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Effect of Intra-group Conflict on Employee Performance among Law Courts in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract:

Kenyan courts devote more than a quarter of their time to conflict resolution. According to the JSC 2019 report, the judiciary system was at odds with other branches of government over complaints about massive cuts to the judiciary's budget and the consequences of those cuts, including the pilling of cases. This has made it difficult for the judiciary to carry out its duties. The study specifically sought to investigate the effect of intra-group conflict on employee performance in law courts in Nakuru County, Kenya. The study was anchored on human relations theory, and interpersonal theory. The target population was 239 employees from Nakuru County's three Law Courts. Slovin's formula was used to generate a sample of 150 respondents for the study. The primary data for the study was collected using a closed-ended questionnaire. To collect data, a semi-structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used. A pilot study was carried out in Kericho Law Court, with 16 questionnaires distributed to respondents. Data collected in this study was quantitative in nature. To analyze quantitative data Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 was used. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used in this study. Descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies, std and mean were used to describe the characteristics of the target population. From the analysis the study findings revealed that there exists a strong, positive and significant relationship between intra-group conflict and employee performance among Law Courts in Nakuru County. The study recommended that efforts should be made by the law court management to occasionally stimulate constructive task conflict by encouraging divergent views and rewarding staff and department for outstanding performance while relationship conflict should be completely prevented.

Keywords: Intra-group conflict, employee performance, law courts

1. Introduction

Workplace conflict, also referred to as organizational conflict, is a state of disagreement or confusion caused by real or perceived differences in an organization's members' relationships, resources, values and needs. Tension arises when persons interact at work and differ in their perspectives on a decision or mission (Dalton, 2015). Organizational conflict has long piqued the interest of academics and practitioners alike. As a result of conflict, employee satisfaction suffers (Bashir, 2016). This discontent will result in higher absenteeism and a lower rate of turnover. Conflict can also erode trust in managers and co-workers, stymieing or even halting project execution. Customer satisfaction may suffer because of missed deadlines and poor service quality as a result of the accumulation of internal negative effects such as lost confidence and delayed improvement (Dontigney, 2015).

Conflict management has been proposed as a constructive and effective tool for Malaysian organizations. Conflict, on the other hand, has negative consequences, reduces team effectiveness, and decreases satisfaction because it causes tension and negativity, diverting attention of team members away from current responsibility. It has significant implications for determining the effectiveness of a team, particularly in terms of team decision-making (Omar, 2014). Asri (2014) polled Malaysian government employees about interpersonal conflict and team effectiveness.

The Kenyan judiciary continues to fall short of public expectations, and numerous demands for comprehensive changes have been made, particularly to address or/and deal with the judiciary's ever-growing case backlog which negatively impacts the judiciary in Kenya, resulting in absence of public trust in the system, resulting in a lack of effective and access to justice administration, particularly among the marginalized, vulnerable and poor (GOK, 2019). A legal system, that is efficient, dependable, and understandable, is essential for thriving businesses and, as a result, a thriving economy. The Kenyan judiciary continues to fall short of the public's expectations, and numerous demands for comprehensive changes have been made, particularly in addressing or/and dealing with judiciary's ever-growing case backlog. In Kenya, the backlog of case negatively impacts the judiciary in Kenya, resulting in absence of public trust in the system, resulting in a lack of effective and access to justice administration, particularly among the marginalized, vulnerable and poor (State of the Judiciary and the Administration of Justice. Annual Report, 2017 – 2018).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

