

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY PRINCIPALS IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS  
IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN MACHAKOS COUNTY**

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## ABSTRACT

Conflict is natural and to differing degrees, occurs daily in everyone's life. Conflict is not necessarily good or bad. However, the way we handle it, makes the outcome positive or negative. If handled effectively, it can create a good learning experience. If handled ineffectively, conflict can quickly escalate to physical and emotional violence (Jones, 1994). Conflict is an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities. Conflict resolution is the process of attempting to resolve a dispute or a conflict. Successful conflict resolution occurs by listening to and providing opportunities to meet the needs of all parties and to adequately address interests, so that, each party is satisfied with the outcome. Schools as organizations face conflicts which when not amicably resolved result into school unrests, lack of effectiveness in the school, poor service delivery and consequently poor performance. The frequent riots witnessed in secondary school as well as poor performance among schools in Machakos are an indication of existing unresolved conflicts among the school members. Despite this, no studies have been carried out to find on conflict resolution strategies in secondary schools in Machakos District. The purpose of this study was therefore to investigate the effectiveness of strategies used in conflict resolution in secondary schools in resolving different types of conflicts that are common in secondary schools. The study sought to achieve the following objectives: to identify the types of conflicts that are common in public secondary schools, to identify conflict resolution mechanisms/strategies used in public secondary schools and to establish the effectiveness of different conflict resolution strategies in resolving conflicts in secondary schools in Machakos District, Machakos County. The information obtained from this study was expected to shed light on possible ways that could be used to reduce these conflicts in schools. The literature is reviewed around types of conflicts and conflict management and resolution styles. The study adopted survey design. The target population of the study was the 24 secondary school principals, and 237 secondary school teachers in public secondary schools in Machakos District. The study used stratified, purposive and simple random sampling techniques to select the sample. The sample consisted of 10 principals and 74 teachers. Data was collected using self-administered questionnaires and interview schedules. The validity of the instruments was checked through a pilot study that was used to determine the clarity of items as well as review by experts. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient at a level of 0.7 was calculated from the results of the pilot study to determine the reliability of the instruments. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequencies and presented in frequency tables and charts. The types of conflicts identified were intra-personal, interpersonal, intra-group, inter-group and intra-organization. Conflicts involving students were the most common. The most effective conflict resolution strategies were: handling the case firmly and making decision on way forward, trying to collaborate with parties involved reaching an amicable solution and trying to bring the parties together at a common agreeable point between the parties. The researcher recommended refresher courses on conflict resolution for all school members including students. School administrators, teachers, learners and support staffs should all be trained in resolving all types of conflicts as they occur in the schools. School administrators, teachers and other members of the school should be trained regularly on the dynamics of the changing trends in conflict resolution strategies so as to use the most effective conflict resolution strategy for any particular conflict in their schools. Schools administrators should ensure constant communication between different members of the schools to avoid conflicts. Conflict resolution should involve all parties in order to reach amicable solutions.