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Original Research Article

The Influence of Collaborating Strategy in Improving Employees' Performance in Insurance Companies in Homa Bay County, Kenya

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Abstract: Research in organizational conflict and its management has gained much currency in contemporary times. Accordingly, this study evaluates the influence of collaborating strategy in improving employees' performance in insurances companies in Homa Bay County Kenya. The study anchored in the Group Conflict Process Theory developed by Robbins. Descriptive research design was adopted. Stratified sampling was used to classify employees then census sampling used to select 4 branch manager, 4 branch administrator, and 29 unit managers. Proportionate and simple random sampling was used to select 140 financial advisors. Reliability of the self- administered questionnaire was tested using Cronbach Alpha. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study concluded that there was a positive relationship between collaborating strategy and employee performance. The study recommends that managers should apply collaborating strategies such as integrating manager's ideas with those of subordinates to come up with a decision jointly.

Keywords: Conflict, Collaborating, Employee, Performance

Introduction

Employee performance has been affected by constant conflicts in organizations hence low productivity and poor economy of many countries Kenya included (Rivers, 2005). This has created the need to improve employee's performance as part of efforts to enhance achievement of goals and objectives in organizations (Purkayastha & Chaudhari, 2011). In order to achieve employee performance there is need to align the organizational conflict management strategies with employees' agreed measures, skills, competency requirements, development plans and the delivery of results. Although performance has been traditionally conceptualized in terms of financial measures, some scholars have proposed broader performance construct that incorporate non-financial measures including integration, obligation, among others (Purkayastha & Chaudhari, 2011).

Organizations be it public or private, small or big exist essentially to achieve certain economic, social or political objectives. These objectives may be in form of profit making, provision of services, production of goods and increase in sales turnover. However, these objectives can only be achieved when human resources are employed to utilize other resources such as raw materials, machineries, money and information (Šlaus & Jacobs, 2011). Organizations are made up of different people with different attitude, beliefs, abilities and personality, therefore conflict is inevitable. There is no organization that can effectively carry out its day to day activities without encountering some form of conflict. Therefore, conflict is the commonest, general and wide-spread phenomenon that is synonymous with group activity and interaction. According to Uwa (2014), conflict cannot be completely dissociated from human beings and their endeavors, be it group or organization. This means that conflict is a "necessary evil" that one cannot do without.

In Britain the Blooming Clothing was closed because its 150 employees couldn't g*et al*ong with one another and this affected the company production and output. During the final meeting with the Company's board of directors, some of the members pointed that they did not have an economic problem, they had a personality problem, and they hated each other. This shows how dysfunctional conflict can destroy an organization. In Portugal the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) method of solving conflict is still at the embryonic stage, especially when compared with other European Countries and countries of the common law system (Hopt & Steffek, 2012). According to Hopt and Steffek (2012) in the last decades there has been an exponential rise in the

In Nigeria Abolo and Oguntoye (2015) asserts that conflict in Organizations is inevitable given the wide range of goals existing in organizations. Sectors such as education, insurance and banking sectors have experienced different types of conflicts (internal and external). These conflicts may have had effects on the work effectiveness of staff resulting in low morale, inaction, frustration, lack of commitment and low productivity. The incessant conflicts resulting in strikes and closure of revolve round the non-implementation of agreements. Unresolved conflicts in the organization seem to have resulted in serious consequences on staff effectiveness such as employee low turnover, low morale, reduced productivity, quality problems, reduced collaboration, passive/aggressive behavior, inefficient management credibility, negative upward attention and distrust (Cram & MacWilliams, 2011).

Over the years, Kenya has been faced with conflicts over employees' management and performance among others. The existing legal and institutional mechanisms that are in place to deal with such conflicts have not offered much in stemming the prevalence of conflicts (Momanyi, 2016). Organization conflict therefore in Kenya is still present and a cause of much concern. Some of the dispute resolution mechanisms have not been very effective in resolving or managing conflicts. Courts, for instance, are formal, inflexible, bureaucratic and expensive to access. They address strict legal rights rather than the interest of the parties. The court system is adversarial in nature with limited room for negotiation and agreement on issues of interest to the parties. There is on the other hand what is commonly referred to as Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods. They include mediation, conciliation, negotiation and traditional/community based dispute resolution mechanisms. These are yet to be fully utilized to be realized.