According to the World Bank (2019), more than 25% of Kenyan law courts' time is spent resolving conflict, and more than 18% of the magistrates' time is spent in relational employee disputes resolution. It is a sign of discord in the legal system, which has harmed employee efficiency. According to 2017/2018 Annual Report on the State of the Judiciary and the Administration of Justice, the Judiciary system was at odds with other branches of government over concerns about the Judiciary's massive budget cuts and the impact of those cuts, which included the piling of cases (Judicial Service Commission, 2019). This has made it challenging for the courts to perform their duties effectively. The performance contracting and result-based management systems in the law courts have put court employees under pressure to deliver results. The issue of workplace conflict has received little attention in Kenyan courts. Thus, understanding the main drivers of disputes in Kenyan law courts is critical in this endeavor, it is this study's main focus. Mukolwe, Korir, Buyeke, and Musyoki (2016) investigated organizational performance in selected hotels in Kisumu affected by interpersonal conflict. According to the findings, interpersonal conflict tactics, relationship conflict, and task conflict all have a significant impact on organizational success. Arafat, Zaki, and Kashif (2016) sought to determine whether there was a link between job satisfaction and interpersonal conflict among intensive care nurses. According to the findings, interpersonal conflict has an impact on workplace satisfaction. However, none of the studies was carried out in a judicial setting, so these studies aimed to evaluate effect of intra-group conflict on employee performance among Law Courts in Nakuru County.

1.2. Hypothesis

Intra-group conflict has no significant effect on performance of employee among Law Courts in Nakuru County.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Review

The study was guided by two theories - the Human relations theory and the interpersonal interaction theory. Human relations theory was proposed by Elton Mayo in 1964 after conducting tests to determine how individual workers behaved in various work environments. The theory stressed the significance of the relationship between various social factors and organizational efficiency. Lee, Chaudhry, & Tekleab, (2014) posit that employee output and efficiency were discovered to be called functions and are finally rewarded. It was discovered during the experiment that employee needs should be met through appropriate compensation packages and incentive so as to improve their morale and productivity.

The theory is concerned with the employees' requirements in the workplace for them to perform better (Muldoon, 2017). Employee participation in decision-making can foster a positive partnership between management and employees (Dobre, 2013). Workers in such situations are subjected to morale-boosting environments, allowing them to focus on their creativity and innovation while still meeting the organization's goals (Odembo, 2013). As a result, to management and their activities, the Human Relations principle ought to be important; management should inspire its employees, have a better interpersonal relationship with them and know them well and how to behave in diverse situations, resulting in fewer challenges and disputes.

According to the theory, which is applicable to the current research, conflict management can be used in an enterprise to manage long-term problems. They should be able to improve employee relations, recognize workers as human beings, eliminate tension between individuals and the organization as well as individual differences in order to achieve organizational goals, create a healthier working environment, promote departmental cooperation, and increase the quality and quantity of the organization's goods and services.

The interpersonal interaction theory was developed by Thibaut and Kelley (1959). Interactions, that are satisfying and fruitful, based on this theory, occur when two people have similar characteristics. The theory states that relationship peace emerges when two people's relationship styles are compatible. One of the central arguments of the theory is that when one person is submissive and the other is dominant (tends to assert control and power), dyadic relationships are more harmonious. Graham (2017) noted that conglomerates typically have formal hierarchies in which employees are below the supervisors with the implication that supervisors possess legitimate authority, control and power.

When bosses and employees hold opposing views on authority, both parties are unsure of their respective positions and expectations. Supervisors are more likely than subordinates to initiate conversation that emphasizes their rank, power, and authority because they are in charge of providing guidance, delegating tasks, and providing performance reviews to their employees. As a result, when high-power-distance managers collaborate with low-power-distance employees, their daily interactions are more likely to exacerbate relationship conflict. As long as high-power-distance bosses try to assert superiority and low-power-distance employees oppose their bosses' desires, the dyad's interpersonal relations can deteriorate, resulting in ongoing conflict (Dust, 2017). The study is relevant to interpersonal interaction theory because it shows that high power distance workers would welcome their supervisors' proclivity for dominance and power. Employees will be more comfortable in their subordinate roles and will have a better understanding of what is expected of them, resulting in less conflict with their superiors.

2.2. Intra-group Conflict and Employee Performance

Intra-group conflict occurs when individuals, with similar interests, or goals, disagree. It can occur large scale, like among a specific demographic group's members or on a small scale like within a workplace. The two most common intra-group conflict types are mission conflict and relationship conflict. Regardless of their role or subjects, in an intra-group relationship dispute, the group members strive with interpersonal relationships (Martinez & Guerra, 2017).

