self and low concern for others), obliging (low concern for self and high concern for others), and avoiding (low concern for self and others).

Brewer, Mitchell and Weber (2002) found that when in mixed dyads, women would feel less powerful and show higher concerns for the others. Men however would feel dominant, would more regularly show a higher concern for the self. When women are in the same sex dyads, the issue of power may no longer be salient, and concern for self and the other, would both be elevated.

Sutschek (2001) in a study consisting 74 first to mid-level male and female managers from numerous business organizations, the researcher found in her study that females did not use the integrating and obliging conflict handling styles more often than males when confronted with the same scenario. Male managers did not use the competitive conflict handling style more often than female managers. Males prefer to use the dominating conflict handling style before utilizing the avoiding strategy. Females on the other hand prefer the avoiding instead of the dominating conflict handling style before utilizing the avoiding strategy.

Another study by Korabik, Baril and Watson (1993) examined gender differences in global self-reported conflict management styles and the behaviours displayed, and outcomes attained by group leaders during a simulated conflict episode. They then did an evaluation of leader’s behaviour by their subordinates. They assessed behaviour through subordinate and leader evaluations as well as transcript coding of the discussion. Not surprisingly, they found no gender differences in self reported conflict management style among experienced managers. Among participants without managerial experience, women rated themselves as more integrating, obliging, and compromising than did men. They found no gender differences in the styles used by supervisors during the role play
nor in the outcomes that they attained. But there were differences in the way the subordinates evaluated male and female supervisors who used similar styles. Dominating was more negatively related, and obliging more positively related, to subordinates perceptions of effectiveness for women than for men.

2.6 Critique of existing studies

In view of the factors raised in the literature review, it is important to note that diversity in the workplace makes it necessary to consider the impact of gender differences especially in regard to conflict management. Both popular and empirical literature supports the view that men and women exhibit differences in their styles and purposes of communication. Gray (1992) identifies differences between communication styles of men and women as: men are goal-oriented; they define their sense of self through their ability to achieve results. Women on the other hand are relationship-oriented as they define their sense of self by their feelings and by the quality of their relationships. However, Gray’s (1992) assertions fail to provide any empirical backing.

Findings that are of the view that males and females have distinctly different ways of speaking, like Tannen (1990) and Gray (1992) have polarized gender resulting in assertions that men speak in one way while women speak another. For instance, the view that females tend to favour co-operative, rapport-seeking speech style whereas males tend to favour competitive, status-seeking speech styles results in a gross oversimplification of the complexity of language and gender (Mullany, 2000). This not only ignores the diversity of speech in groups of women and groups of men, but also ignores cultural differences, and differences that may be the result of other social variables such as age, class and ethnicity (Mullany, 2000).

Research on the influence of gender on conflict management strategy has presented conflicting results. Sutschek (2001) found significant differences in the conflict management styles employed by males and females. Other researchers, for instance, Brewer, Mitchell and Weber (2002) found that when in mixed dyads, women would feel less powerful and show higher concerns for the others. Men however would feel dominant, would more regularly show a higher concern for the self. When women are in the same sex dyads, the issue of power may no longer be salient, and concern for self and the other, would both be elevated.

However, another study by Korabik, Baril and Watson (1993) examined gender differences in global self-reported conflict management styles and the behaviours displayed, and outcomes attained by group leaders during a simulated conflict episode. they found no gender differences in self reported conflict management style among experienced managers. Among participants without managerial experience, women rated themselves as more integrating, obliging, and compromising than did men. They found no gender differences in the styles used by supervisors during the role play nor in the outcomes that they attained. But there were differences in the way the subordinates evaluated male and female supervisors who used similar styles. These inconsistencies therefore necessitate further research on the impact of gender differences in conversational styles in conflict management.

2.7 Research gaps

This study seeks to find out whether there are gender communication styles differences in
the Kenyan public secondary schools and the impact this has on the management of conflict. Studies carried out in other parts of the world reveal that gender communication styles differences exist and that gender roles determine the conflict management styles individuals adopt. With more women joining the public service in line with the provisions of the new constitution in Kenya, it becomes necessary to determine whether men and women bring in similar competence in such skills as conflict management.

There is scarce knowledge in Kenya in regard to approaches adopted by either male or female employees in the management of conflict in spite of the inevitability of conflict in organizations. Previous research in Kenya, particularly in management of conflict in public institutions has not examined the gender variable in conflict management. One such study by Mwangi (2013) examined workplace conflict in schools in Nyeri central district, Kenya. However gender as a variable was not under study. Another study by Matu (2015) investigated prevalence of workplace conflict among primary school teachers in Nyeri County, Kenya. Similarly the gender variable was not under study in that study. Therefore, this study will fill the knowledge gap by examining the impact gender conversational styles have in conflict management.

2.8 Summary of literature review

The literature reviewed shows that with the rapid influx of women into previously male dominated formal employment, there are concerns about perceived gender differences in communication styles. For instance, Tannen (1990) makes the claim that women and men differ in their communicating styles. She characterizes women's conversations as rapport talk; language that maintains social connection, and men's conversation as report talk; language that asserts male status and authority. This obviously sets the pace for a discussion on how these differences would impact on the many functions in the organization, in view of the centrality of communication in a work environment. Conflict is communicated, reduced, escalated or effectively managed depending with the styles and capabilities of the interacting parties.

Researchers like Xu (2009) argue that in mixed-sex conversation, it is men who tend to dominate. This study looks at the influence of gender differences in language use. Scholars like Taylor and Hardman (2004) in Copley (2008), posit that gender must be seen more than an individual's sex. According to Bem's (1974) Sex Role Inventory, gender can be different from physiological sex. Sometimes women take on masculine gender roles and men take on feminine gender roles. The literature reviewed also shows the differences between males and females concerning the preferred management style adopted for effective conflict management.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter explains the various research methods that were used to generate data in this study. The chapter is organized under the following sections: research design, target population, sampling frame, sample and sampling technique, research instruments, data collection procedure, piloting of the research instruments and, data analysis and
processing.

3.1 Research Design
This study used descriptive survey research. Mugenda (1999) citing Gay (1981) says a survey is an attempt to collect data from members of a population in order to determine the current status of that population with respect to one or more variables. Survey research is therefore a self report study, which requires the collection of quantifiable information from the sample. Survey research could be descriptive, exploratory or involving advanced statistical analysis. Mugenda (1999) further points out that survey research is probably the best method available to social scientists and other educators who are interested in collecting original data for the purpose of describing a population which is too large to observe directly. Therefore this design would be more consistent with the general objective of this study which aims to assess the gender communication styles differences in conflict management.

