



The Impact of School Heads' Conflict Resolution Skills on the Effective Management of Public Secondary Schools in Bunda District, Mara-Tanzania

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Abstract : This study aimed to assess the impact of school heads' conflict resolution skills on the effective management of public secondary schools in Bunda district, Mara- Tanzania. The study was guided by Situational Leadership Theory developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard in the late 1960s. The study employed a mixed research approach and explanatory sequential design. The study targeted a population of 14,528 respondents, including 271 teachers, 14212 of students ,25 heads of schools, 19 Ward Education Officers (WEOs), and 1 District Education Officer (DEO). Which made a total sample size of 276 teachers who were selected through simple random and stratified sampling, 8 heads of schools, 6 WEOs, and 1 DEO were selected via purposive sampling. Data collection instruments included questionnaires and interviews. The reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha, with values of 0.7. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 27, generating descriptive statistics like means, frequencies, and standard deviations. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The results revealed that school heads' conflict resolution skills significantly enhance effective management in public secondary schools by fostering collaboration, minimizing disruptions, and promoting a positive school climate. Teachers and administrators agreed that when school leaders resolve disputes fairly and inclusively, it leads to improved relationships, increased motivation, and better educational outcomes. The study concluded that strong conflict resolution skills among school heads are essential for maintaining institutional harmony and achieving school success. The study recommended that school heads undergo regular training in conflict management, emotional intelligence, and communication strategies to strengthen their leadership capabilities. Additionally, schools should establish formal systems for open dialogue and conflict prevention to ensure a cooperative and supportive school environment.

Keyword : School Heads, Conflict Resolution Skills, Efficiency, Management

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict resolution skills are vital for effective leadership and school management, as they equip school heads with the ability to address disagreements, interpersonal tensions, and organizational disputes in a constructive and professional manner. These skills are especially important in public secondary schools, where the diversity of stakeholders; teachers, students, parents, and staff combined with the pressures of academic performance, can often lead to conflict. School leaders who possess strong conflict resolution competencies, such as active listening, negotiation, mediation, and problem-solving, are better positioned to manage these challenges without allowing them to disrupt the teaching and learning process. Effective conflict resolution fosters a collaborative and supportive school climate, where open communication, mutual trust, and respect are promoted among all members of the school community. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2020), such skills are instrumental in maintaining a stable and positive learning environment that supports academic excellence. In contrast, the lack of conflict resolution skills can result in unresolved issues, low staff morale, and a decline in institutional performance, as highlighted by Tablate (2022). Therefore, these skills play a crucial role in ensuring that school operations remain smooth, relationships stay healthy, and

educational goals are consistently achieved.

Obeten et al.. (2024) opined that the way and manner conflict is resolved made conflict resolution collaborative, therefore the process of managing conflict include the explicit, interplay of knowledge types ,attributes which have the ability of resolving organizational dispute, this dispute can be resolved through strategies like avoidance and accommodation.

In developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and Japan, conflict resolution skills among school heads are considered essential competencies for effective educational leadership (Kakembo & Annet, 2025). School administrators in these settings often receive formal training in emotional intelligence, collaborative problem-solving, and restorative practices, which enable them to address disputes constructively. For example, in the U.S., principals are expected to foster inclusive and respectful school environments where conflict resolution is integrated into the school culture (Ok, 2024). In the UK, research indicates that heads who adopt structured mediation and dialogue-based approaches are more successful in maintaining school discipline and staff morale, leading to better student outcomes and overall school effectiveness (Espeño, 2025). Similarly, in Japan where cultural values emphasize harmony school leaders are trained to prevent and de-escalate

conflicts through consensus-building and empathetic communication (Hamamoto, 2025). However, despite these strengths, challenges such as increasing multicultural diversity, high-stress environments due to academic accountability, and mental health issues among students and staff can strain the conflict resolution capacities of even well-trained administrators. These issues underscore the need for continuous professional development and context-specific strategies to manage evolving school dynamics.