In all intra-group conflict scenario types, individuals risk failure to achieve objectives or goals and destroying personal relationships. Intra-group conflict can divert group members' attention away from valuable results production, putting risking jobs of group members. It can be caused by opposite values and attitudes of two organizations. Managers in one organization feel that other organization is not behaving ethically and is frightening the well-being of stakeholder groups and also the pricing strategies are speculated to be the main triggers of this conflict (Lumineau, 2015).

Passos and Caetano (2015) investigated how team effectiveness is affected by previous performance feedback and intra-group conflict. The study enlisted the help of 183 people who worked in 47 different teams. Data gathering was done by a questionnaire. The results revealed that team decision expectations have a complete mediation impact in the relationship between process conflict and team success. Task and interpersonal conflict and team success or satisfaction's relationship was not significant. The discovery that effective past performance feedback improves team performance suggests that previous successful decisions can reinforce team members' previous decision-making processes.

Tafvelin and Keisu (2018) investigated intra-group disputes' implications and prevalence for the well-being of employees in a female-dominated workplace. Based on survey data from 1299 social workers, teachers and nurses, the study discovered that the most common conflict type was job conflict, though it was not related to well-being. Employee vigor was found to have a negative relationship conflict, whereas employee depression, burnout and stress positively related. Depression has been linked to process disagreements. According to the report's findings, men and women in a similar profession face intra-group conflicts equally.

Hanif and Mehmood (2016) investigated the impact of intra-group conflict on group success, as well as the role of cultural diversity in mitigating this effect. A Questionnaire was utilized in collecting information from 170 workers. Data was analyzed using SPSS. According to the findings, group success effectiveness was negatively and significantly impacted by intra-group conflict. Further, the results suggested that imparting skills to team members to handle conflict effectively and eliminating intra-group conflict improves group performance as well as introduces strategies to reduce workplace tension and enhance team-building activities.

Amin and Ozturk (2015) investigated how group work effectiveness is impacted by intra-group disputes: cultural diversity's moderating influence. The study had a total sample size of 306 participants, but only 180 completed and returned questionnaires. Based on the study's findings, there is a need to better understand how intra-group conflicts and job effectiveness relate at the managerial level. As a result, since workplace conflicts are unavoidable, making them functional rather than dysfunctional is preferable. Furthermore, there may be a number of unexplored variables in the field of intra-group conflict.

Hon and Choi (2015) investigated how employee performance is affected by job stress and intra-group conflict. A survey of 265 managers and employees in 50 hotels in China found out that there was an association between challenge-related stress and team task conflict which was further associated with satisfaction and job performance; there was an association between hindrance-related stress and team relationship conflict which associated negatively with satisfaction and job performance. The study further discovered that the cross-level relationship between satisfaction outcome and individual performance and group conflict is mediated by work stress. Cox (2016) conducted a study on effects of intra-group conflict on team performance effectiveness and work satisfaction. Path analysis using multiple regressions was used to test the model. The non-random sample consisted of 141 nurses employed on 13 inpatient units at a state-supported, 597-bed academic medical center in a southeastern city. Findings indicated that intrapersonal conflict had a direct negative impact on intra-group conflict and work satisfaction.

Mannix (2017) conducted a longitudinal study of intra-group conflict and group performance. In a longitudinal study, we found that higher group performance was associated with a particular pattern of conflict. Teams performing well were characterized by low but increasing levels of process conflict, low levels of relationship conflict, with a rise near project deadlines, and moderate levels of task conflict at the midpoint of group interaction. The members of teams with this ideal conflict profile had similar pre-established value systems, high levels of trust and respect, and open discussion norms around conflict during the middle stages of their interaction.

2.3. Research Gap Summary of Reviewed Literature

Passos and Caetano (2015) investigated how team effectiveness is affected by previous performance feedback and intra-group conflict. The study enlisted the help of 183 people who worked in 47 different teams. Data gathering was done by a questionnaire. The results revealed that team decision expectations have a complete mediation impact in the relationship between process conflict and team success. Task and interpersonal conflict and team success or satisfaction's relationship was not significant. Although the study was conducted among 183 employees from 47 groups, the study failed to indicate the type of sampling used as opposed to the current study which used Slovin formula to generate a sample of 150 respondents for the study.