In her studies on how conflict management strategies affect employee satisfaction in Nairobi, Momanyi (2016) asserted that managing workplace conflict was one of the most difficult business challenges facing today's managers. The study found that organization faced the challenge of personal differences, challenge of different faith and culture, challenge of changing environment (globalization and technology), different ways of conflict management, challenge of critical skills associated with handling difficult people and situations, challenge of competition over scarce resources, the challenge of creating structural for consensus processes, challenge of cooperative discourse and the challenge of change.

In Homa Bay, insurance companies have a culturally rich, dynamic and diverse workforce comprising a variety of personalities who are in competition within themselves and eternally with the outside market to gain a competitive edge in the Insurance sector. Cases of conflict have therefore been observed as teams are constantly in competition to meet and surpass targets (Pioneer Assurance Kenya, 2016). It is therefore imperative that conflict is managed so that the performance of the team isn't affected. While studies have shown that the strategies of negotiation, compromise, collaborating third party intervention and communication have worked in organizations globally and regionally, insurance companies in Homa Bay have not been subjected to such a study.

Since employees are the key players in a conflict situation, conflict strategies, while at the same time form the key resources in driving performance; Pioneer Assurance Company, Madison Insurance Company, Britam and Cooperative Insurance Company (CIC) therefore provides a good basis to ascertain the influence of conflict management strategies on organization performance. It is against this backdrop that this study evaluated the influence of collaborating conflict management strategy on employees' performance in insurance companies in Homa Bay County.

Literature Review

Conflict management strategies refer to the internal mechanisms used by the various authorities in resolving conflict. Saldana (2013) conceptualizes conflict as a form of socialization. Saldana points that personalities and role preferences are key in organizations' actions and policies. Conversely, there will arise conflict when the desired course of action is impossible to be translated to action. From this we find Bens (1997) assertion that animosity created as a result of unmet desires and the efforts put in by people in the organization results into conflict. Several empirical studies have been discussed under the following sub sections.

Empirical literature cited in Song, Jeffrey and Dyer (2006) research on "conflict management and performance" explores the effect of conflict on performance as having incongruous findings. The study concluded that there was a significant negative correlation between conflict and group productivity, the quality of decision making, and firm performance. Further studies suggested that conflict in top management teams can improve decision quality, while hurting group consensus and acceptance. Still other researchers propose that moderate levels of conflict result in the best performance outcomes or consequences. Song et., (2006) points out in a study on Conflict Management and Innovation Performance that the integrating conflict-handling strategy—also called win-win, collaborative, cooperative, and positive sum involves a high concern for self and others and is an approach in which the conflict participant attempts to satisfy both sides' needs and wants to the highest degree possible. The study cites Prein (1984), who suggested that this strategy involves an open exchange of information in which participants bring issues into the open, investigate them thoroughly, encourage the expression of thoughts and feelings, and use any information gained to maximize the benefits to both parties.

Among the organization conflict management strategies, studies appear to favor the use of collaborative style in relation to employee performance due to its generation of higher quality decisions. Descriptive research design findings by Pološki and Sontor (2009) on "Conflict Management Styles in Croatian Enterprises – The Relationship between Individual Characteristics and Conflict Handling Styles" suggests that, since there is typically less emphasis in modern business on competitive negotiation and more on inter organizational relationships, it is not surprising to find that the most valued conflict management strategy in business is collaboration. Collaborating is the only conflict management style that considers the interests of both parties and focuses on mutual gains, and it is therefore argued that this style produces superior outcomes in employee performance with more open exchange of information and a higher level of satisfaction through exploring the conflict issues more comprehensively.

Further research by Dee, Henkin, and Holman (2004) points that collaboration entails several cadres that comprise self and other contributors of a project, and managers. These cadre as the strategy show opts for approaches where disagreements and role conflicts are settled down through collaborative means. Leung *et al.* (2005) found that collaboration strategy was positively correlated with the level of satisfaction which is a key indicator of employee performance of team members. Paul, Samarah, Seetharaman, and Mykytyn (2004) studies indicated that this strategy is pivotal in improving organization performance in teams which are diverse in social cultural set up. Additionally, collaboration among team members was central to enhance the degree of agreement, perceived decision quality, and satisfaction with the decision process. Collaboration approach was also found to positively boost team cohesiveness and team effectiveness when used to deal with task conflicts (Liu *et al.*, 2009).