3.2 Target Population
This study focused on the Kenyan public secondary schools. The target population was employees in public secondary schools in Mathira East Sub County. Among these, some were in management positions. There are over 278,000 teachers employed by The Teachers Service Commission. Over 70,000 are in post primary institutions the bulk of which are public secondary schools. In Mathira East Sub County there are 271 teachers in public secondary schools who form the target population.

3.3 Sampling Frame
This study used the list of teachers in public secondary schools, obtained from the ministry of education, records at the D.E.O office, Mathira East Sub County. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) point out that a sampling frame is a list of cases from which a sample can be selected. Therefore, in this study, a list containing data on the number of teacher under TSC working in the public secondary schools in Mathira East Sub County, across the genders, was used to draw the sample.

Table 3.1: Table of the Sampling Frame

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Number of teachers</th>
<th>Number of male teachers</th>
<th>Sampled male teachers</th>
<th>Number of female teachers</th>
<th>Sampled female teachers</th>
<th>Total number of sampled teachers.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kanjuri Boys</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatondo Girls</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiarithaini Boys</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giakaibii Boys</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Itundu Mixed</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kangocho Mixed</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miiri Mixed</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiamwangi Mixed</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4 Sample and Sampling Technique

The process of sampling makes it possible to draw valid inferences or generalizations on the basis of careful observations of variables within a relatively small proportion of the population (Nchabira, 2013). Gataara (2010) says a large survey would need a large number of researches and this would not give quality data. A large survey would also require a long time to implement which means that by the time results are out, the events would have greatly altered the phenomenon under study. A large sample would also imply huge management problem due to training and supervisory activities and therefore increase cost (Nchabira, 2013).

Nchabira (2013) says that the sample size is a function of the population, desired precision type of sampling design, substrata sizes acceptable at analysis, availability of resources and logistics. The total population under study was 271. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) say that in Social Science research, a formula is used to determine the sample size. In this study the significance level was taken as 95% with a margin error of 5%. The total population was 271 comprised of the administrators and members of the teaching staff in public secondary schools in Mathira East Sub County.

Gay in Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) suggests that for correlation research, 30 cases or more are required; for descriptive studies, ten percent of the accessible population is enough and for experimental studies, at least 30 cases are required per group. A sample size is a smaller part of the population, which is carefully selected to represent all the main traits of the accessible population (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Gay (1981) in Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) says that 10% to 30% is adequate for analysis and reporting. In this study, the researcher used 30% of the accessible population. This translated to 81 respondents.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used proportionate stratified random
sampling. This sampling technique allowed the researcher to achieve the desired representation from the two genders under study. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) points out that in stratified sampling, the population is divided into two or more groups and then a given number of cases are randomly selected from each population subgroup. The obvious advantage in stratified random sampling is that it ensures inclusion in the sample of subgroup, which otherwise would be omitted entirely by other sampling methods because of their small number in the population.

The total population was 271. This was drawn from 24 schools in Mathira East district. The sampling technique used was stratified random sampling. The strata were male and female teachers. To calculate the sample per school, the following method was used:

\[ X/N \times n \]

Where: \( X \) is the number of teachers per strata in a school
\( N \) is the total population = 271
\( n \) is the sample = 81

3.5 Research Instruments

For effective collection of data, a researcher needs to develop instruments with which to collect the necessary information. In social science research, the most commonly used instruments are: questionnaires, interviews and observations (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). In this study, self-developed questionnaires were developed to collect data from employees in the public service. One advantage of the questionnaires according to Kombo (2006) is that they assist in the translation of the research objectives into research hypothesis which motivate the respondents to provide the information being sought. Questionnaires as instruments of data collection also save on time and money. They also enable the respondents to answer questions freely and frankly on sensitive issues because they are not required to reveal their identity, thus increase the likelihood of getting accurate information. Questionnaires also offer uniformity in answering questions allowing a great degree of comparison because the items are framed in the same format (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003).

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The researcher used questionnaires which have both open and close-ended questions to get the opinion of male and female employees in the public secondary schools on gender communication differences in conflict management in their workplace, preferred conflict management styles and conflict management outcomes. The questionnaires were proffered on 2% of the sample. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) point out that, deficiencies in the questionnaire will be revealed by pretesting. Questions which were vague were revealed in the sense that the respondents interpreted them differently. In the actual data collection, the researcher used self-administered questionnaires that were hand delivered.

3.7 Piloting of the Research Instruments

Samples of the questionnaires were administered on a pilot test to 2% of the respondents. Respondents were encouraged to make comments and suggestions concerning instructions, clarity of questions and relevance (Mugenda, 2003). A pilot study provided the researcher with an opportunity to try out the questionnaires to check whether the
questionnaire was reliable and whether the items gathered the information required. This assisted in improving the validity of the study. The sample questionnaires that were used are in appendix I and II.

3.8 Data Analysis and Processing

Orodho (2004) defines data analysis as a process of systematically searching and arranging interview transcript, field notes, data and other materials obtained from the field with the aim of increasing your understanding of them and enabling you to present them to others. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) look at it as the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of information collected. Before the analysis, all the questionnaires were adequately checked for data verification. Data was tabulated and classified in line with the objectives of the study (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). The coded, tabulated and classified data was subjected to quantitative analysis. The quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies, tallies and percentages. The statistics were generated using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) and data obtained was communicated through pie charts, tables and bar graphs.

In determining the causal effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable, the following multiple regression model was used:

\[ Y = a + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + e \]

Where:
- \( Y \) = Conflict Management Outcome (Dependent variable)
- \( a \) = Constant
- \( \beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4 \) = Coefficients of the Communication Styles
- \( X_1 \) = Expressive and Instrumental Communication Styles
- \( X_2 \) = Conversational Dominance
- \( X_3 \) = Tentative and Assertive Speech Styles
- \( X_4 \) = Collaborative and Competitive Styles
- \( e \) = Error term

Table 3.2 A Matrix of Data, instruments and inferential statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Nature of data to be collected</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Inferential statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To assess the impact of expressive and instrumental communication styles on conflict management</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Multiple regression and ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To evaluate the impact of conversational dominance on conflict management</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Multiple regression and ANOVA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To assess the impact of tentative and assertive speech on conflict management</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>Multiple regression and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To evaluate how collaborative and competitive styles impact on conflict management

Quantitative
Questionnaire
Multiple regression and ANOVA.


CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction
In this chapter the collected data was analyzed and presented using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Various methods which included frequency tables, pie charts, graphs and percentages were used in the presentation of the collected data. The research model is also analyzed and findings presented using ANOVA and Multiple regression analysis.