Tafvelin and Keisu (2018) investigated intra-group disputes' implications and prevalence for the well-being of employees in a female-dominated workplace. Based on survey data from 1299 social workers, teachers and nurses, the study discovered that the most common conflict type was job conflict, though it was not related to well-being. Employee vigor was found to have a negative relationship conflict, whereas employee depression, burnout and stress positively related. Depression has been linked to process disagreements. According to the report's findings, men and women in a similar profession face intra-group conflicts equally. However, the study focused on the nurses and social, while the current study was conducted in Law Courts.

2.4. Conceptual Framework

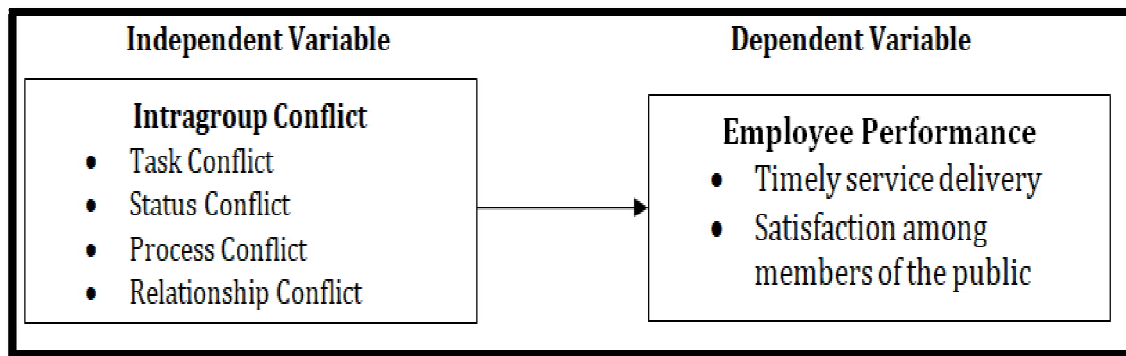


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

3. Research Methodology

A descriptive research design was deployed by this study. The target population was 239 employees from Nakuru County's three Law Courts. The formula devised by Slovin was used to generate a sample of 150 respondents for the study. Proportionate sampling was further used in getting a sample of each of the three-law courts. A questionnaire was used in gathering primary data. Data was collected after receiving a formal letter from the university, which assisted in obtaining a permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). A pilot study was conducted at Kericho Law Court where 16 participants were used. The collected data in this study was quantitative in nature. To analyze quantitative data, the SPSS version 24 was used. Inferential as well as descriptive statistics was utilized. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation) was utilized in describing the target population's characteristics. In determining the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, a multiple regression analysis was performed.

4. Findings

4.1. Response Rate

The chapter focuses on data analysis, results presentation and discussion of the findings. The study, thus, administered 150 questionnaires for data collection. However, 125 questionnaires among them participated in this study with 83 percent overall successful response rates. Respondents were also assured of confidentiality of the information provided.

4.2. Pilot Test Result

To test the reliability of measuring instrument, a pilot study was done in Kericho Law Court where 15 questionnaires were administered to employees. The findings of the reliability test are shown in Table 1

| Variable | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|----------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Intra-group Conflict | 6 | 0.734 |
| Employee Performance | 7 | 0.803 |

Table 1: Reliability Results

From the findings the Cronbach's Alpha values of all the items were more than 0.7 which means that the questionnaires used to collect the data were reliable. This concurs with Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) standards that the instrument of study should only be used if Cronbach's Alpha coefficient value is 0.70 or higher is obtained.

4.3. Your Age Bracket

The respondents were requested to indicate their age brackets. The findings were indicated in Table 4.2.

| Gender | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------|-----------|------------|
| 18-30 years | 12 | 13% |
| 31-40 years | 25 | 26% |
| 41-50 years | 32 | 34% |
| 50 years and above | 26 | 27% |
| Total | 95 | 100% |

Table 2: Age Bracket

From the findings 13% indicated they were aged between 18-30 years, 26% indicated they were aged between 31-40 years, 34% indicated they were aged between 41-50 years, while 27% were aged above 50 years. This implies that majority of the respondents were aged between 41- 50 years. Age determines the efficiency of the human resources among

Law Courts in Nakuru County. Age may affect the job performance of certain individuals, particularly in high-pressure jobs such as the senior managers in the public sector where heavy demands are placed on workers. The findings agree with Strangleman & Warren (2018) who view age to be a social division of work and it had unique effects depending on the group at hand. For some senior positions, the more the employee's age, the more skillful they become; thus chances of job retention are higher but unfortunately for the young unskilled workers, their employment opportunities diminish with age.

