



Influence of Conflict Management Practices on Performance of Public Hospitals in Kenya: A Case of Kenyatta National Hospital

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ABSTRACT

Proper conflict management is of paramount importance to the public health system in Kenya which is currently in a state of crisis. Particularly, though Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) has effectively provided medical care for the Kenyan citizens for many years, there has been a worrying trend of staff conflict in the hospital. This has been caused by a variety of issues such as communication breakdowns, limited resources and poor management. To reduce the incidence of conflicts, it is important to work on improving communication among staff, providing more resources for the hospital and training staff members in conflict resolution techniques. The purpose of the study was to determine the influence of conflict management practices on performance of public hospitals in Kenya: case study of Kenyatta National Hospital. The study specific objectives were to determine how communication in conflict management influence performance of Kenyatta National Hospital, to establish the influence of conflict management policies on performance of Kenyatta National Hospital, to assess the influence of organization conflict management styles on performance of Kenyatta National Hospital, to evaluate the influence of conflict management culture on performance of Kenyatta National Hospital and to determine the influence of conflict resolution practices on performance of Kenyatta National Hospital. The study was guided by four main theories including Contingency Theory, Theory of Conflict Transformation, Conflict Resolution Theory and Organizational Culture Model. The study followed a descriptive research design. The population for this study comprised of top management, health workers, and support staff employed at KNH. Fisher's formula was used to obtain a sample population of 376 respondents who were selected using stratified random sampling coupled up purposive sampling. The study used primary data methods including questionnaires and interviews. The study results suggested that effective conflict management practices were positively associated with the performance of Kenyatta National Hospital. However, the relationship between organizational culture practices and performance is weak and slightly negative, while human resource policies practices show a moderate positive correlation with performance. The model demonstrates a strong correlation ($R=0.800$) between the selected independent variables, and the dependent variable. The R Square value of 0.639 indicates that approximately 63.9 percent of the variance in KNH performance can be explained by the predictors. The overall model, as indicated by the ANOVA test, is statistically significant ($F=109.140$, $p<0.001$), suggesting that at least one of the predictors has a significant impact on KNH performance. The study concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between the conflict management styles employed at Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) and its overall performance. The study concluded that effective conflict resolution practices are associated with higher performance at KNH. The study recommended that KNH should invest in training programs and workshops to enhance the skills of its staff in various conflict management styles. The study also recommended that KNH should establish clear and effective communication channels within the organization.



Key Words: *Conflict Management Practices, Public Hospitals, Kenyatta National Hospital*

DOI 10.35942/w2tq1043

Cite this Article:

Njeri, D., & Odenyo, M., (2024). Influence of Conflict Management Practices on Performance of Public Hospitals in Kenya: A Case of Kenyatta National Hospital. (2024). *International Journal of Business Management, Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 6(2), 143-163. <https://doi.org/10.35942/w2tq1043>

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

Conflict is an inevitable part of any organizations, however, how organizations manage the conflict can make all the difference in performance (Flin, 2022). Conflict arises when different individual needs, perspectives, desires, values and goals come into contact. Specifically, if left unchecked, conflict can be detrimental and decrease performance through lower morale and motivation. That is why conflict management is so important for successful organizations. Good conflict management involves the use of active listening, understanding the underlying issues of the conflict, and working together to reach a resolution. Effective conflict management has been proven to have positive effects on performance, such as increased productivity and improved problem solving (Manning & Phillips, 2019). Through the use understanding and compromise, firms can use conflict to their advantage and benefit from improved performance.

It is essential that healthcare organizations create open and supportive communication environments in order to minimize these types of potential conflicts and work towards creating a more collaborative and safe environment for all stakeholders (Chua et al., 2019). Effective management strategies can help hospitals identify and address potential sources of conflict before they become more serious problems and disrupt workflow and improve performance. In developed countries, factors contributing to poor performance of public hospitals often include funding issues, resource allocation challenges, and increased patient demand. For example, in the United States, a study done in 2020 found that overcrowding, long waiting times, and inadequate staffing were common problems in public hospitals, leading to compromised quality of care and patient dissatisfaction (Durbin et al., 2020).