4.1.1 Response Rate
Out of the 81 questionnaires that were issued to the respondents 69 were filled up and collected for this analysis. The response rate therefore was over 85% which was adequate for analysis and making conclusion on the study’s objectives. The table 4.1 below shows the response rate:

Table 4.1: Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaires issued</th>
<th>Questionnaires returned</th>
<th>Percentage response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher, 2016

4.2 Findings

4.2.1 Personal Profile of Respondents

4.2.1.1 Position of the Respondents
Most of the respondents were teachers representing 93% of all the respondents while the administrators were 7%. This therefore means that much of the views expressed in the study were from the teachers in secondary schools in Mathira East Sub-County as shown in figure 4.1 below:
4.2.1.2 Gender of the Respondents

There were more male respondents than female respondents. About 63% of the respondents were male while about 37% were female. The gender of the respondents is shown in the figure 4.2 below:

4.2.1.3 Marital Status of the Respondents

Most of the respondents (70%) were married while (30%) were single. The figure 4.3 below shows the gender of the respondents.
4.2.1.4 Education Level of the Respondents

About 50% of the respondents in this study held bachelor degree while 38% of them held diploma. About 5% held post graduate diploma, 5% master degree, no doctorate degree and about 2% held other qualifications. The figure 4.4 below shows the academic qualifications held by the respondents:

4.2.2 Conflict Manager

4.2.2.1 Position of the Conflict Manager

In most of the public secondary schools in Mathira East Sub-County conflicts between various parties were handled by the principal of the school. About 71% of the respondents indicated that conflicts were handled by the principal while 12% of the respondents indicated that conflicts were handled by the deputy principal. The remaining 17% of the respondents indicated that conflicts were handled by others for instance the deans. The figure 4.5 below shows the position of the conflict manager:
4.2.2.2 Gender of the Conflict Manager

About 57% of conflict managers according to the respondents in the study were male while 43% of the conflict managers were female. This ensured that both genders were almost equally represented in this study. The figure 4.6 below shows the gender of the conflict manager:

4.2.3 Communication styles:

4.2.3.1 The impact of Expressive or Instrumental Conversational Style

The research findings showed that a total of 70% (i.e. 26% agreed and 44% strongly agreed) that the male managers sought to maintain closeness through their conversation while only 10% did not seek to maintain closeness (figure 4.6). On the other hand, of female managers, about 80% engaged in conversation aimed at maintaining closeness while about 13% did not aim at maintaining closeness through conversation (figure 4.7). This compares with Mason’s (1994) findings that women are more cooperative,
sensitive, and concerned about the feelings and relationships with others. Basow and Rubenfield (2003) found that women on the one hand tend to be more expressive, tentative, polite and social in their communication while men on the other hand are on average more assertive, and dominant when it comes to communication style. Kim and Jin (2000) studied a more specific area of communication between males and females, the use of cell phones. Their research found that women use text messaging more than men and men use verbal phone communication more than women. The ideas of expressive versus instrumental communication, as well as communal and agentic dimensions are also discussed. Their research indicates that women use cell phones more than men because it is their way of maintaining close, personal relationships and establish their intimacy with others who are far away.

On whether the administrator frequently expressed sympathy and understanding a higher percentage of male (79%) was found to express sympathy and understanding than female managers (60%). However, a higher percentage of respondents disagreed that male administrators expressed sympathy and understanding (18%) while only 13% of the respondents indicated that female administrators failed to express sympathy and understanding. These findings therefore are in agreement with Adler, Laley, and Parcker (1993) who found that women use signals of courtesy when they talk to people and they show respect by listening and remembering what has been said.

On politeness a higher percentage of respondents indicated that female administrators were polite in their statements than male administrators. About 80% of the respondents indicated that female managers expressed politeness in their conversation while about 69% of the respondents indicated that male managers expressed politeness in their conversation. A total of 24% of the respondents disagreed that male managers were polite while only 7% of the respondents disagreed that female managers expressed politeness in their conversation. On whether the administrator constantly gives compliments to the other speakers the study showed that same percentages of male and female administrators gave compliments to the speakers. A total of 74% and 73% of the respondents indicated that male and female managers respectively gave compliments to other speakers during conversation. The same percentage of respondents i.e. 15% disagreed that both male and female managers gave compliments to other speakers during conversation. This again is similar to earlier findings that women are more likely to use politeness while men are more likely to state directives (Mulac, Winemann, and Widenmann, 1988).

On disclosure of personal information that is related to the topical issue, interestingly equal percentage of male and female managers were found to disclose personal information that was related to the topic at hand. About 20% of the respondents indicated both male and female managers disclosed their personal information. However more respondents i.e. 69% disagreed that male managers disclosed personal information compared to 40% of the respondents who disagreed that the female managers disclosed personal information that was related to the issue of discussion. This therefore meant that more female managers were likely to disclose personal information than male managers as shown in the figures 4.7 and 4.8 below.

Shakeshaft (1989) argues that when women communicate, their speech is likely less likely to be centered on impersonal subject matter, more likely on personal and emotional...
issues, and they talk less and listen more than men.

![Expressive/Instrumental conversational style among male managers](image1)

**Figure 4.7:** Expressive/Instrumental conversational style among male managers

**Source:** Researcher, 2016

On whether the manager suggests a solution to the problem that could have caused the conflict a very significant difference was noted between the male and female administrators. A total of 82% of the respondents indicated that male managers offered a solution to the problem that caused the conflict while 54% of the respondents indicated that female managers offered a solution to the problem that may have caused the conflict.

![Expressive/Instrumental conversational style among female managers](image2)

**Figure 4.8:** Expressive/Instrumental conversational style among female managers

**Source:** Researcher, 2016
About 34% of the female managers did not offer a solution while only 15% of the male managers did not offer a solution. The study further revealed that more female managers i.e. 20% were likely to interrupt another speaker than male managers i.e. 13%. Further, a higher percentage of respondents i.e. 82% disagreed with the statement that male administrators interrupted another speaker while 73% of the respondents disagreed that female managers disrupted a conversation. In total therefore, more female managers were likely to disrupt a conversation compared to male managers. Other research shows that men tend to interrupt more than women (Breshnan and Cai, 1986; Coates, 1987; Leaper and Ayers, 2007). Conversely, interruption indicates dominance and aggression (Breshnan and Cai, 1986). Their research further suggests that when women interrupt men with agreement interruptions, men rate them as more dynamic and competent, and that women and men with a masculine identity interrupt partners more than men and women with a feminine identity.