4.4. Effect of Intra-group Conflict on Employee Performance

| Statements on Intra-group Conflict | SA | A | N | D | SD | Mean | Std |
|---|-----|-----|-----|----|----|-------|-------|
| There is likelihood of tasks conflict among groups with related functions such as procurement and store department | 49% | 39% | 10% | 2% | 0% | 4.351 | .767 |
| Interdependence among different department result to process conflict among various groups | 48% | 39% | 6% | 4% | 3% | 4.345 | .692 |
| Superiority fights among departments result to intra-group conflict which negatively affect the performance of involved employees | 44% | 38% | 7% | 7% | 4% | 4.273 | .689 |
| Unequal distribution of resources among departments contribute to in intra-group conflict | 62% | 32% | 3% | 3% | 0% | 4.604 | .670 |
| Functional intra-group conflict promotes careful discussion of a variety of ideas that can yield greater or more effective output | 40% | 42% | 9% | 3% | 6% | 3.873 | 1.037 |
| Status conflict negatively affects group outcomes by diminishing the quality of the group's information sharing | 64% | 29% | 2% | 5% | 0% | 4.403 | 0.778 |
| High task interdependence leads to intra-group conflict. | | | | | | | |

Table 3: Effect of Intra-group Conflict on Employee Performance

The findings indicated that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that there is likelihood of tasks conflict among groups with related functions such as procurement and store department, (mean=4.351, SD=0.767). The respondents further strongly agreed that interdependence among different departments result to process conflict among various groups (mean=4.345, SD=0.692). On the same note, the respondents also agreed that superiority fights among departments result to intra-group conflict which negatively affect the performance of involved employees (mean=4.273, SD=0.689).

The study sought to find out whether unequal distribution of resources among departments contribute to intra-group conflict and majority were in agreement (mean=4.604, SD=0.670). The respondents further agreed that functional intra-group conflict promotes careful discussion of a variety of ideas that can yield greater or more effective output, (mean=3.873, SD=1.037). Finally, majority of the participants were strongly in agreement with a mean of 4.403 and standard deviation of 0.778, that the status conflict negatively affects group outcomes by diminishing the quality of the group's information sharing.

The study findings conquer with those of Katzenbach (2015) who found that conflict may escalate and lead to non-productive results or conflict leads to communication breakdown which negatively affects organizational performance. The findings also agree with Hayes (2018) who argues that employees had the mentality that managers could address conflicts better because they understand it thus can curb the tension before it escalates into a bigger issue. The study findings further conquer with those of Connie (2014) who found that interdepartmental has been on the rises which hinders effective organization management.

4.5. Employee Performance among Law Courts in Nakuru County

The researcher sought to find out the employee performance among Law Courts in Nakuru County. Table 4 displays the findings.

| Statements on Employee Performance | SA | A | N | D | SD | Mean | Std |
|---|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-------|-------|
| Employees are satisfied by the working conditions in the judiciary | 32% | 41% | 8% | 8% | 11% | 3.855 | 1.185 |
| The institutions are able to deliver its services on time | 49% | 40% | 3% | 5% | 3% | 4.403 | 0.778 |
| Employees working in the judiciary are able to achieve their targets | 48% | 44% | 0% | 5% | 3% | 4.307 | 0.738 |
| Members of the public are satisfied by the quality of services offered in the judiciary | 53% | 44% | 3% | 0% | 0% | 4.145 | 0.807 |
| Employee understand the link between their job and the organization broad goals | 54% | 36% | 2% | 5% | 3% | 4.563 | .608 |
| Employees are accountable for achieving specific measurable results | 48% | 40% | 3% | 5% | 4% | 4.181 | .513 |
| Employee meet their goals on time and as expected | 50% | 34% | 8% | 4% | 4% | 4.145 | 0.921 |

Table 4: Employee Performance among Law Courts in Nakuru County

The findings from the analysis indicated that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that employees are satisfied by the working conditions in the judiciary, (mean=3.855 SD=1.185). The respondents further agreed that the institutions are able to deliver its services on time (mean=4.403, SD=0.778). On the same note majority of the respondents agreed that employees working in the judiciary are able to achieve their targets (mean=4.307, SD=0.738). The study sought to find out whether the members of the public are satisfied by the quality of services offered in the judiciary, majority of the respondents were in agreement (mean=4.145, SD=0.807).