In the African context, conflict is a common challenge in managing public secondary schools, but the importance of school heads' conflict resolution skills is gaining recognition (Khalid & Qian, 2024). In South Africa, principals employing democratic leadership and mediation strategies effectively manage tensions in socially fragmented settings, especially after apartheid policy. (Ndwandwe, 2024). Nigeria faces frequent unrest linked to poor conflict management, causing strikes and indiscipline, yet training school leaders in conflict resolution has led to better staff retention, academic outcomes, and community relations (Adeoye, 2023; Amito et al., 2023). Kenyan principals who use collaborative approaches with teachers and parents report smoother school operations and improved student results (Shee, 2021). Tanzania struggles with limited leadership training, hierarchical cultures, and weak policy

support, but where inclusive strategies are applied, school governance and teamwork improve, creating better learning environments (Jackson, 2025). Despite some advances, challenges such as scarce professional development opportunities and persistent authoritarian leadership styles continue to hinder effective, conflict-sensitive management across African schools.

In Bunda District, the effective management of public secondary schools is challenged by frequent conflicts such as teacher-student disciplinary issues, staff disagreements, and limited resource allocation. The core issue is the lack of formal training in conflict resolution among school heads, leading many to adopt authoritarian approaches that often worsen tensions rather than resolve them. This contributes to low teacher morale, reduced academic performance, and strained school-community relationships. As such, the absence of structured conflict management skills significantly undermines school leadership effectiveness in the district (Alex & Mukadi, 2022). Therefore, this study aimed at assessing the impact of school heads' conflict resolution skills on the effective management of public secondary schools in Bunda District, Mara- Tanzania.

Empirical Review

Conflict resolution skills, such as effective communication, empathy,

and problem-solving, are essential for school administrators in addressing disagreements and fostering a supportive educational environment (Smith, 2024). These skills help create inclusive spaces that promote the achievement of educational goals. Marquez (2023) studied school leaders in Bolivia's Santa Cruz South District and found that conflicts are common in schools, with administrators using methods like compromise, collaboration, and avoidance to manage them. The study emphasized the value of communication, teamwork, and shared goals in resolving conflicts. It also highlighted challenges such as poor teacher planning, delayed reporting, and lack of instructional readiness. To address these issues, Marquez proposed a more comprehensive conflict resolution framework that includes proactive strategies aimed at improving teacher preparedness and overall school management.

Dlamini and Zulu (2023) conducted a study in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, emphasizing that conflict management skills empower school administrators to handle disagreements constructively and prevent escalation. Their findings revealed that training in mediation and emotional intelligence enables leaders to de-escalate tensions, build consensus, and improve staff collaboration while reducing disciplinary problems. Similarly, Mokoena (2024) found that conflict

management is essential for adaptive leadership in South African schools, especially in diverse contexts, where principals with strong interpersonal skills foster inclusive environments and stakeholder trust. Gxhaweni and Plaatjies (2023) highlighted the importance of deliberation and relationship-building within School Management Teams (SMTs), noting that unresolved conflicts between SMTs and teachers hinder school performance and advocating for improvements in decision-making and resource allocation. Complementing the South African context, Magha and Ashu (2023), in their study of secondary schools in Cameroon's Fako Division, concluded that effective conflict management by principals promotes a positive atmosphere among teachers, enhances attentiveness, reduces student dropout rates, and strengthens overall school effectiveness underscoring the need for structured frameworks to develop administrative competencies in resolving school-based conflicts.

Onuorah (2023) examined how school principals manage conflicts and their impact on teachers' effectiveness in public secondary schools in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study revealed a strong positive correlation between principals' use of collaborative conflict resolution strategies and teacher effectiveness, although reliance on self-reported data posed potential bias. To strengthen the findings, the study recommended incorporating

feedback from external stakeholders such as students and guardians for a more comprehensive assessment. In Kenya, Wainaina (2020) found that principals in Murang'a County predominantly used mediation when managing conflicts with teachers, which had a significant positive impact on resolution outcomes; however, persistent conflicts pointed to a need for enhanced training. The study called for capacity-building initiatives to better equip school leaders with practical conflict resolution strategies. Similarly, Wabwire (2019), studying secondary schools in Kampala District Uganda, reported a statistically significant positive relationship between head teachers' communication skills and effective conflict resolution ($r = 0.265, p = .005$), while other skills like collaboration and problem-solving showed positive but statistically insignificant correlations highlighting communication as a key component in managing school-based conflicts.

Messanga and Mkulu (2022) assessed the efficacy of managerial determinations in the resolution of interpersonal conflict in public secondary schools located in Tarime Town, Tanzania. The findings presented how public secondary schools in Tarime Urban experience various types of interpersonal conflicts, including affective, substantive, interest, value, and goal-oriented conflicts. Principals face challenges such as absence of supportive resources, knowledge, and cooperation

and environmental issues. To manage these conflicts, school heads should use a range of strategies, including meetings, negotiations, communication, mediation, guidance and counselling, and scolding. The research highlighted the necessity for principals to apply diverse approaches to effectively resolve interpersonal issues among students.