On whether the administrator made forceful or authoritative statements, a total of 34% of the respondents agreed that male administrators made such statements while a total 52% disagreed and 21% neither agreed nor disagreed. For female administrators 34% of the respondents indicated that they made forceful or authoritative statements while 47% of the respondents disagreed and the remaining 19% neither agreed nor disagreed. On whether the statements made by the administrator were general and did not display personal feelings, a very significant difference was noted where more female managers i.e. 73% were likely to make such statements than male managers i.e. 47%. On the other hand about 41% of the respondents disagreed that male managers made such statements that were general and did not display personal feelings compared to only 13% of the respondents who disagreed that female managers made such statements as indicated in figure 4.7 and 4.8 above. The findings of Newman, Groom, Handelman, and Pennebaker (2008) suggest that previous research found that men use language to give information instrumentally, while women use verbal interaction to simply socialize without any underlying purpose. They also found that as women discussed their thoughts, emotions, senses, other individuals, negations, and utilized verbs in the present and past tense, male conversation consisted primarily of occupation, money, sports, articles, prepositions and long words.

Many studies have found that there are differences between the way mothers and fathers communicate with children. In these instances, sons often relate to fathers and model after them. In a study by Dino, Barnett and Howard (1995), as cited by Fitzpatrick and Vangelisti (1995), they found that fathers tend to deal with sons with instrumental responses and suggest ways of resolving problems without really listening or trying to understand perspective. In their reactions to children, fathers use directives that elicit little response but focus on solution. These types of responses can be interpreted as modelling a need for power by emphasizing control over situations. Mothers on the other hand were found to use a different style when communicating with their children. For instance, mothers speak to their sons in an active manner, focusing on the son’s activities rather than on problems and solutions. Mothers initiate more interactions by asking questions and tend to focus on the recognition of and acceptance of the child’s opinions (Fitzpatrick and Vangelisti, 1995). These communication styles by mothers give daughters a model of empathic conversation to follow.
In a study by Samar and Alibakshi (2007) in Cinardo (2011), they examined the differences between male and female communication strategies. They studied the linguistic differences that exist in face-to-face interactions. After conducting research from data gathered from 20 face-to-face conversations, in both mixed and same sex interactions and educated and less educated participants, the researchers found significant differences between male and female use of linguistic strategies.

4.2.3.2 The impact of Conversational Dominance

Both male and female managers in secondary schools in Mathira East sub-county were found to be less dominant in conversations as shown in figures 4.8 and 4.9 below. About 15% of the male and managers and 20% of the female managers were found to interrupt other speakers compared to 82% of the male administrators and 73% of the female administrators that did not interrupt other speakers while conversing. Itakura (2001) describes conversational dominance as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of sequential, participatory, and quantitative dimensions, all of which must be analyzed to determine who the dominant participant in a particular interaction is. He describes sequential dominance as one speaker’s tendency to control another speaker’s actions with respect to the direction of the interaction, similar to topic control. If a speaker initiates a new topic and receives positive responses, he or she is said to have successfully controlled or dominated that particular interaction. Participatory dominance refers to one speaker’s ability to restrict the speaking rights of others, mainly through overlap or interruption. Quantitative dominance refers to the level of contribution by any given speaker in terms of the number of words spoken by each participant and the length of each participant’s turns (Mintz, 2014). Mintz (2014) says that in most early studies on dominance in every day interactions, dominance is measured by the distribution of various interactional features among speakers. Each of these features is strictly quantifiable, meaning that each can be counted, measured, and compared. These features include overall number of turns taken, frequency of interruptions and overlaps, and amount of topic control (West and Garcia, 1988; West and Zimmerman, 1983) as cited in Mintz (2014).

Earlier researchers have suggested that these interruptions are an expression of male power or dominance. By interrupting, the interrupter gains control of the conversation and thus gains a position of interpersonal power. However, later researchers have suggested that interruptions can mean more than simply expressing power and dominance. Aries (1996) found that most interruptions tend to be agreements or requests for clarification and have nothing to do with dominance. Also, women often engage in more supportive interrupting, especially when they are in all-female groups (Aries, 1996) in McQuiston and Morris (2009).

On overlapping other speakers, a significant percentage of the respondents i.e. 30% indicated that female administrators overlapped while only 10% of the respondents indicated that male administrators overlapped. The findings of the study further showed a significant percentage of both male and female administrators in public secondary schools in Mathira East Sub-County rerouted the topic of discussion i.e. 30% and 33% for male and female administrators respectively.

Finally, more female secondary school administrators were found to dominate
conversation through long statements than men. About 27% of the respondents indicated that female administrators made the long statements while only 15% of the respondents indicated that male administrators made such statements as indicated in figures 4.9 and 4.10 below. Kendall and Tannen (1997) state that research on how women and men interact with each other at work has tended to focus on amount of participation and influence. The research suggests that, in groups, men tend to get and keep the floor more often than women, talk more often and for longer, interrupt more, and make different kinds of contributions, using language strategies that challenge, create and maintain status distinctions. Women according to this research, tend to get and keep the floor less frequently and for less time, interrupt less, and use language strategies that are more supportive and that minimize status distinctions. Kendall and Tannen (1997) say that these results are similar to those that Tannen (1994) describes for interactions that she observed and analysed in several large corporations. She found that some men were more likely to speak in ways that claimed attention and got credit for their contributions, whereas women were more likely to preface statements with a disclaimer, speak at a lower volume, and try to be succinct so as not to take up more speaking time than necessary, especially at meetings. Tannen (1994) also found that women and men tended to make different kinds of contributions as well, based, in part, on having different conventionalized ways of exploring ideas. More men than women used an oppositional format to accomplish a range of interactional goals, including the discussion of ideas.

**Figure 4.9:** Conversational dominance among male conflict managers

**Source:** Researcher, 2016
Xu (2009) notes that in mixed-sex conversation, it is men who tend to dominate. They dominate conversations by interrupting, hogging the floor and even controlling the topic development. Zimmerman and West (1975), based on their analysis of eleven mixed sex conversations, say only two of the total forty-eight interruptions were caused by women and women used no overlaps. Thus, men infringe women’s right to speak, especially women’s right to finish a turn, while women are concerned not to violate the man’s turn but to wait until he’s finished. However as Xu (2009) points out, most researchers drew the conclusion that men interrupt more than women by recording conversations and counting instances of interruption without taking into account factors such as the topic being discussed, the intentions of the speakers, the reactions of the speakers to each other and the effect the interruption has on the conversation. Tannen (1990) and Coates (1989) also say that instead of showing dominance, the use of an interruption in certain contexts can be a way for speakers to show involvement and closeness in a conversation. Therefore, like other conversational features, interruptions should be interpreted in context. Intentions and effects are not always the same (Xu, 2009).