Moreover, majority of the respondents agreed that employees understand the link between their job and the organization broad goals with (mean=4.563, SD=0.608). Moreover, majority of the respondents agreed that employees are accountable for achieving specific measurable results (mean=4.181, SD=0.513). Finally, majority of the respondents agreed that employees meet their goals on time and as expected (mean=3.984, SD=1.032). According to Ryba, (2015) employee goals are at the heart of successful performance management. Goals help align employees with the organization's mission. They also help employees see how their contributions fit into the big picture and the value they bring to the company. Goals direct and guide employee efforts, motivate performance, and improve performance evaluation and strategic planning. The findings also agree with Patterson (2017) who argues that trained employees with adequate skills ought to have enough capacity to work, thus raising the organization's performance; this was not the case in the two case studies.

4.6. Regression Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | .038 | .145 | | .260 | .796 |
| Intra-group Conflict | .432 | .106 | .382 | 4.075 | .000 |

Table 5: Regression Coefficients
Dependent Variable: Employee Performance

The study also conducted a regression analysis to establish the regression coefficients connecting the independent and dependent variables as illustrated by the equation.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1$$

Whereby Y represents employee performance among Law Courts, X_1 represents intra-group conflict. β_0 represents Constant which defines the value of employee performance without the inclusion of predictor variables. The given equation was answered by the values of Unstandardized Coefficients (B) and all of them were statistically significant since their p values (Sig. <0.05) were less than 0.05. The results indicate that all the predictor variables in the study have a positive relationship with employee performance. Thus, $Y = 0.038 + 0.432X_1$

The value of employee performance without the effects of the predictor variables is 0.038. This explains that, at any given time, employee performance will be 0.038 holding other factors constant at 0. The results also illustrate that a unit increase in intra-group conflict would result to 0.432 times increase in employee performance as given by the coefficients in the model. The findings agree with Mwangi and Ragul (2013) who argue that poor management of factors leading to intra and inter conflicts as well as poor conflict resolution approaches greatly affect the performance of majority of employees.

5. Conclusion and Implication

From the analysis the study findings revealed that there is likelihood of tasks conflict among groups with related functions such as procurement and store department. The study further revealed that interdependence among different

departments results to process conflict among various groups. Moreover, the study findings uncovered that superiority fights among departments result to intra-group conflict which negatively affect the performance of involved employees. Unequal distribution of resources among departments contributes to intra-group conflict. The study findings further revealed that functional intra-group conflict promotes careful discussion of a variety of ideas that can yield greater or more effective output. Finally, the study findings revealed that the status conflict negatively affects group outcomes by diminishing the quality of the group's information sharing.

Regarding the effect of intra-group conflict, the study concluded that functional intra-group conflict promotes careful discussion of a variety of ideas that can yield greater or more effective output. The study further concluded that status conflict negatively affects group outcomes by diminishing the quality of the group's information sharing. High task interdependence leads to intra-group conflict. Finally, the study concluded that there exists a strong, positive and significant relationship between intra-group conflict and employee performance among Law Courts in Nakuru County.

In the light of the foregoing findings, the study recommends that the law court should develop diverse but appropriate strategies to resolve and manage conflicts as they arise before escalating to unmanageable level. Proper communication procedures should be put in place to resolve conflict. For instance, when any disagreement arises among the employees, it should be reported to the management and then management should get statements from the parties involved, brainstorm the issue and make recommendations on how to resolve the conflict.

The study lastly recommended that efforts should be made by the management to organize in house training/seminars/workshops on organizational conflict management from time to time for the employees. This will enable employees learn about conflict and how it can be effectively managed for individual and organization effectiveness.

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