



Vol. 2, Iss. 1 (2021), pp 46 – 57, March 16 2021. [www.reviewedjournals.com](http://www.reviewedjournals.com), ©Reviewed Journals

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## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND INDUSTRIAL HARMONY: A THEORETICAL REVIEW OF UNIVERSITIES IN KENYA

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Accepted: February 14, 2021

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### ABSTRACT

*Conflict is a necessary aspect of organizational life. Its presence at the workplace infuses innovation and creative mindset in people through diversity of constructive opinions and criticisms. Although some theories support its encouragement while others condemns it. Given today's new business order which promote and advocates collective participation in decision making, the need for constructive conflict becomes even more than necessary. It was in regard that this study theoretically reviewed the contributory influence of conflict management strategies as a precursor for enthronement of industrial harmony in contemporary workplaces with emphasis on universities in Kenya. The study reviewed extant literature on the meaning and nature of all the study variables of study and discovered that no organization irrespective of the kind of business or industry they are in can progress effectively without giving room for constructive conflict to thrive while managing the destructive aspects using appropriate strategies such as compromise, collaboration and accommodation where necessary. Therefore we concluded when an organization promotes constructive conflict, it fosters innovation and creativity through diversity of opinions. On the other hand, when dysfunctional conflict is properly managed, it promotes industrial harmony among the members of the organization and also serves as bedrock of a successful entrepreneurial venture. Finally, we recommend that: that Management of tertiary institutions should try as much as possible to discourage destructive conflict while promoting constructive conflict. That in the event of any conflict situation, management should be responsive enough to arrest it objectively with appropriate strategies such as compromise, collaboration and accommodation to avoid turning the organization to a breeding ground for various deviant workplace behavior like sabotage, strike and alienations as result of disharmony.*

**Key word:** Conflict, theories, management, strategies, industrial harmony

## **INTRODUCTION**

Drawing from the multiplicity of empirical and theoretical investigations in organizational behavior literature, many scholars and management practitioners have acknowledged the indispensability of the human aspect of organizational resources. For instance Tamunomiebi and Wobodo (2018) reiterated that amid all organizational resources, the employees still remains the life blood of the organization as its success or failure depends largely on their performance and commitment to its mission. However, the implication of this is that the employees can make or mar the organization's mission depending on how they perceive their policies and practices especially in relation to organizational justice. Therefore, when an organization's policies and practices are anchored on the principles of justice, equity and fairness among its stakeholders, such environment is perceived as a breeding ground for industrial harmony. Industrial harmony within organizations is considered very paramount for employees' success at work and other aspects of life; and fosters synergy which is critical to task accomplishment and stability in life (Yusuf-Habeeb&Kazeem, 2017).

This attention became necessary according to Osamwonyi and Ugiagbe (2013) who observed that in Nigeria many organizations are faced with unabated industrial conflicts caused by inefficient management styles and lack of leadership skills as well as strained relationship between management and labor union representatives. Similarly, Nworgu (2005) cautioned that lack of quality leadership skills is likely to instigate industrial disharmony or standoff between administrators, managers and labor. Furthermore, Iheriohanma (2007) revealed that management practice of exclusionism, neglect of power sharing mechanism which ensures partnership amongst stakeholders in the workplace and derogation of organizational communication pattern will also contribute in breeding disharmony and conflict in contemporary workplaces. More so, where this situation persists, it may slide the organization into early entropy; given the position of Yusuf-Habeeb and Kazeem (2017) that conflict has taken a precarious dimension in Nigeria and as a matter of necessity requires cogent approach towards its proper management and transformation as essentials for peace and progress in the workplace while Nwokocha (2015) pointed out that productivity in most organizations has comparatively been hindered due to frequent industrial conflict.