4.2.3.3 The impact of Tentative or Assertive Speech Style

On tentative and assertive speech styles, the study examined use of tag questions, disclaimers, hedges and intensifiers. For male managers, more respondents disagreed i.e. 59% (13% strongly disagreed and 46% disagreed) that the male managers used tag questions during conversation. For female managers almost the same percentage of respondents agreed (36%) and disagreed (40%) that managers used tag questions during conversation. On use of disclaimers, 70% of the respondents disagreed that male managers used disclaimers like “I am not sure if this is right…..”), while only a total of 8% of the respondents agreed that male managers used such disclaimers. On the other hand, 46% of the respondents agreed that female administrators used the disclaimers while 27% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. The remaining 27% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.
On frequent use of hedges like “I guess….”, only 5% of the respondents agreed that male managers used them while a total of 67% of the respondents disagreed. On contrast about 43% of the respondents agreed that female administrators in secondary schools in Mathira Sub-County used the hedges while 30% of the respondents disagreed with the statement hence more female managers used the hedges in their conversation than male managers as shown in the figures 4.11 and 4.12 below.

Figure 4.11: Tentative/Assertive Speech Style among male managers  
Source: Researcher, 2016

Figure 4.12: Tentative/Assertive Speech Style among female managers  
Source: Researcher, 2016

The study further found that more female administrators used the intensifiers like “very, so, really …” to emphasize a point than male administrators in their conversation. About
80% of the respondents agreed that female administrators used the intensifiers compared to 53% of the respondents who agreed that the male administrators used the intensifiers in their conversation as shown in figure 4.10 and 4.11 above. These findings agree with Wood (2011) findings that females express attentiveness by being responsive in the conversation. Conversations continue on and on with women because they use tentativeness to leave the door open for others to respond and express their opinions. Men being instrumental have been found to interrupt each other in conversation more frequently and thus are noted for conversation command and speaking for longer lengths of time. Masculine speech also tends to be direct and assertive, and compared to feminine speech, masculine speech tends to be more abstract as well as less emotionally responsive, than feminine interactions.

A number of studies have also found that women use intensifier verbs more than men do (Aries, 1996, Mulac, 1998). McQuiston and Morris (2009) point out that intensifiers are adjectives or adverbs used by a speaker to emphasize a particular aspect of their statement or in an attempt to add credibility for that statement. Women are more likely to exhibit tentativeness in their communication patterns by using tag questions, disclaimers, and hedges (Hyde, 2005). While some may interpret this tentativeness as uncertainty, others would see it as an attempt to foster interpersonal communication, or to build a better understanding with their communication partner.

A number of studies have also found that women use intensifier adverbs more than men do (Aries, 1996, Mulac, 1998). Women may use intensifiers more than males, perhaps to better express emotion and power (Brannon, 2007).

According to McQuiston and Morris (2009), in a meta-analysis of 30 empirical studies of verbal differences between males and females, Mulac, Widmann, Widenmann, et al. (1998) identified the linguistic features that men and women prefer to use. Hyde (2004) also studied many of these differences and developed a number of classifications of these gender differences. Combining the key findings of both of these studies, the key factors that influence gender differences appear to be: tentativeness, intensifiers, interruptions, directives, politeness, quantity, back channels, rising intonation, and talking time (McQuiston and Morris, 2009).

Lakoff (1975) highlighted the use of the tag question as an illustration of tentativeness. She claimed that women use more tag questions than men, who in turn by using tag questions less, appear to be more assertive (Broadbridge, 2003). Siegler and Siegler (1976) also found that tag questions were more commonly associated with women’s language illustrating people’s attitudes towards women’s speech and its tentativeness. Men on the other hand, use more directive statements.

Hannah and Murachver (1999) say evidence is found that women use more tag questions than men or that they use them more with men than with women. Thus, as Carli (1990) notes, tag questions are interpreted as a device showing submission or tentativeness. Holmes (1984) however says tag questions can be used to express uncertainty, to soften the force of a speech act, to encourage participation, to express solidarity, and to express politeness. McQuiston and Morris (2009) add that while some may interpret tentativeness as uncertainty, others would see it as an attempt to foster interpersonal communication, to gain additional information, or to build a better understanding with their communication.
partner.

Lakoff (1973) says men communicate in an assertive manner because they occupy the dominant position in the social hierarchy and in contrast she proposed that women communicate in a more tentative and polite manner because they occupy the subordinate position in the social hierarchy.

4.2.3.4 The impact of Collaborative or Competitive Style

On collaborative or competitive speech styles, the study enquired on minimal responses by the administrators, overlapping of other speakers, making of long statements and interruption of other speakers by the administrators. The findings showed a high degree of similarity between these styles of speech and tentative/assertive style of speech as shown in the figures 4.13 and 4.14 below.

Coates (2004) discusses the differences in minimal responses between men and women and agrees that women make greater use of minimal responses to indicate support for the speaker and that is why listening is highly valued by women. Further, men use minimal responses, but in a different form, which is called delayed minimal responses and their function is to signal a lack of understanding or lack of interest in what the current speaker is saying. Coates (2004) says that these differences in minimal responses between men and women occur because women tend to speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy, whereas men speak and hear a language of status and independence. Women are more likely to use back channels, which are expressed in the form of minimal agreements during the course of a conversation than men are (Hall et al. 1994).

Overlap occurs mostly in all-female talk and when it occurs much of it is clearly supportive (Tannen, 1992). Women are more collaborative in their communication tendencies. Women use the collaborative style more because they prefer giving support rather than showing status, they want to compromise rather than make conflict. The reason why women use a collaborative style is because they like to create more intimacy and show that all people are the same and are feeling equally close to each other (Tannen, 1992). Coates (1996) says minimal responses are one strategy female speakers use in conversation to give support and show solidarity between conversational participants and this shows why female speakers use the collaborative communication.

Tannen (1992) says that competitiveness has been stereotypically associated with masculinity, meaning that men are more competitive in their communication tendencies. This is because competition is an important aspect of dominant versions of masculinity. The characteristics of competitive style are when one seeks fulfillment and involvement with others through asymmetric or competitive relationships, with the key goals of independence, physical action, problem solving, personal competence, and dominance (Tannen, 1996).
Kendall and Tannen (1997) point out that two classic studies set the stage for investigations of how women and men tend to interact with each other in groups in the workplace. Eakins and Eakins (1976) analyzed seven university faculty meetings, and found that men spoke more often and for longer than the women, and that each of the men in the faculty meetings interrupted more often than each of the women, even when...
taking into account the total number of turns taken. Also, Edelsky (1981, 1993) cited in Kendall and Tannen (1997) analysed five university faculty meetings and found that during the more structured segments, there were few interruptions but men took longer turns than the women.