Theoretical Review

The study was guided by the Situational Leadership Theory, developed by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard in the late 1960s, which assumes that there is no single best leadership style; instead, effective leadership involves adapting one's approach based on the competence and commitment levels of the individuals or teams being led (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). This theory is particularly relevant to school management, especially in relation to conflict resolution, as it emphasizes the need for school heads to adjust their leadership style whether directing, coaching, supporting, or delegating based on the unique needs and maturity of their staff. In the context of conflict resolution, the theory supports the use of interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and communication strategies that align with the readiness levels of teachers and staff. In Bunda District, where school heads face challenges such as diverse staff capabilities, limited resources, and varying levels of

motivation, the adaptability promoted by Situational Leadership Theory provides a valuable framework for resolving conflicts effectively and enhancing school management outcomes (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed research approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of how school heads' conflict resolution skills influence school management. An explanatory sequential design was employed, where quantitative data were collected and analyzed first, followed by qualitative data to explain and deepen the findings (Creswell, 2023). The study targeted a population of 14,528 respondents, including 271 teachers, 14212 students, 25 heads of schools, 19 Ward Education Officers (WEOs), and 1 District Education Officer (DEO). A total sample size of 276 was drawn using Taro Yamane's formula and Mugenda and Mugenda's guideline: 162 teachers and 99 of students were selected through simple random and stratified random sampling, 8 heads of schools, 6 WEOs, and 1 DEO were selected via purposive sampling due to their administrative responsibilities. Data collection instruments included questionnaires for teachers and interviews for school heads, WEOs, and the DEO. Content validity was ensured by expert review and revision of instruments, while reliability was confirmed through

Cronbach's Alpha, with values above 0.7 for all objectives. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 27, generating descriptive statistics like means, frequencies, and standard deviations. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically through transcription, coding, and theme development. Ethical considerations were strictly observed: permissions were obtained from relevant authorities, participants' confidentiality and privacy were protected, informed consent was secured, and APA ethical guidelines including citation and plagiarism avoidance were followed throughout the research process.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conflict Resolution Skills on Effective Management of Public School

The study intended to analyse how school heads' conflict resolution skills promote effective management of public secondary schools in Bunda District. This paper sought to establish the means or ways through which conflict resolution skills improve effective management of public secondary schools. The descriptive statistics and quotations from administrators were used to establish these ways or means as perceived by teachers and administrators. Data for this objective were collected through questionnaires administered to 151 teachers and interviews to 11 administrators. It is important to

explore how conflict resolution skills affect management of public secondary school and at improving teaching quality and students' outcomes. The finding reveals both the school head strengths and staff, on resolving conflict for healthy of institution prosperity. Table 1 below presents the findings collected from the questionnaires, followed by interview supplements, and linkage of the findings to previous studies.

Table 1. Teachers' Response on Conflict Resolution Skills (n=151)

Key: 1= to no extent. 2= to little extent; 3= to some extent; 4= to a large extent; And 5= to a very large extent;

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %
School head effectively resolves conflicts among teachers and staff	3 2.0	9 6.0	36 23.8	56 37.1	47 31.10
School head doesn't address conflicts among students	29 19.2	14 9.3	35 23.2	40 26.5	33 21.9
Handle disputes to improve overall management	7 4.6	6 4.0	37 24.5	53 35.1	48 31.8
Listens to all parties before conflict resolution decisions	5 3.3	7 4.6	36 23.8	51 33.8	52 34.4
School head doesn't promote dialogue to	25 16.6	16 10.6	32 21.2	45 29.8	33 21.9

prevent conflicts	4	8	35	51	53
Effective conflict resolution fosters positive climate	2.6	5.3	23.2	33.8	35.1
School head ensures that conflicts do not disrupt teaching	3	9	31	47	61
Strong conflict resolution skills enhance collaboration	2.0	6.0	20.5	31.1	40.4
Poor conflict resolution leads to misunderstanding in schools	5	8	32	47	59
Effective conflict resolution strategies contribute to overall success of school	3.3	5.3	21.2	31.1	39.1
Effective conflict resolution leads to misunderstanding in schools	8	5	25	50	63
Effective conflict resolution strategies contribute to overall success of school	5.3	3.3	16.6	33.1	41.7