### **The Meaning and Nature of Conflict**

The concept of conflict management has been acknowledged as a veritable approach to solving organizational problems be it intra-organizational or inter-organizational. Managing conflict has become a necessary managerial phenomenon because of the diversity-driven nature of contemporary workplaces whereby people from different divides in terms of religion, gender, profession, age, generational class, personality, values etc. come together to achieve a set goal. Given the enormity of surface and deep level diversities between individuals, people are bound to behave and respond to issues and events differently even in manners that may likely affect other people around them and most times without their knowledge, or deliberately as a result of clash of interests, thereby leading to conflict. This view is further buttressed in Sims (2002) that conflicts within organizations usually emanate as a result of incompatible goals or disagreement among individuals and groups. Also, Mullins and Christy (2013) maintain that conflict is a behavior projected to obstruct the achievement of some other person's plans. Again, Keritner and Kinicki (2010) define conflict as a process in which one party perceives that its interest is being opposed or negatively affected by another party's action. Similarly, Osabuohien and Ogunrinola (2007) related industrial conflict to inadequacy or absence of industrial peace in the workplace. This includes any form of work dissatisfaction that can manifest in several ways; like absenteeism, strike, high turnover, sabotage, amongst others.

However, irrespective of the surface misconception that conflict is such a dangerous phenomenon, empirical discoveries show that not all conflict situations are bad; hence some are considered indispensable for

organizational wellbeing. This is as Pinkley (1999) contends that conflict has many perspectives to it; it could be positive on one hand and negative on the other hand (Amason, 1996). Therefore, organizational conflict can manifest in the form of functional and dysfunctional conflict. When functional conflict occurs within group or team, it is considered to be creativity, innovation, and team building driven; which means that the emergence of functional conflict within teams and groups bring about healthy and constructive criticisms, suggestions and competitions geared towards improving one another's skills and in the long run achieve better group productivity and performance. It is usually achieved through diversity of opinions that help teams to identify new ways of solving problems and handling issues (Lepsinger, 2018). Robins et al., (2011) corroborated this assertion hence, they maintained that functional conflicts are constructive and supports an organizational objectives and enhances performance outcome. Yet, Der Deru and Gelfand (2008) consider them as conflict that brings about positive result as constructive controversy. Functional conflict can also bring about information exchange, honest and free expression of opinions (Rivers, 2005).

On the other hand, while functional conflict is encouraged in the organization, dysfunctional conflict is discouraged in its entirety. This is because dysfunctional conflict is destructive and has the tendency to hinder the actualization of organizational goals. Hence, the actors in conflict engage in different forms of counter-productive work behavior like sabotage, self-preservation behaviors such as withholding of information, refusing to help others, showing lack of interest in shared goal etc. (Lepsinger, 2018). In the same manner, Olakunle (2008) maintained that conflict is dysfunctional when it absorbs organizational efforts and resources without generating anything; when it deflects attention from basic purposes, and perhaps, when it leads to actions which consciously or unconsciously sabotages and subverts primary organizational objectives. Dysfunctional conflict if not managed properly is prone to break an organization down. For instance, interdepartmental conflicts can distort resourcefulness in other departments (Maltz&Kohli, 2000); interference with another function's work by withholding information and forming of coalitions to block certain proposals (Barclay, 1991).

### **Theories of Conflict**

Studies show that there are several perspectives the concept of conflict could be examined. But to us in this study, we actually limited our focus to the following three perspectives i.e. traditionalists, human relation and interactionists view. First, from the perspective of the traditionalist, conflict is believed to be a threat to organizational survival. Also in their view, conflict has a negative impact, and leads to deteriorations in performance as the level of conflict increases (Ajike, Akinlabi, Magaji & Sonubi, 2015). Therefore they hold that conflict should be avoided at all cost as it represents a problem (Robbins, Judge, &Vohra, 2011). But in our view, the traditionalist theorists got it all wrong in their total believes that all conflicts are precarious in nature. This is because beyond dysfunctional or destructive conflict, organizations directly and indirectly benefit from functional conflict as it brings out the best in teams and groups for optimum performance. In fact, organizations build strong competitive advantage through this kind of conflict because of its tendency to instill innovation and creativity within a group or team. Therefore, managers operating within the purview of the traditionalist approach may end up leading their organization into early entropy due to inflexibility and absence of constructive suggestions.