However, although it may seem that collaboration is the superior style and thus the most appropriate in all circumstances, there may be situations in which it is not in the best of interest of either party to use that style. To be precise, no single style of conflict handling is always appropriate. In any given situation a particular mode of handling conflict may be more suitable than others. In other words, context seems to play an integral part in conflict management, which indicates that the choice of conflict style or strategy should be situationally dependent. Therefore, many scholars suggest a situational/contingency approach to handling conflicts, which argues that the appropriateness of using a particular style depends on the conflict situation (Delerue, 2005).

Methodology

The study used descriptive design. According to Cohen and Manion (2002) this design gathers data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing condition or identifying conditions against which the condition can be compared or determined, and the relationship which exists between specific events. The design was opted for because of its strengths as it involved gathering information from the Insurance Companies, direct quotation from the respondents. This design was good in obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data with regard to conflict management strategies and employees' performance. The study focused on the Pioneer Assurance Company, Madison Insurance Company, Britam Insurance Company and Co-operative Insurance Company consisting of 4 branch managers, 4 branch administrator, 29 unit managers and 282 financial advisors. The questionnaire was used to obtain data from the four Insurance Companies. A five point likert scale was used in the structured questions. The questionnaire aimed to gather information from the Branch Manager, Branch Administrator, Unit Managers and Financial advisors. The questionnaire was appropriate because the respondent cannot be subjected to intimidation.

The instruments were piloted and this was conducted in Pioneer Assurance Company and Madison Insurance Company in Kisumu. A pilot study is justified for its importance in shaping future research (Creswell, 2011). A sample of 17 respondents were utilized for the piloting. According to Connelly (2008), a pilot study sample should be 10% (10% of 177) of the sample projected for the larger parent study. Validity is the accuracy and meanings of inferences, which are based on the research results. According to Kumar (2011) validity of the instruments means the degree to which the instruments are used to measure what they intended to measure. The relevant validity in this case was content validity. Content validity deals with the representativeness of the items in a data collection instrument. In order to improve content validity and face validity of the study, the researcher read a wide range of literature on the research topic to be able to have an all-inclusive items related to the study in the research instrument. Creswell (2011) also suggests that what is valid in interview research is the degree to which it illuminates what it claims to inform, what credibly captures and portrays the meaning and significance of representative participants' perspectives on set of events and experience. Creswell (2011) noted the importance of participants rechecking the data and the interpreted meanings as this contributes to validity of those evidences. Respondent feedback is also important to prove how well the interpretations fit their lived experience. This allows participants a stronger voice in how they are presented.

Reliability refers to the extent to which a research instrument yields measures that are consistent each time it is administered to the same individual (Kumar, 2011). A measuring instrument is reliable if it provides consistent results or data after repeated trials (Singh, 2007). The instruments were administered to Pioneer Assurance Company and Madison Insurance Company in Kisumu. The researcher then used the split- half technique to measure reliability of the questionnaires. This technique is designed to correlate half of the items with the other half (Kumar, 2011). The scores obtained by administering the two halves were then correlated (Singh, 2007). Reliability was calculated by using the Cronbach alpha coefficient. A correlation coefficient of > 0.8 was acceptable (Kumar, 2011).

The study used descriptive and inferential data analysis methods. Qualitative data from open ended question in form of words and phrases were transcribed and then arranged as per the emerging themes. This involved the following: the recorded data from the open ended questions were sorted first for completeness. Editing was done. The data was then coded as per the emerging theme. The researcher then transcribed the emerging themes and gave the interpretations. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively and inferentially. In descriptive data, information was collected from the questionnaires arranged and sorted out. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics that included means, standard deviation, frequencies and percentage. This was done using computer packages statistical package for social sciences (SPSS version 23). Tables, pie charts, bar graphs and histograms were used to present descriptive data.