Source: Field Data (2025)

Conflict Resolution Skills on Effective Management of Public School

The findings reveal that conflict resolution skills significantly contribute to effective management of public schools, with 47 (31.1%) teachers agreeing to a very large extent, 56 (37.1%) to a large extent, and 36 (23.8%) to some extent that school heads play an active role in this area. Overall, 139 (92%) teachers believe their school heads manage conflicts effectively to varying degrees. However, regarding conflicts involving students, 43 (28.5%)

teachers feel that school heads address these issues fairly and justly only to a little extent or not at all, while the majority, 108 (71.5%), perceive fair and just conflict resolution among students from some to a large extent. Cecchi-Dimeglio (2024) supports these findings, noting that leaders who handle disagreements constructively and privately foster psychological safety and strengthen team cohesion. One respondent argued that:

“Conflicts can be avoided by treating everyone fairly and with respect. When the head of the school is fair, they ensure that the regulations are followed consistently and that decisions are made fairly. Teachers, students, and parents all benefit from mutual trust and cooperation when everyone behaves with respect. People are more inclined to cooperate and less prone to dispute or oppose decisions when they believe they are being treated properly, “(Interviewee, 13/6/2025).

The school heads in Bunda district use their dispute resolution skills. It was noted that the head of school successfully settles disputes between staff and teachers, handles disputes between students, hears both sides of an issue before rendering a decision, and encourages and participates in preventive discussions. The school administrators should ensure disputes don't interfere with regular classes and activities. Opinions about resolving student conflicts and

encourage conflict-avoidance communication are divided. The Situational Leadership Theory, emphasizes that there is no one ideal leadership style. The effective leadership relies on adjusting the leader's conduct to the level of maturity and skill of the team or individuals under their direction, (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).

Address Conflicts Among Students in A Fair and Just Manner

The study found that school heads largely address conflicts among students in a fair and just manner, which is crucial for a positive school environment. According to the results, 33 teachers (21.9%) agreed to a very large extent, 40 (26.5%) to a large extent, and 35 (23.2%) to some extent that school heads handle student conflicts fairly, while only 14 (9.3%) and 7 (4.6%) reported little or no fairness, showing that 71.5% of teachers perceive fair conflict resolution to some or large extent. This aligns with Cecchi-Dimeglio (2024), who notes that leaders who manage disagreements constructively and privately foster psychological safety, team cohesion, and trust. One head of school emphasized that resolving student disputes fairly ensures that all viewpoints are heard, decisions are objective, and relationships among students, teachers, and parents remain positive, creating a safe and respectful work atmosphere. Fair conflict resolution not only reduces ongoing

disputes and promotes cooperation but also helps students develop honesty, responsibility, and respect, supporting both academic achievement and the development of social and emotional skills essential for future success.

The Ability to Handle Disputes Improves Overall School Management

The study examined whether school heads' ability to handle disputes improves overall school management. Results from Table 4.4 show that 48 teachers (31.8%) agreed to a very large extent, 53 (35.1%) to a large extent, and 37 (24.5%) to some extent that effective dispute handling by school heads enhances school management. Conversely, 6 (4.0%) and 7 (4.6%) teachers agreed to little or no extent, respectively. Overall, 91.4% of teachers reported that the school head's dispute management positively impacts school management to some degree. Kakembo (2025) supports this, noting that school leaders who employ mediation, empathy, and structured dialogue are better equipped to resolve conflicts and maintain organizational harmony. One respondent emphasized,

“Effective management of the entire school depends heavily on the head of the school's capacity to resolve conflicts. A competent school leader is able to hear all viewpoints, maintain objectivity, and come up with solutions that benefit all parties. This keeps the school calm and ensures that parents, instructors, and children

get along well. A healthy atmosphere where everyone feels valued and safe is created after the head of the school is able to resolve conflicts in an efficient manner. This skill facilitates prompt and wise decision-making, which maintains the school's success and efficiency” (Interviewee: 12/06/2025).

These findings show that effective conflict resolution by school leaders benefits the entire school community by fostering a peaceful, respectful environment where students and staff feel secure and appreciated. This reduces disruptions and promotes discipline, allowing uninterrupted learning. Additionally, it builds confidence in school administration, encouraging collaboration, strengthening relationships among students, teachers, and parents, and ultimately enhancing school productivity, success, and growth.