Secondly, the human relations view; according to these theorists, conflict is seen as a natural tendency among human beings. It is considered as a non-negative phenomenon (Robbins et al., 2011). Accordingly, they maintained that its emergence may either bring good fortunes or frustrations to the firm depending on how the conflict is handled. In consonance with this observation, Rivers (2005) stated that while conflict is necessary among people, managers should also know that the hidden costs of unresolved conflict are usually enormous and as such must continuously find effective ways to manage and resolve organizational conflicts. Thirdly, the interactionist view; here the theorists proposed that conflict is not just a cohesive force in a group, they in fact,

believe that some conflict is critically non-negotiable and should be encouraged due to its propensity to improve performance. They further hold that a contemporary workplace without conflict is full of cooperation and tranquility which is likely to become static, apathetic and unresponsive to organizational survival (Robbins, et al., 2011; Singh, 2013). Therefore, they affirmed that some levels of conflict could be helpful in terms of constructive idea offerings. Consequently, in our opinion, we align with the thoughts and philosophies of the human relations and interactionist because with the wave of the current business order, driven by aggressive innovation and creativity to meet up with the constant changing customers' taste, no firm can survive without given room for functional conflict for innovation and creativity to thrive.

### **Causes of Conflict**

Conflict can arise in different situations; according to Deutch and Coleman (2006) some of the potential causes of conflict include differences in knowledge, beliefs and basic values; competition for position, power and recognition; a drive for autonomy; personal dislike; and differing perception or attributes brought about by the organizational structure, different role structure, heterogeneity of the workforce, environmental changes, differences in goals, diverse economic interest, loyalties of groups, and value discrepancies; which were all considered at various stages as major causes of conflict in organizations. Havenga (2004) indicated that the causes of conflict at the level of organization could also include resource unavailability; affirmative action programs, the scope and content of workload, the introduction of new management techniques; and differences of a cultural and racial nature. A typology that further categorizes sources of conflict is offered by Kreitner and Kinicki (2010), who differentiate between structural factors (causes) that is, those that develop from within the organization and originate from the manner in which work is organized, and secondly personal factors, which emerge as a result of individual differences among employees. Also, Robbins and Judge (2009) identified some sources and causes of conflict in organization to include: scarce resources, task dependency, communication breakdown, personality clashes and role ambiguities.

### **Levels of Conflict**

Given the endemic nature of conflict among humans, Olakunle (2008) identified six different levels of conflict as including the following: interpersonal, intra-group, intergroup, intrapersonal, intra-organizational and inter-organizational levels.

**Intra-personal Conflict:** Intra-personal conflict occurs when an individual is not at peace with himself, often involves some form of goals conflict or cognitive conflict. For instance, goal conflict occurs in individual when their behavior results in outcomes that are mutually exclusive or have incompatible elements. It is also a manifestation of a person's inability to understand role expectations especially, when such role is ambiguous.

**Interpersonal Conflict:** Interpersonal conflict refers to conflict between two or more individuals of the same or different group at the same or different level within an organization as a result of discrepancies in personality make ups, incompatibility of interest, beliefs, violation of territory etc.

**Intra-group Conflict:** Intra-group conflict focuses on conflict within the group as a whole as well as the individual members. Intra-group conflict falls into two distinct categories: substantive and affective conflicts. Substantive conflict refers to conflict based on the nature of the task or on the "content" issues. It is associated with intellectual disagreements among the group members. Affective conflict arises primarily from the group's interpersonal relations. It is associated with emotional responses aroused during interpersonal clashes (Olakunle, 2008).

**Intergroup Conflict:** Intergroup conflict focuses on conflict between two or more groups such as conflict between line and staff positions, between work groups or indeed collective conflict between labor and management (Wehrich, Cannice & Koontz, 2011). However, intergroup conflict can have negative side-effects, which can persist long after the competition is over. Therefore, managers must minimize any intergroup conflicts; and if possible, handle any conflict presence with great care.