Results

Influence of Collaborating Strategy In Improving Employees' Performance

The research objective was to establish the influence of collaborating strategy in improving employees' performance in insurance companies in Homa Bay County, Kenya. The findings are presented in the following sections

Collaborating as a Strategy in Organization Conflict Management

The researcher made attempts to gather information from respondents on how the insurance companies were utilizing this strategy. The responses are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Collaborating as a Strategy in Organization Conflict Management

	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Always		Mean	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
the manager is free to integrate my ideas with those of my subordinates to come up with a decision jointly	19	14.1	49	36.3	20	14.8			47	34.8	3.0519	1.5
The manager is free in working with subordinates to find a solution to a problem that satisfies our expectation	49	36.3	19	14.1	2	1.5	57	42.2	8	5.9	2.6741	1.5
The manager is free to collaborate with subordinates to come up with decisions acceptable to us	49	36.3	2	1.5			19	14.1	65	48.1	3.3778	1.8
The manager is free to consider various issues, bargain, use negotiations, and searching for solutions that bring some degree of satisfaction to both parties	49	36.3			2	1.5	42	31.3	42	31.1	3.2074	1.72815

N/B 1 =never, 2 = rarely, 3=sometimes, 4 =often, 5 = always

Various indicators on the collaborating strategy as indicated in Table 1 showed that managers as shown by 19 (14.1%) respondents are never free to integrate subordinates ideas with those of others to come up with a decision jointly whenever conflict arises in the insurances companies sampled, 49 (36.3%) respondents indicated rarely, 20 (14.8%) indicated sometimes while 47 (34.8%) respondents indicated always (mean 3.0519 Standard deviation ±1.5). This findings indicates that majority of the respondents felt that the manager integrates subordinates ideas to solve conflicts. This finding is in line with Song, Jeffrey and Dyer (2006) conclusions in a study on Conflict Management and Innovation Performance that the integrating conflict-handling strategy—also called win-win, collaborative, cooperative, and positive sum involves a high concern for self and others and is an approach in which the conflict participant attempts to satisfy both sides' needs and wants to the highest degree possible.

Finding in Table 1 shows that managers as shown by 49 (36.3%) respondents are never free to work with subordinates to find a solution to a problem that satisfies subordinates expectations, 19 (14.1%) respondents indicated rarely, 2 (1.5%) respondents indicated sometimes, 57 (42.2%) indicated often while 8 (5.9%) respondents indicated always (mean 2.6741 Standard deviation ±1.5). This findings shows that majority of managers do collaborate freely with subordinates in times of conflict to satisfy everyone expectations. Further findings in Table 4.9 indicate that managers as shown by 49 (36.3%) respondents are never free to collaborate with subordinates to come up with decisions acceptable to subordinates, 2 (1.5%) indicated rarely, 19 indicated often while 65 (48.1%) indicated always (mean 3.3778 Standard deviation ±1.8). Findings reveal that unlike the preceding indicators managers embraced this strategy in resolving conflicts. Dee, Henkin, and Holman (2004) points that collaboration entails several cadres that comprise self and other contributors of a project, and managers. These cadre as the strategy show opts for approaches where disagreements and role conflicts are settled down through collaborative means

Lastly the findings in Table 1 indicates that managers as shown by 49 (36.3%) respondents are never free to consider various issues, bargain, use negotiations, and search for solutions that bring some degree of satisfaction to both parties, 2 (1.5%) indicated sometimes, 42 (31.1%) indicated often while 42 (31.1%) respondents indicated always (mean 3.2074 Standard deviation ±1.72815). These findings give credence to managers using this strategy in the sampled companies in relation to resolving conflicts.

Perception on Collaborating Strategy on Employee Performance

Data on the influence of collaborating strategy on improving employees' performance in insurance companies in Homa Bay County was researched on. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Perception on Collaborating Strategy on Employee Performance

	Very much		Much		Neutral		Little		Very little		Mean	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Integrating managers ideas with those of subordinates to come up with a decision jointly	21	15.6	103	76.3	11	8.1					1.9259	0.48
working with subordinates to find a solution to a problem that satisfies our expectation	31	23	53	39.3	51	37.8					2.1481	0.768
Collaborating with subordinates to come up with decisions acceptable to all	46	34.1	27	20	51	37.8	1	0.7	10	7.4	2.2741	1.16176

N/B 1 = very much, 2 = much, 3 = neutral, 4 = little, 5 = very little

Findings in Table 2 indicate that 21 (15.6%) of the respondents felt that integrating managers ideas with those of subordinates to come up with a decision jointly as a way of resolving conflict influences employee performance very much, 103 (76.3%) respondents indicated much while 11 (8.1%) respondents were undecided (mean 1.9259 Standard deviation ±0.48). As the findings indicate integrating ideas has a major influence on employee performance as shown by the perception of many respondents. Further finding in Table 2 indicate that 31 (23%) of the respondents felt that working with subordinates to find a solution to a problem that satisfies subordinates expectation may influence very much employee performance, 53 (39.3%) indicated much while 51 (37.8%) were undecided (mean 2.1481 Standard deviation ±0.768). This finding indicates that working with subordinates to find a solution may influence employee performance.