The School Head Listens to all Parties Involved Before Making Conflict Resolution Decisions

The study investigated whether school heads listen to all parties involved in a conflict before making conflict resolution decisions to improve school management. Findings from the Likert scale show that 52 (34.4%) teachers agreed to a very large extent, 51 (33.8%) to a large extent, and 36 (23.8%) to some extent that their school heads respect stakeholders' opinions during decision-making. Only a small number, 7 (4.6%) and 5 (3.3%),

indicated little or no extent. Overall, 92% of teachers reported that their heads engage all parties prior to resolving conflicts. This inclusive approach promotes transparency, mutual understanding, and collaborative problem-solving, fostering fairness and a positive school environment. Johnson and Johnson (2014) emphasize that active listening is essential for effective conflict management, as it builds trust and helps find fair solutions. By valuing everyone's voice, school heads reduce misunderstandings, nurture respect, and create an inclusive atmosphere that strengthens relationships and the school community. In an interview, one head of school respondent declared that:

"Before making decisions about conflict resolution, the head of the school should consult with all parties involved since this builds trust and encourages collaboration, both of which result in more lasting and successful solutions. Relationships within the school community are strengthened when stakeholders feel heard and understood because they are more willing to collaborate and support the resolution" (Interviewee, 5th June 2025).

The findings implies that, Prior to making judgments on conflict resolution, school head who actively listens to all parties involved builds mutual respect, trust, and fairness within the school community. This promotes cooperation and shared ownership of solutions. By reducing

misunderstandings, preventing escalation, and fostering a greater knowledge of the underlying causes of conflicts. This strategy fosters a welcoming and conducive school climate. It improves moral leadership, forges closer bonds with others, and fosters a more peaceful atmosphere where disputes are settled amicably and sustainably, all of which are advantageous to the general growth and well-being of employees and pupils.

The School Head Promote Dialogue to Prevent Conflicts

Table 1 reveals that while a majority of school heads promote dialogue to prevent conflicts, a notable proportion do not do so consistently. Specifically, 33 teachers (21.9%) agreed to a very large extent and 45 (29.8%) to a large extent that their school heads encourage conflict-preventing dialogue, with 32 (21.2%) agreeing to some extent. However, 16 (10.6%) and 25 (16.6%) teachers reported this happens to little or no extent, respectively. Overall, 72.8% of teachers acknowledged that their heads engage in preventive conflict resolution dialogue to some degree, whereas 27.2% felt it occurs little or not at all. School heads play a crucial role in fostering open communication, empathy, and proactive engagement among stakeholders, which is vital for effective conflict prevention. Kakembo (2025) emphasizes that successful school leaders prioritize inclusive

dialogue, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered before conflicts arise. One respondent affirmed, "As the head of the school, I make myself approachable, promoted communication with staff and students, and valued their opinions and efforts to improve the administration and operation of my school" (Interviewee, 5th June 2025). By involving all stakeholders including teachers, students, parents, community members, and policymakers, school heads foster respect and shared ownership essential for inclusive and effective leadership. When heads actively listen and incorporate diverse perspectives, they build trust and enhance educational outcomes (Silayo, 2022; Bellwether, 2023). Furthermore, respecting stakeholders' ideas helps improve administrative activities and creates a supportive environment conducive to academic progress and a positive working atmosphere.

Effective Conflict Resolution by the School Head Fosters a Positive School Climate.

The study found that effective conflict resolution by school heads significantly fosters a positive school climate. According to Likert scale results, teachers 53 (35.1%) agreed to a very large extent, 51 (33.8%) to a large extent, and 35 (23.2%) to some extent that school leaders' conflict resolution enhances the school environment, while only 8 (5.3%) and 4 (2.6%) reported little or no impact, indicating

that 92.1% of teachers affirmed its positive contribution. The findings underscore that school heads who employ collaborative and emotionally intelligent conflict management techniques create supportive, motivating, and professional school cultures. Interview data highlighted that active listening allows leaders to understand underlying issues, appreciate diverse perspectives, and make practical, inclusive decisions, enhancing teacher satisfaction and engagement. These practices help manage challenges such as low motivation, heavy workloads, and miscommunication, while promoting trust, clear goals, and a productive learning environment, aligning with Qitalig (2025) and Stark et al. (2017) on the critical role of conflict resolution in effective school leadership.