**Intra-organizational Conflict:** This is a type of conflict situation within organization such as conflict between departments especially, when there is a perceived inequality in resource allocation, recognition, rewards etc.

**Inter-organizational Conflict:** Inter-organizational conflict according to Olakunle (2008) is a type of conflict situation between two or among organizations. This type of conflict can ensue between a franchiser and franchisee especially, when there is an observable breach of terms of contract by either party.

### **Conflict Management Strategies**

According to Rahim (2002) conflict management strategies is concerned with the adoption of effective approaches to undermine the dysfunctional implications of conflict while enhancing its functional aspect in order to improve learning and effectiveness of the organization. It is also associated with the process through which interpersonal communication is utilized to allow two conflicted parties to reach an amicable and satisfactory point of agreement (Omoluabi, 2001). Managing conflict became very important since it was spotted as an inescapable phenomenon that permeates a multitude of organizational processes and outcomes. Consequently, scholars have lined up a number of approaches and strategies to provide remedies to destructive conflict which are usually unhealthy for the organization. For instance, Thomas (1976) identified four approaches for managing conflicts as including: avoidance, accommodation, compromise and collaboration. Furthermore, Khan (2013) listed conflict management strategies as; dominance, integrating, compromising, avoiding and obliging; while Hussein, Salem Al-Mamary and Hassan (2017) utilized five dimensions namely: avoiding, compromise, forcing, problem solving (cooperation) and accommodation. Yet others use conciliation, negotiation, arbitration, mediation and litigation.

Therefore in this study, we adopted one dimension of conflict management strategies (i.e. collaboration) from the work of Thomas (1976) as well as two other dimensions (i.e. compromise and accommodation) as utilized in Hussein, Salem Al-Mamary and Hassan (2017).

### **Collaborating Strategy**

According to Salami (2009) the adoption of collaboration strategy in the management of conflict situation ranks high on both assertiveness and cooperativeness. On the other hand, Calha (2017) sees collaboration strategy as an affirmative and obliging means of conflict management which usually results in a win-win settlement. Similarly, McShane and Von Glinow (2000) added that collaboration carries the highest level of win/win orientation that brings about information sharing, openness, and clarification of issues at the point of conflict to come up with solution acceptable to both parties. In the same manner, Snell (2002) maintained that collaboration serves to maintain and strengthen work relationships for both parties. This is as it allows people in conflict to subsume their original interest and then work in synergy to achieve a common goal. Consequently, Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez and Asokere (2010) contend that effective use of collaborative strategy may result in positive work behavior and attitudes hence; it promotes cooperation and integrity in the workplace that reduces conflicts.

### **Compromising Strategy**

This strategy is characterized with negotiation and a high degree of flexibility. According to Burnside (2008) the adoption of compromising approach creates an atmosphere of win – lose outcome among the parties in conflict.

This is so because it is expected that for parties in conflict to arrive at an agreeable resolution, each party must give up something such that there is no clear winner or loser. This therefore proves that under this platform no party achieves complete satisfaction of needs and goals but provides partial satisfaction accepted by the parties concerned. In this regard, Snell (2002) added that this strategy is neither highly cooperative nor highly assertive thus resulting in satisficing rather than maximizing solutions. On the other hand, Steyn (2001) affirmed that compromising is mainly suitable when there is a balance of power between the individuals or when limited resources have to be shared, in the sense that this strategy requires achievement of balance between personal and common interests.

### **Accommodating Strategy**

This approach to conflict management is considered to be empathy driven because of its non-assertive nature. It is sometimes referred to as the smoothing strategy (Hussein, Salem Al-Mamary & Hassan, 2017). Therefore, accommodation strategy seeks to provide solution to conflict situation by neglecting one's own personal demand or interest just to satisfy the demand of the other party. Accordingly, Vigil- King (2000) asserted that the adoption of accommodation strategy in managing conflict is likely to create better results and higher commitment in individuals than teams using non-integrative conflict management approach.