Lastly findings in Table 2 indicate that 46 (34.1%) of the respondents felt that Collaborating with subordinates to come up with decisions acceptable to all may influence employee performance very much, 27 (20%) respondents indicated much, 51 (37.8%) were undecided, 1 (1.7%) indicated little, while 10 (7.4%) indicated very little (mean 2.2741 Standard deviation ±1.16176). This finding shows that collaboration between managers and subordinates may influence employee performance. This finding is in line with Liu, *et al*., (2009) assertion on collaboration concerning team members that it is key enhancing degree of agreement, perceived decision quality, and satisfaction. Liu study concludes that collaboration approach positively boosts team cohesiveness and team effectiveness when used to deal with task conflicts (Liu *et al*., 2009).

However, literature indicate that, although it may seem that collaboration is the superior style and thus the most appropriate in all circumstances, there may be situations in which it is not in the best of interest of either party to use that style. This implies that, no single style of conflict handling is always appropriate. In any given situation a particular mode of handling conflict may be more suitable than others. In other words, context seems to play an integral part in conflict management, which indicates that the choice of conflict style or strategy should be situationally dependent. Therefore, many scholars suggest a situational/contingency approach to handling conflicts, which argues that the appropriateness of using a particular style depends on the conflict situation (Delerue, 2005).

Inferential Statistics

Correlation Analysis

Pearson's product correlation coefficient was applied to check whether there is linear relationship between the variables. The correlation shown in the Table 3 below presents bivariate correlations between the study variables (collaborating strategy and employee performance.

Table 3: Correlations Analysis between the Dependent and Independent Variables

Correlations			
		Performance	compromising
Pearson Correlation	performance	1.000	.625
	Collaborating	.625	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	performance	.	.001
	Collaborating	.001	.
N	performance	135	135
	Collaborating	135	135

** Correlation is significant at 0.000 level (2 - tailed)

From the Table 3 the collaborating conflict management strategy was positively and statistically significant ($r = 0.625$, $p < 0.00$). This implies that the study variables compromising conflict management strategy were correlated to employee performance. Empirical literature cited in Song, Jeffrey and Dyer (2006) research on conflict management and performance explores the effect of conflict on performance as having incongruous findings. Akanji (2005) opined that constructively managed conflict induces a positive performance, while destructively managed conflict heats up the work environment to bring about dislocation and polarization of the entire group with reduction in productivity and job performance

Additional previous findings employing Spearman correlation analysis, in a study done by Longe (2015) on the Impact of "Workplace Conflict Management on Organizational Performance: A Case of Nigerian Manufacturing Firm", showed a significantly positive relationship between conflict management strategy (compromise, and accommodation) and organizational performance

Simple Linear Regression

The simple linear regressions enable the researcher to predict and weight the relationship between the independent variable which is an explanatory variable and the dependent variable which is the explained variable. The Beta weightings (β) gives an indication of how many standard deviation units will be changed in the dependent variable for each standard deviation unit change in each of the independent variable. In a simple linear regression analysis, there is one independent variable and one dependent variable and the predictor equation is presented as;

$$\mathbf{Y = a + \beta x + \varepsilon}$$

Where y is the dependent variable and x is the independent variable in the study. The value for *a* is more or less an intercept at the vertical axis and the **β** is the partial regression coefficients. **β** represents the amount of change in y for a unit change in the corresponding *x* value

The linear regression coefficient is shown in Table 4

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Analysis Model

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics: R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.625[a]	.391	.386	2.26227	.391	85.384	1	133	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Compromising
b. Dependent Variable: Performance

As shown in Table 4, the R value was 0.625. R is a measure of correlation between the observed value and the predicted value of the dependent variable. Thus, 0.625 is the correlation coefficient between the levels of employee performance in insurance companies in Homa Bay County as reported by the respondents and the levels as would be predicted by the predictor variable. In the model R^2 x 100 = .391 x 100% = 39.1 % indicating that 39.1 % of the variance in the independent variable is explained by the independent variable in the study. The R-square value indicates that this model succeeds in predicting up to 39.1% of the variables in employee performance in insurance company. Up to 39.1 % of the variation seen in the area under study is accounted for by collaborating strategy.