School Head Ensures that Conflicts do not Disrupt Teaching.

This study examined whether school heads ensure that conflicts do not disrupt teaching to promote better school management. Findings show that teachers 61 (40.4%) agreed to a very large extent, 47 (31.1%) to a large extent, and 31 (20.5%) to some extent that their heads effectively prevent conflicts from interfering with teaching activities. Only a small proportion, 9 (6.0%) and 3 (2.0%), agreed to little or no extent, respectively, resulting in an overall 92% of teachers confirming that their school head takes proactive measures to keep conflicts from disrupting daily

operations. These findings underscore that unresolved conflicts hinder teaching and learning, negatively affecting institutional goals. Effective school leaders use proactive conflict management strategies such as mediation, restorative dialogue, and structured communication to address disputes early. Kakembo (2025) highlights that school heads who foster harmony through problem-solving and negotiation maintain uninterrupted teaching and learning, benefiting all stakeholders. One school head remarked, "The head of the school ensures that disagreements do not impede instruction. They strive to find swift and equitable solutions so teachers and students can focus on their work without interruptions. When disagreements are resolved amicably, the school remains a secure and serene setting conducive environment to teaching and learning, improving the school environment and achieving educational goals." This indicates that school leaders play a crucial role in creating a stable, positive climate where conflicts do not distract from instruction. Effective dispute resolution reduces tension and distraction, thereby enhancing student engagement and academic performance. Moreover, a calm school atmosphere fosters cooperation and respectful relationships, essential for a productive learning environment (Bush, 2021). Ultimately, this proactive leadership approach supports the overall growth

of the school community and improves educational outcomes.

School Head with Strong Conflict Resolution Skills Enhances Collaboration

The study found that school heads with strong conflict resolution skills significantly enhance collaboration among teachers and staff, which is critical for overall school performance. As shown in Table 4.4, teachers 59 (39.1%) agreed to a very large extent, 47 (31.1%) to a large extent, and 32 (21.2%) to some extent that effective conflict resolution fosters staff collaboration, while only 8 (5.3%) and 5 (3.3%) reported little or no impact. Overall, 91.4% of respondents affirmed the positive role of school heads' conflict resolution abilities in promoting collaboration. Leaders who encourage open communication, mutual respect, and shared decision-making cultivate a professional culture of trust, cooperation, and teamwork, which improves staff morale and performance while creating a supportive learning environment for students. Interview insights highlighted that skillful conflict management fosters understanding among parents, staff, and students, strengthens trust, and prevents unresolved disputes from undermining school cohesion. This aligns with Johnson and Johnson (2019) and Platjies (2023), emphasize that effective conflict resolution is essential for building a harmonious,

collaborative, and high-performing school community.

Poor Conflict Resolution by the School Head Leads to Misunderstandings in School Operations

The findings in Table 1 reveal that poor conflict resolution by school heads significantly contributes to misunderstandings in school operations, with 86.7% of teachers agreeing to some extent that ineffective conflict management leads to such issues 34.1% to a very large extent, 31.8% to a large extent, and 18.5% to some extent. Only a small minority (4.0% and 9.3%) perceived little or no impact. These results indicate that unresolved conflicts cause role misinterpretations, unclear expectations, communication breakdowns, and weakened cooperation among teachers, students, and parents. As Saitis and Saiti (2017) state, addressing root causes of conflict is a key duty of school managers, since unmanaged tensions can harm school performance. This view was supported by a school head interviewed, who noted that ineffective dispute resolution heightens stakeholder tensions, disrupts learning, and undermines school functioning. Such ineffective conflict management also erodes trust among parents, teachers, and students, fostering a negative school climate and poorer academic outcomes (Smith & Johnson, 2021). Unaddressed disputes exacerbate

misunderstandings, leading to increased absenteeism, student unrest, and staff turnover, which collectively impair the school's overall operations and damage its reputation in the community, thereby hindering collaborative efforts to improve the institution. Effective conflict resolution is therefore essential for maintaining teamwork, promoting a positive school environment, and ensuring overall school success.