### **Industrial Harmony**

The concept of industrial harmony has been reviewed by a number of management scholars using different predictor variables, for instance Puttapalli and Vuram (2012); Osad and Osas (2013) and Nwinyokpugi (2015). However, evidence from these studies showed that no organization can survive or succeed without unflinching manifestations of harmonious and peaceful coexistence between the various stakeholders ranging from the internal stakeholders i.e. employees and shareholders to the external stakeholders such as the suppliers, distributors, host communities and regulatory agencies. Industrial harmony became a phenomenon in modern business because of the rational nature of human being (employees) as well as the general notion that they are the most valued asset of the organization whose level of commitment and engagement depends on how far the management is people-oriented. This is as every employee at the workplace desires to be recognized, accepted and integrated in every aspect of their work life (Nwokocha, 2015). In the same vein, Yusuf-Habeeb and Kazeem (2017) contend that for people to progress at work and other facets of life, there must be cooperation which is crucial to ensure task accomplishment and stability in life. Given this observation, industrial harmony can be considered as the bedrock of any successful entrepreneurial venture.

Furthermore, Puttapalli and Vuram (2012) defined industrial harmony as being concerned with the mutual relationship between management team and employees in relation to the terms and conditions of employment at the workplace. It is a situation where there is healthy and cooperative working relationship between employers and employees. And as such, implies that whenever these mutual expectations are breached by either parties, industrial relations tend to be strained, ending up in industrial disharmony or conflict (Bankole, 2000); and consequently, manifests in the form of open hostility, distrust, disrespect, non-cooperation and avoidance of interaction (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013). However, in order to mitigate or probably avert this scenario, Akpoyovwaire (2013) contends that people at the helm of affairs (management staff) must have the prerequisite knowledge and authority to execute their responsibilities objectively without fair or favor; they must ensure that the task structure of each employee group is properly defined in such a way that it leaves no room for role ambiguity; that employers of labor should synergize with trade union representatives in the development of effective procedures for negotiation of terms and conditions of employment and for settlement of disputes.

### **Measures of Industrial Harmony**

### **Absence of Strike**

In view of the modern day business operational pattern, one of the most widely used approach by employees to express their grievance and dissatisfaction towards employers is through strike (industrial action). This action is geared towards passing a message to the management that there is something they are not doing well in relation to employee welfare schemes. Just as Yusuf-Habeeb and Kazeem (2017) affirm that workers may protest against the activities of their organization if they perceive any form of unfair treatment or any unethical conduct against labor law. To this end, Singh (2013) defined strike as the stoppage of work activities in an organization or industry by workers who act in group in pursuit of a common agenda. Drawing from this definition, we can see that industrial action is not a good phenomenon for any organization because rather than enthrone peaceful and harmonious work relationship between employers and employees, it strains it. Hence, strikes could lead to temporary gains for the aggrieved, while the organization may suffer loss in output and profitability in the long run if the strike is prolonged. Therefore, it is through the absence of strike that employers and employees can work cooperatively in pursuit of a common goal without unnecessary stoppage or sabotage of work.

### **Mutual Trust**

Bearing in mind that both employers and employees are primary stakeholders within the organization with incompatible interests that can only be achieved through synergy, the issue of trust becomes a necessary tool for improved commitment of each party in fulfillment of their obligations. Mutual trust is considered paramount in building and sustaining industrial harmony because of the interdependent nature of employer-employee relationships. This view was made clearer in Armstrong (2009) where mutual trust is considered as a positive employment relationship which acknowledges the interdependency of employers and employees and from which both parties accomplish their individual goals. Also, Lewis (1999) positioned that mutual trust is a shared belief that one can rely on each other to achieve a laid out goal for the benefit of all involved. These assertions explain why mutual trust is seen as an essential element in social and business relationships in relation to their activities (Shittu & Adedokun- Shittu, 2011; Gefen, 2002).