The adjusted R^2 indicates the percentage of variation explained by only the independent variable that actually affect the dependent variable. The adjusted R square as shown in the model was adjusted R^2 x 100 = .386 x 100 = 38.6%. This implies that the independent variable accounted for 38.6% variation in the dependent variable without any interference. Because the adjusted R square was not below zero it means that the model is a good fit.

Table 5: Presents the ANOVA output analysis.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	436.982	1	436.982	85.384	.000[b]
	Residual	680.677	133	5.118		
	Total	1117.659	134			

a. Dependent Variable: PERFORMANCE
b. Predictors: (Constant), COLLABORATING

Similarly, the ANOVA analysis is highly significant (0.000) indicating that the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable is very strong. The table assesses the overall significance of the model and since $P < 0.05$; the simple linear regression model adopted in this study is relevant for the analysis. The ANOVA results of the linear regression analysis show that the regression equation is statistically appropriate to examine the relationship ($F = 85.384$; df = 1; $p = 0.000$) at 0.05 level of significance. The model summary showed that the model can explain 39.1 % variation in employee performance that was occasioned by any changes in the collaborating strategies.

Linear Regression Coefficient for the analysis is represented in Table 6

Table 6: The Coefficients

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients: B	Unstandardized Coefficients: Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients: Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.378	.470		2.935	.004
	compromising	1.851	.200	.625	9.240	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Performance

The simple linear regression analysis was conducted so as to determine the relationship between collaborating strategy and employee performance. The equation

$Y=\alpha+\beta X+$ ε generated before therefore become:
Y = 1.378 + 1.851

Where Y is the dependent variable (employee performance), X is collaborating strategy. According to the regression equation established, taking all other factors into account (collaborating strategy) constant at zero, employee performance will be 1.378. The data findings analyzed also show that taking all other independent variable at zero, a unit increase in collaborating strategy will lead to a 1.851

increase in employee performance. Since there is a significant relationship between collaborating management strategy and employee performance the researcher therefore concludes that the null hypothesis be rejected.

Test of Hypothesis

The study used a linear multiple regression analysis so as to test the relationship among independent variable (collaborating strategy) on dependent variable (employee performance). The statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was applied to code, enter and compute the measurements of the simple linear regressions for the study. The null hypothesis was to be rejected at a $p < 0.05$ significance level using the simple regression analysis. The details are as follows; The hypothesis (H_{o1}) stated that there is no significant influence between collaborating strategy and employee performance in insurance companies in Homa Bay County. However findings in Table 6 showed that collaborating strategy has a positive and significant influence on employee performance in insurance companies in Homa Bay County ($\beta = .625$, $P < 0.05$). Thus the hypothesis (H_{o1}) was rejected and this can be explained further by assessing the value of the t – test which indicated that employee performance would be attributed to the regression model 9 times more compared to the effect of the standard error associated with the estimated coefficient ($t = 9.24$). Findings from the ANOVA showed that the sum of squares for the regression model was 1117.659 this means that the linear regression model accounted for more than 1117.659 times the variation of employee performance compared to the residuals, F- value 85.384, P value = 0.000

Discussions

Findings indicates that majority of the respondents felt that the manager integrates subordinates ideas to solve conflicts. This finding is in line with Song, Jeffrey and Dyer (2006) conclusions in a study on Conflict Management and Innovation Performance that the integrating conflict-handling strategy—also called win-win, collaborative, cooperative, and positive sum involves a high concern for self and others and is an approach in which the conflict participant attempts to satisfy both sides' needs and wants to the highest degree possible.

Findings further revealed that unlike the preceding indicators managers embraced this strategy in resolving conflicts. Dee, Henkin, and Holman (2004) points that collaboration entails several cadres that comprise self and other contributors of a project, and managers. These cadre as the strategy show opts for approaches where disagreements and role conflicts are settled down through collaborative means.

Table 2 indicated that collaboration between managers and subordinates may influence employee performance. This finding is in line with Liu, *et al*., (2009) assertion on collaboration concerning team members that it is key enhancing degree of agreement, perceived decision quality, and satisfaction. Liu study concludes that collaboration approach positively boosts team cohesiveness and team effectiveness when used to deal with task conflicts (Liu *et al*., 2009).