Case (1985, 1988) in Kendall and Tannen (1997) found that women and men managers tend to make different types of contributions in groups. She assessed the frequency of 34 gender-related speech variables in each of the manager’s speeches, creating a speech profile for each manager. Then, using statistical analysis, she identified two predominant speech styles that correlated with sex. Based on the types of strategies used in these styles, she characterised the style used primarily by women as a facilitative, personal style, and the style used primarily by men as an assertive, authoritative style. She found that the men tended to use more strategies of display such as joking, swearing, using slang, and talking about competition and aggression, as well as more of the strategies that appeal to authority and maintain status distinctions, such as appealing to objectivity instead of personal experience and giving direct commands. The women tended to use more strategies that engaged others and minimised status differences, such as backchannelling, adding to others’ comments to shift topics, and using modal constructions rather than imperatives.

Contrary to stereotypes regarding women’s chatiness, men actually talk more than women in business conversations, with these increased talking times being linked to who is perceived as having the power in the communication situation (Kollock, Blumstein, and Schwartz, 1994) in McQuiston and Morris (2009).

According to Wood (2011), in Cinardo (2011), masculine speech communities on the one hand tend to regard talk as a way to accomplish concrete goals, exert control, preserve independence, entertain and enhance status. On the other hand, Wood (2011) says that the main element existing in the communication ideals of most women is that of establishing and maintaining relationships with others.

Wood (2011) further says that men have been found to interrupt each other in conversation more frequently and thus are noted for conversation command and speaking for longer lengths of time. Though they may talk for a longer amount of time, Wood (2011) says that masculine speech tends to be direct and assertive. Compared to feminine speech, masculine speech also tends to be more abstract, as well as less emotionally responsive, than feminine interactions.

### 4.2.4 Conflict Management Approaches

Under conflict management approaches the study examined accommodating (giving in to the other party), avoiding (staying away from the conflict), competing (forcing own way), compromising (satisfying others at the expense of own) and, collaborating (forcing of mutual outcome).

The findings of the study revealed that more male than female administrators were unlikely to give in to the other party in a conflict resolution. A total of 92% of the respondents disagreed that male managers give in to the other party and ignored their own goals compared to 74% of the respondents who disagreed in the case of female administrators. For male administrators only 3% of the respondents agreed that they
gave in to the other party compared to 20% of the respondents in the case of female administrators meaning that female managers were likely to give in to the other party in a conflict resolution than male managers.  

Like in the case of the manager giving in to the other party, the study revealed that female administrators were more likely to keep away from a conflict as compared to male administrators. A total of 84% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that male administrators kept away from the conflict compared to 70% of the respondents who disagreed in the case of female administrators. While no respondent agreed that a male administrator would keep away from the conflict, a total of 20% of the respondents agreed that female managers kept away from the conflict as shown in figures 4.15 and 4.16 below. This compares well to Furumo, Buxton, Pillis, Higa and Furumo (2014) who found that females were significantly more likely to use an avoiding and a compromising conflict management style. Males were significantly more likely to use a dominating conflict management style.

**Figure 4.15: Conflict Management Approaches among Male Managers**  
*Source: Researcher, 2016*

**Figure 4.16: Conflict Management Approaches among Female Managers**

*Source: Researcher, 2016*
On whether the administrator forced an issue to have own way in conflict resolution a significantly higher number of female administrators were found to force their own way compared to male administrators. While a total of 6% of the respondents agreed in the case of male administrators, 40% of the respondents agreed with the statement in the case of female administrators. This means that more female administrators in public secondary schools forced their way in conflict resolution than male administrators as shown above. In contrast, Kaimenyi (2014) found that majority of the male respondents (65%) used competing style of conflict management compared to 34% of their women counterparts. Similarly, Desrayaud (2008) found that in high stakes situations, men are significantly more likely to use dominating than compromising, obliging and avoiding. They are also just as likely to dominate as they are to integrate. A combination of the two styles is the most likely result. However, women are significantly more likely to integrate than any other style. They also seem as likely to compromise as they are to dominate. Brewer, Mitchel and Weber (2002) found that a masculine gender role orientation was more likely to be associated with a dominating conflict style, a feminine orientation with the avoiding conflict management style, and an androgynous orientation with the integrating conflict management style.

On forcing for a mutual outcome, more respondents indicated that female administrators did it i.e. 23% compared to male administrators i.e. 3% as shown in the figures 4.15 and 4.16 above. This finding agrees with the findings of Kaimenyi (2014) that Collaborating style emerged the most used by female respondents at 40% of the respondents.

Since females are more likely to use communication in teams to establish relationships and trust (Furumo, 2009), they may be more likely to utilize an integrating or compromising style of conflict management. Males, who use communication in teams to establish dominance, may be more likely to use a dominating conflict management style (Furumo, Buxton, Pillis, Higa and Furumo, 2014).

Havenga (2006) found that all five of the conflict-handling styles are used in the same extent, when measured in terms of a significant difference, by both males and females. It was also found that although the variance in conflict-handling styles explained by gender was not particularly large, it was established that females made use of the integrating style on a more frequent basis than men, to manage conflict with the subordinates. The other conflict-handling styles showed no significant difference by either of the two genders.

De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001) point out that whether and how particular ways of handling conflict in teams influences team effectiveness has been studied extensively. Reviews of this literature suggest that when teams manage conflicts through collaborating, team effectiveness is enhanced. In contrast, when teams manage conflicts through contending, team effectiveness suffers (Tjosvold, 1997, 1998) as cited in De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001).

### 4.2.5 Conflict Management Outcomes

In the aftermath of conflict situations in the school and employment of various management strategies, the study examined nine factors namely: improved relationship between parties, increased ease of achieving set goals, enhanced staff and students’
discipline, improved team spirit, effective utilization of resources, poor performance, unrests/strikes and destruction of property, increased frustration of the parties and decreased team spirit among the members. The response in case of male and female respondents was as indicated in figures 4.17 and 4.18 below.

On whether there were improved relationships between the parties, a total of 76% of the respondents agreed and 10% disagreed in case of male administrators compared to 60% of the respondents who agreed and 19% disagreed in the case of female administrators. About 14% and 20% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed in case of male and female administrators respectively. If it became easier to achieve the set goals after the conflict resolution, 92% of the respondents agreed while the remaining 8% neither agreed nor disagreed in case of male administrators. In case of female administrators 93% of the respondents agreed that it became easy to achieve the set goals after the conflict resolution while the remaining 7% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement.