### **Employee Participation**

Employee participation is viewed as one of the most critical leadership approach that stimulates the employees' energy towards goal achievement. Literature exploration showed that the adoption of participative management behavior is primarily to attain commitment and ownership of decisions democratically. In fact, it creates a platform that sincerely engages the employees without coercion. From Sapru (2013) point of view, employee participation is a leadership behavior in which the leaders incorporate the followers in their decision making processes. In the same context Jaja (2013) confirmed that it is one that gives group members the prerogative to participate in decision making process. However, this allowance manifests in the form of delegation of authority, group decision making in relation to deciding work methods and goal expectations, feedback etc. Nwachukwu (1988) argued that today's workforce respond favorably to participative management in organization through increased performance, lower unit cost and improved labor management relations. And as such, brings about group cohesiveness that promotes industrial harmony in organization.

### **Relationship between Conflict Management and Industrial Harmony**

According to Yusuf-Habeeb and Kazeem (2017) industrial conflict management is a decision making towards ensuring industrial harmony. This is because according to Pearce and Robinson (2009) every organization seeks to have solid management- employee relationships hence, no organization can effectively thrive amid any form of instability emanating from conflict. Therefore, one way to establish and sustain such a cohesive relationship that drive performance is to try as much as possible to undermine the emergence of dysfunctional conflict tendencies

through the adoption of effective conflict management strategies since conflict is omnipresent in every human endeavor. This view is in synchrony with Snell (2002) who argued that there is no specific conflict management strategy to solve all industrial conflict situations but however, the adoption of any strategy should be dependent on the context. Choosing the right strategy is particularly essential because the manner in which issues of interest to individual stakeholders (government, management, students and host community etc.) is handled can either persuade or dissuade total commitment towards shared goals and in the long run affect industrial harmony. Therefore, frantic effort must be exerted to ensure that dysfunctional conflict is resolved without leaving either party frustrated.

Consequently, in our institution of focus, we discovered that due to its sector domain (public institution), they often utilize the collaboration, compromise and accommodation strategies in the event of any conflict situation. Some of the predominant level of conflict we discovered in this institution revolves more around the following area: i) intra-organizational conflict (conflict between government and employees); (conflict between departments); (conflict between management and students) in which the two parties often toll the part of compromise or accommodation to reach an acceptable resolution. ii) Interpersonal conflict (conflict between lecturers or between non-academic staff) in which the parties usually resolve through compromise and accommodation depending on the hierarchical differentiation between the parties involved. iii) Inter-group (conflict between lecturers and non-academic staff) which is normally resolved by the use of accommodation strategy.

#### **Relationship between Collaboration Strategy and Industrial Harmony**

This strategy is associated with problem solving and involves openness, sharing information, searching for alternatives and examination of differences to reach an effective solution acceptable to both parties (Rahim, 2002). On the other hand, it is concerned with partnership between parties to reach an acceptable solution to a conflict situation (Rahim & Magner, 1995). Its primary goal is to identify a creative solution that is acceptable to everyone (Dontigney, 2014); thereby preserving the existing harmonious relationship within the parties concerned. However, with respect to the institution we studied, we understood that collaboration strategy is a dominant tool used within the organization to solve problem. For instance, when the university management plans to increase tuition fee and the student protested against it what the school management did in order to resolve the conflict was to collaborate with the Student Union Government (SUG) by engaging them to carry out survey on other universities within the Niger Delta Region's tuition fee and compare their findings with what is being paid by them and then report back to the university. It was as a result of this collaboration (participative management) that SUG was able to resolve this problem without undermining industrial peace enjoyed in the university.