However, literature indicate that, although it may seem that collaboration is the superior style and thus the most appropriate in all circumstances, there may be situations in which it is not in the best of interest of either party to use that style. This implies that, no single style of conflict handling is always appropriate. In any given situation a particular mode of handling conflict may be more suitable than others. In other words, context seems to play an integral part in conflict management, which indicates that the choice of conflict style or strategy should be situationally dependent. Therefore, many scholars suggest a situational/contingency approach to handling conflicts, which argues that the appropriateness of using a particular style depends on the conflict situation (Delerue, 2005).

The collaborating conflict management strategy was positively and statistically significant ($r = 0.625$, $p < 0.00$). This implies that the study variable collaborating conflict management strategy was correlated to employee performance. Empirical literature cited in Song, Jeffrey and Dyer (2006) research on conflict management and performance explores the effect of conflict on performance as having incongruous findings. Longe (2015) opined that constructively managed conflict induces a positive performance, while destructively managed conflict heats up the work environment to bring about dislocation and polarization of the entire group with reduction in productivity and job performance

Additional previous findings employing Spearman correlation analysis, in a study done by Longe (2015) on the Impact of "Workplace Conflict Management on Organizational Performance: A Case of Nigerian Manufacturing Firm", showed a significantly positive relationship between conflict management strategy (compromise, and accommodation) and organizational performance.

Implication to Research and Practice

Based on this research, managers should apply collaborating strategies such as collaborating with subordinates to come up with decisions acceptable to all, working with subordinates to find a solution to a problem that satisfies our expectation and integrating manager's ideas with those of subordinates to come up with a decision jointly

Cconclusion

Based on the findings accommodating strategy was found to have a positive and significant influence on employee performance in insurance companies in Homa Bay County. Thus the hypothesis (H_{o1}) was rejected. In addition the accommodation strategy had the strongest positive influence on the status of employee performance (β = 0.482), and that this is statistically significant. accommodating the wishes of subordinates, bringing all subordinates concerns in the open so that issues can be resolved in the best possible way, working with subordinates for a proper understanding of a problem, going along with the suggestion of subordinates, exchanging accurate information with subordinates to solve a problem together, working with subordinates to find a solution that satisfies their expectations may influence employee performance though in different proportion.

Based on the findings compromising strategy was found to have a positive and significant influence on employee performance in insurance companies in Homa Bay County. Thus the hypothesis (H_{o2}) was rejected. The independent variable compromising strategy had the least effect on employee performance (β = 0.110) but that this is statistically significant. It can be concluded that finding a middle ground as a way of resolving an impasse, giving in to wishes of subordinates, allowing concessions to subordinates, purposing a middle ground for breaking deadlocks, negotiating with subordinates so that a compromise can be reached, going along with the suggestion of subordinates and giving and taking so that compromise can be made may influence employee performance although in different proportions.

Based on the findings collaborating strategy was found to have a positive and significant influence on employee performance in insurance companies in Homa Bay County. Thus the hypothesis (H_{o3}) was rejected. The collaborating strategy (β = 0.347) had the second most influence on employee performance. Therefore it can be concluded that, integrating managers ideas with those of subordinates to come up with a decision jointly as a way of resolving conflict, working with subordinates to find a solution to a problem that satisfies subordinates expectation and collaborating with subordinates to come up with decisions acceptable to all may influence employee performance. However, findings indicated that, although it may seem that collaboration is the superior style and thus the most appropriate in all circumstances, there may be situations in which it is not in the best of interest of either party to use that style.

Based on the findings competing strategy was found to have a positive and significant influence on employee performance in insurance companies in Homa Bay County. Thus the hypothesis (H_{o4}) was rejected. The competing strategy (β = 0.201) had the third most influence on employee performance. Therefore it can be concluded that using managers influence to get subordinates ideas accepted, using power to win a competitive situation, using managers expertise to make a decision in subordinate favour, using authority to make a decision in subordinate favor, attempting to avoid being put on the spot and trying to keep your (managers) conflict with your subordinates to yourself (manager), holding on to a solution to a problem and firmness in pursuing an issue may influence employee performance in different proportions.

Future Research

During the research it was noted that, only few studies exist that attempt to address conflict management strategies and employee performance in Kenya. In view of this the following are recommended for further research.

i. Further studies should focus on other levels of management as the present study was focused on top middle and bottom level management setting. Other levels involving government ministry and executive board of directors should be investigated.
ii. Further studies should be done to establish the correlation between internal and external conflict affecting insurance companies and their impact on employee performance.

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