The study showed that in both cases of male and female managers staff and students’ discipline became more enhanced as a result of conflict resolution. A total of 80% of the respondents in both cases indicated that discipline became more enhanced while only 10% and 7% of the respondents in the case of male and female administrators respectively disagreed. On improved team spirit, the study findings showed that the team spirit of the members improved as a result of conflict resolution irrespective of the gender of the administrator. A total of 80% and 77% of the respondents agreed in case of male and female administrators respectively. In both cases only 10% of the respondents disagreed that the team spirit of the members improved after the conflict resolution.

![Figure 4.17: Conflict Management Outcome among Male Managers](image)

**Figure 4.17: Conflict Management Outcome among Male Managers**

**Source:** Researcher, 2016
Figure 4.18: Conflict Management Outcome among Female Managers

Source: Researcher, 2016

On effective utilization of resources as a result of conflict resolution the study showed a significant difference between conflict resolution by male and female administrators. A total of 84% of the respondents agreed that there was more effective utilization of resources in case of male administrators while on the other hand only 3% of the respondents disagreed that there was effective utilization of resources after the conflict resolution. Over 70% of the respondents disagreed that there was effective utilization of resources in case of female administrators while only a total of 13% disagreed in the case of male administrators as shown in the figures 4.17 and 4.18 above. The study further revealed that performance was unlikely to be poor as a result of conflict resolution. In case of male administrators a total of 69% of the respondents disagreed that performance decreased as a result of conflict resolution while 77% of the respondents disagreed in case of female administrators. About the same percentage of respondents in both cases agreed i.e. 20% and 17% in male and female administrators’ cases respectively.

In cases where the conflict handlers were male 72% of respondents disagreed that there were unrests leading to strikes and destruction of property while only 10% of the respondents agreed. The remaining 18% of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. In cases where the conflict handlers were female 80% of the respondents disagreed that conflict resolution led to unrests, strikes and destruction of property while 17% agreed with the statements. On whether the members of the institution got more frustrated as a result of conflict resolution 82% of the respondents disagreed where the conflict handlers were male and 80% of the respondents disagreed in case of female administrators. A total of 15% and 17% of the respondents agreed with the statement in case of male and female administrators respectively. Again, majority of the respondents in both cases disagreed that conflict resolution led to lack of team spirit among parties as shown in figures 4.16 and 4.17 above.

In a study by Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012) the respondents cited conflicts as emanating from unfair distribution of resources.

Ageng’a and Simatwa (2011) found that most teachers preferred someone else other than the head, preferably the District Education Officer to resolve conflict especially where the head is an interested party. They also found that accommodation conflict handling style
was not popular because it involved working with a person in spite of the differences between them.

4.3 Results

4.3.1 Model Analysis

4.3.1.1 Model Summary
This study’s dependent variable was conflict management outcomes, while communicational styles namely expressive versus instrumental style, conversational dominance, tentative versus assertive speech style and collaborative versus competitive speech style were the independent variables. The R-value was 0.70122, as indicated in table 4.2 below, which represented the sample correlation indicating a high degree of correlation.

4.3.1.2 ANOVA
The statistical significance level of the regression model was 0.03481 as shown in the table 4.2 below, which was less than the acceptable significance level of 0.05, (p < 0.05). This means that the prediction of the outcome of the study using this model was acceptable i.e. determination of gender communication styles on conflict management outcomes in the Sub-County. The R Square ($R^2$) of the model was 0.641953 meaning that the model was fit to predict the outcome of dependent variable i.e. conflict management outcome in this study.

Table 4.2: Model Analysis

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ANOVA

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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Source: Author, 2014

4.3.1.3 Regression Coefficients
Using SPSS, the values of the $\beta$s in the regression model $Y = a + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + e$ were used to determine the causal effect of the independent variables on the
dependent variable. Below are the values as extracted from SPSS. From the tabulated figures below, the completed model was:

\[
Y = 2.175 + 0.1961X_1 + 0.2009X_2 + 0.2262X_3 + 0.3093X_4 + 0.08
\]

This means that 19.61% of the conflict management outcome was influenced by expressive/instrumental conversational style, 20.09% of the conflict management outcome is influenced by conversational dominance of the conflict manager, 22.62% of the outcome was influenced by tentative/assertive speech of the conflict manager and 30.93% of the conflict management outcome was influenced by collaborative/competitive conversational style of the conflict manager. There was however 8% of the conflict management outcome that was not influenced by factors covered in this study. This therefore means that the coefficients of independent variables were significant they in total accounted for 0.92 of the outcome of the dependent variable. In other words the four independent variables that were covered in this study determined the outcome of the conflict management by 92%. The table 4.3 below shows the coefficients of different independent variables of the study.

**Table 4.3: Regression Coefficients**

| Source: Researcher (2016) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficients</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>t Stat</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2.175</td>
<td>0.156021</td>
<td>2.521786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive/Instrumental Conversational Style</td>
<td>0.1961</td>
<td>0.021343</td>
<td>1.886523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversational Dominance</td>
<td>0.2009</td>
<td>0.006531</td>
<td>1.909402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tentative/Assertive Speech Style</td>
<td>0.2262</td>
<td>0.149441</td>
<td>0.976242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative/Competitive Style</td>
<td>0.3093</td>
<td>0.333675</td>
<td>1.000217</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a summary of the study, conclusions and recommendations. The study sought to establish the impact of perceived gender communication styles differences on conflict management in public secondary schools. Using both theoretical and empirical backing, the study presented the different conversational styles employed by men and women and the impact these have on conflict management. In assessing gender communication styles differences the study focused on instrumental versus expressive styles, conversational dominance, tentative versus assertive styles, and collaborative versus competitive styles. Further, the study examined five conflict management styles namely: avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising and collaborating. Finally, the study looked at both desirable and undesirable conflict management outcomes arising from the communication styles employed by the
administrator handling conflict in an institution.

5.1 Summary of the study

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of gender communication styles differences on conflict management in regard to the conflict management styles adopted by male and female administrators in public secondary schools and the outcomes realized henceforth. The study thus examined the impact of the following conversational styles: expressive versus instrumental styles, conversational dominance, tentative versus assertive styles, and, collaborative versus competitive styles on the choice of the following conflict management styles: avoiding, accommodating, competing, compromising and collaborating. This would further determine whether there would be desirable outcomes like good relationships or enhanced discipline or, undesirable conflict management outcomes like poor performance, unrests, strikes, and destruction of property.