#### **Relationship between Compromise and Industrial Harmony**

With respect to compromising strategy, Dobkin and Pace (2006) said that compromising style can strengthen commitment among employees because it encourages them to manage conflict by collective way. Compromising is characterized by willingness of the employers/ employees to give in on some demands in return for concession from the other so that both parties are working together in cooperative method and without being selfish in negotiation and making concession. If one party achieved its needs, the other party will concede in order to achieve the goals together. According to Green and Marks (2001) compromising gives team members a better understanding of the others in the team and as a result enhances commitment among employees towards the organization. Based on researchers of organizational conflict views, employees who choose to resolve conflict through compromise and accommodation strategies tend to establish and foster cordial relationships among



employees (Likert & Likert, 1976; Rahim & Buntzman, 1989); which will result in improved industrial harmony and group performance.

In view of this, we observed in our institution of study that compromising strategy has been a viable option in solving conflict situation between the government and employees (academic and non-academic). We observed that when employees as represented by Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU) and Non-academic Staff of University (NASU) wants to express their dissatisfaction toward the employer (government) in relation to their welfare and other associated demands, they resort to overt conflict such as industrial action (strike) which may be prolonged for a given period of time depending on the responsiveness of the government. However, when government responds, due to the multiplicity of these demands in relation to their associated cost, government as riddled with corruption, insincerity and lack of commitment to improved education in the country will not be willing to oblige to all the requests before it but instead resorts to negotiation to provide some aspects of their demands while promising to provide others subsequent, thereby resulting in compromise as the best tool in resolving such conflict.

### **Accommodation Strategy and Industrial Harmony**

Of all the conflict management strategies, accommodating or harmonization strategy is viewed as the "peacekeeper" mode as it focuses more on preserving relationships than on achieving a personal goal or result (Dale, 2006). However in a dispute, this creates a lose/win relationship where the accommodating party may make a choice to concede to the needs of the other party, sometimes out of kindness and sometimes to avoid conflict or stress. "Giving in" and letting the other party "take" is the result when this choice is made. While this may be seen as a weak or non-productive position, there are situations when this approach is preferable and will gain more for a person than by taking a strong position (Dale, 2006). Therefore since organizations operate in a competitive environment characterized with conflicting interests among actors, having a good understanding of when to adopt accommodation strategy in conflict situation to mitigate imminent disruption can promote industrial harmony.

For instance in the tertiary institution, the lecturers and non-academic staff may disagree in relation to logistics and administrative lapses that may impinge on smooth running of academic activities in the university. This manifests in a situation whereby the Head of Department as a matter of necessity requires his/her secretary to work beyond the official closing hour in order to deliver an urgent task or even compel the secretary to come to work on weekends to in order meet up deadlines especially, during accreditations which may not be comfortable with the secretary and as matter of fact results in conflict. However in this circumstance, since the secretary does not have the prerogative to bandy words with or disobey the HOD, the only viable option here to solve the problem is accommodation strategy by obeying the HOD's instruction.

### **CONCLUSION**

Drawing from the forgoing account on the meaning and nature of conflict management construct and how it can be used to promote industrial harmony, we discovered that there is no organization immune to conflict tendencies be it public or private institutions, thereby making it a necessary and compulsory phenomenon in human interaction. Conflict offers organization with both positive and negative outcomes depending on how it is managed. When an organization promotes constructive conflict, it fosters innovation and creativity through diversity of opinions. On the other hand, when dysfunctional conflict is properly managed, it promotes industrial harmony among the members of the organization hence, everyone's voice, opinion or demand is being paid attention to either on the basis of compromise, collaboration or accommodation depending on the nature of the

conflict. Therefore, when organization adopts these measures, they do so to enthrone harmonious coexistence which serves as the bedrock of successful entrepreneurial venture. Finally, we recommended that:

- That management of universities in Kenya should try as much as possible to discourage destructive conflict while promoting constructive conflict.
- That in the event of any conflict situation, management should be responsive enough to arrest it objectively with appropriate strategies such as compromise, collaboration and accommodation to avoid turning the organization to a breeding ground for various deviant workplace behavior like sabotage, strike and alienations as result of disharmony.

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