Effective Conflict Resolution Strategies by the School Head Contribute to the Overall Success of the School

The findings indicate that effective conflict resolution strategies by the school head significantly contribute to the overall success of the school, with 63 (47.7%) teachers agreeing to a very large extent, 50 (33.1%) to a large extent, 25 (16.6%) to some extent, and only a small minority reporting little (3.3%) or no impact (5.3%). By proactively addressing disputes through mediation, open communication, and restorative practices, school leaders foster trust, collaboration, and a shared sense of purpose among staff, students, and parents. Teachers highlighted that effective conflict management promotes prompt and equitable problem-solving, enhances motivation, teamwork, and trust, and creates a respectful, safe, and productive school climate. These practices reduce disruptions, strengthen cooperation,

and improve academic achievement, emphasizing the critical role of strong leadership in achieving educational objectives and supporting overall school effectiveness (Kakembo, 2025; Smith & Patel, 2021).

Additionally, students were provided with the questionnaires to indicate their thoughts concerning school heads' interpersonal skills on helping the management of public secondary schools. Their responses are presented in table 2.

Table 2.
Students' Response on Head of School Conflict Resolution Skills (n=99)

Key: 1= to no extent. 2= to little extent; 3= to some extent; 4= to a large extent; And 5= to a very large extent;

Statements	1		2		3		4		5	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Our School Head solves problems between students and teachers fairly.	1	17.2	3	38.4	1	11.1	16	16.2	1	17.2
Our School Head acts quickly when there is a conflict in school.	1	13.1	3	33.3	8	8.1	20	20.2	2	25.3
Our School Head lets everyone talk and share	1	15.2	3	33.3	1	13.1	17	17.2	2	21.2

their side during conflicts	1	16.3	3	38.4	1	14.9	9	9.1	2	22.2
Our School Head helps keep peace and order in our school.	1	18.2	3	35.4	9	9.1	11	11.1	2	26.3
Our School Head helps people get along again after a disagreement.	1	18.8	3	35.5	4	4.1	11	11.1	6	6.3

Source: Field Data (2025)

The findings reveal that a majority of students perceive their School Head's conflict resolution skills as limited. Specifically, many students reported that the School Head solves problems between students and teachers only to a small extent, with 17.2% saying "to no extent" and 38.4% "to a little extent," only 16.2% and 17.2% said "to a large" and "very large extent," respectively. Similar patterns were observed regarding prompt action during conflicts and allowing everyone to speak, with a significant portion of students feeling their voices are not consistently heard. Additionally, 16.2% and 38.4% of students felt that the school heads helps maintain peace and order to no extent or a little extent, while only 22.2% agreed to a very large extent. For restoring relationships after disagreements, 18.2% said "to no

extent," 35.4% "to a little extent," and 26.3% "to a very large extent." These findings suggest that while some students recognize efforts to resolve conflicts, overall, conflict management is seen as inconsistent, potentially limiting trust, communication, cooperation, and harmony within the school community.

These results align with prior research indicating that inadequate conflict management and interpersonal skills among school leaders can negatively affect teamwork, collaboration, and a supportive school climate (Franca, 2019; Dlamini & Zulu, 2023; Onuorah, 2023; Ofojeb & Akudo, 2021; Wabwire, 2019; Marquez, 2023). In line with Situational Leadership Theory, which emphasizes adapting leadership to the readiness and needs of followers, the findings suggest that the School Head needs to strengthen fairness, transparency, active listening, inclusivity, and responsiveness in handling conflicts. Implementing structured conflict resolution sessions and clear guidelines could enhance trust, restore relationships, reduce tension, and foster a more collaborative and supportive learning environment for both students and teachers.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that effective conflict resolution skills among school heads significantly enhance the management and overall success of public secondary schools. Teachers overwhelmingly perceive that

school heads manage disputes fairly, listen to all parties, promote dialogue, prevent disruptions, and foster collaboration, contributing to a positive school climate and improved academic outcomes. However, students' responses indicate inconsistencies in conflict management, suggesting gaps in responsiveness, fairness, and inclusivity. Overall, strong conflict resolution by school leaders foster trust, cooperation, and a respectful environment, which is critical for maintaining order, minimizing misunderstandings, and ensuring the school's operational efficiency.

It is recommended that school heads implement structured conflict resolution strategies that actively involve both students and staff, ensuring fairness, transparency, and timely action. Regular training in mediation, active listening, and inclusive decision-making should be provided to strengthen interpersonal skills and responsiveness. Additionally, establishing clear guidelines and preventive dialogue sessions can enhance trust, restore relationships after disagreements, and foster a more collaborative, supportive, and harmonious school environment conducive to learning and overall school success.

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