The study adopted a descriptive survey research to collect data from the target population. Data was collected from a 69 respondents out of a sample population of 81. Proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to select the respondents from 24 public secondary schools in Mathira East Sub County. This ensured a proportionate number of both male and female respondents.

5.1.1 Conversational styles differences

The study established that there were significant differences in the conversational styles used by male and female school administrators in Mathira East Sub County. This consequently influences the conflict management approaches employed by the conflict managers. As shown by the regression coefficient, conflict management outcome is heavily influenced by the conversational style one uses. Therefore, in this study 19.61% of the conflict management outcome was influenced by expressive or instrumental conversational styles, 20.09% of the conflict management outcome is influenced by conversational dominance of the conflict manager, 22.62% of the outcome was influenced tentative or assertive speech of the conflict manager and 30.93% of the conflict management outcome was influenced by collaborative or competitive conversational style of the conflict manager.

The study revealed that female administrators on the one hand more often used expressive speech, tentative language and were more collaborative with other speakers. Surprisingly, female administrators were also found to employ conversational dominance, a style stereotypically associated with males. Male administrators on the other hand used instrumental style of communication and used assertive and competitive speech styles but were surprisingly less dominant in their conversation.

5.1.2 Conflict management styles

In regard to the conflict management approaches used by the administrators, the study revealed that female administrators mainly employed avoiding, accommodating and compromising approaches while male administrators generally used competing and collaborating approaches.
5.1.3 Conflict management outcomes

The study examined both desirable and undesirable outcomes after conflict management and hence considered nine probable factors in the form of both desirable and undesirable outcomes namely: improved relationships, increased ease of achieving set goals, enhanced staff and students’ discipline, improved team spirit, effective utilization of resources, poor performance, unrests/strikes and destruction of property, increased frustration and decreased team spirit.

On the one hand, where the conflict manager was male, the study found that there were more instances of improved relationships and effective utilization of resources as outcomes of conflict management. On the other hand, where the conflict manager was female, there was a higher likelihood of increased ease of achieving set goals. More respondents also disagreed that where female administrators managed conflict there would be poor performance, unrests/strikes and destruction of property, and decreased team spirit.

However, the study also revealed that there were no significant differences on conflict outcomes between male and female administrators in regard to the following factors: enhanced staff and students’ discipline, improved team spirit and increased frustration.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study several conclusions were made. The study revealed that there are significant differences in communication styles used by male and female administrators especially when handling conflict at their workplaces. Female administrators on the one hand were found to use expressive speech which creates and maintains closeness, while male administrators on the other hand were found to use instrumental speech which basically aims at offering solutions to problems without portraying personal feelings to the issues at hand. This is similar to a study by Mulac et al. (2001) who predicted that male language is relatively direct, succinct and instrumental whereas female women’s style is indirect, elaborate and affective. Conversational dominance was however found to be more prevalent among female administrators than males. Female administrators were also found to use tentative and competitive speech styles while males used assertive and collaborative speech styles more. This hence implies that just as Netshitangani (2008) found in a study, women administrators sometimes show feminine communication styles and sometimes masculine communication styles.

The choice of the conflict management style was also found to vary with gender. This study found that male administrators mainly used compromising and accommodating conflict management styles while female administrators were found to predominantly use avoiding, competing and collaborating styles. This implies that just like with the communication styles, women can at times employ styles traditionally associated with males like competing, while men also can use styles associated with females like accommodating. Brewer et al. (2002) say that with the great amount of literature concerning gender and conflict management style preference, there is a mixed response to the issue. Wachter (1999) is of the opinion that men and women tend to endorse conflict behaviours that complement gender role expectations wherein styles such as forcing or problem solving are preferred from males. In contrast, women, for whom
relationships are more important and aggressive behaviour less condoned, are more likely to prefer styles such as smoothing, withdrawing, and compromising (Ting-Toomey, 1986). Findings in this study are supported by Brewer et al. (2002) who in a research on males and females from upper and lower status organizational positions of three similar organizations argue that competitive or dominating behaviour appears consistent with feminine gender role. The study also suggests that the integrating and compromising behaviours are both stereotypically masculine and feminine. This is also in line with the study of Bedell and Sistrunk (1973) who concluded that women are more competitive than men.

Ting-Toomey (1986) also found that males prefer to use more indirect non-confrontational strategies such as avoidance to resolve conflicts than the females who tend to use more active, solution-oriented strategies to deal with relational conflicts than the males. Sutchek (2002) in a more contemporary study found that men and women significantly differ only in the use of compromising style.

5.3 Recommendations

There should be a concerted effort by the Ministry of Education, the Teachers Service Commission and other employers to ensure gender parity among administrators especially in line with legislative guidelines. This should be informed by the fact that diversity in the workforce brings with it different perspectives and approaches that enhance and develop performance. As the findings of this study have revealed, the different communication styles employed by individuals with either a feminine or masculine orientation, coupled with the different conflict management approaches employed by these individuals, employers should

The public and private sector should embark on programmes that would sensitize those involved in conflict management on the various conversational styles that could be adopted to ensure easier conflict management, this should be done alongside focused training for administrators on suitable conflict management styles.

There should be concerted effort by the government and other employers to train employees on the suitable communication styles. Considering that there are other factors involved in communication like culture, class and age, miscommunication may occur in both mixed and same gender conversations. It is therefore important for institutional administrators to familiarize themselves with the differences in communication of men and women in order to avoid miscommunication.

One possible solution to minimizing misconceptions in communication is by combining female and male communication styles. For instance men should be encouraged to adopt some feminine styles of communication and females some masculine communication styles. By adopting each others’ positive aspects of communication individuals could become more effective communicators. For instance women are believed to be more self-revealing and supportive while men would be more assertive and forceful, combining these styles would make a more effective communicator.

5.4 Further research.

Future research should extend across gender and sector. The impact that communication styles have on conflict management in the workplace

Research in future should also examine the effect of gender stereotyping in regard to the
perceived ability to handle conflict
Future research should examine the effect of gender socialization on the choice of the communication styles. The social hierarchy as dictated by ones gender should be examined in regard to the effect it has on how males and females communicate. Research in future should study the factors that may lead to males adopting feminine communication styles and females adopting masculine communication styles. Another area of interest that future research should consider is the effect of individuals combining male and female communication styles. Research should also examine what role is played by the decision making procedures in institutions in the management of conflict among and between students and the members of staff. There is also need to study the impact of other factors like guidance and counseling and mentorship in management of conflict in institutions.

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