In Kenya, public hospitals also face numerous challenges that hinder their performance. A study conducted by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics in 2014 revealed that public hospitals in Kenya faced challenges related to poor sanitation, inadequate medical equipment, and shortages of essential drugs (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2014). Furthermore, corruption and mismanagement have been identified as significant problems in the Kenyan healthcare system, affecting the performance of public hospitals (Transparency International Kenya, 2019). Particularly, though Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) has effectively provided medical care for the Kenyan citizens for many years, there has been a worrying trend of conflicts in the hospital (Dyer, 2017). This has been caused by a variety of issues such as communication breakdowns, limited resources and poor management. To reduce the incidence of conflicts, it is important to work on improving communication among staff, providing more resources for the hospital and training staff members in conflict resolution techniques.



Kenyatta National Hospital is Kenya's oldest referral hospital, having been established in 1901 as a prominent player in the local health industry. As specified in its mandate, it plays a critical part in the country's, East Africa's, and other African globes' healthcare delivery systems (Willis, 2015). The hospital has the most effective and efficient referral system, and it receives referral cases for specialist healthcare from both within and beyond the country. The hospital offers five specialized centers, which concentrate on different medical practices (Ibrahim, 2017). Due to the quality of care and range of facilities, the hospital has attracted both local and international patients. According to records, the hospital treats more than 10,000 inpatients and as high as 42,000 outpatients annually (Senkoro, 2019). Though KNH is the largest hospital in East Africa, its lack of transparency has been a major problem (Dyer, 2017). KNH has been at the center of multiple corruption scandals due to the lack of accountability and oversight (Iyer, 2018). The hospital has been accused of financial mismanagement, severe overcrowding, and poor service delivery (Ayoo & Ngula, 2017). The Kenyan government has attempted to intervene and improve the situation, but without transparent financial records and tracking of resources, it is difficult to monitor progress (Ayoo & Ngula, 2017). To address the issue, KNH must commit to achieving accountability, openness in their financial processes, and increased transparency.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Conflict management is a critical tool to have in any organization, and its affects can be seen both in performance within the organization and amongst personnel. Research has shown that conflict management is linked to improved morale, job satisfaction, and organizational learning (Fried 2020). It is an important skill for effective teamwork, leadership, and creating a productive and positive work environment. Furthermore, when employees learn to manage conflicts within their workplace, they are more likely to feel empowered and more motivated when facing tasks (Yun 2015). These benefits are invaluable to any organization, and addressing the problem of conflict is key to maximizing these benefits. When managed correctly, conflict in the workplace can have positive impacts on the performance of an organization, but if left unresolved, it can lead to reduced productivity and in extreme cases the dissolution of an organization (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2019; Min *et al.*, 2018).

Studies have shown that organizations with well-managed conflict tend to have higher productivity, higher morale and better employee engagement (Drori, 2015). Conflict management affects the performance of the organization by improving communication, accelerating decision-making, and encouraging adaptability (Venegas, 2019). It can also be used to address organizational issues such as low performance and low employee engagement (MacPherson, 2017). In order to improve the effects of conflict management, organizations must have an effective conflict resolution procedure and should encourage open communication with all levels of staff (Hooley, 2020). However, according to a study done by Blanchard *et al.* (2020) found that while conflict management skills have an impact on the interpersonal relationships and responses, they have no direct impact on hospital performance. The study did find, however, that other non-conflict management strategies like developing communication plans, improving organizational cohesion, creating more clarity in roles and responsibilities, and improving teamwork all yielded more positive performance results.

This shows that there is limited literature focusing specifically among public hospitals in Kenya which have continued fail to attain the expected performance targets. The available studies also fail to specify the nature of association that exists between conflict management and performance



as well as the intervening effects of organizational culture and performance. It is against this background that the study is deemed ideal and is aimed to fill the gap. Furthermore best-developed conflict management practices among public hospitals in Kenya do not contribute to improved performance due to lack of efficient implementation approaches which necessitates this study (Boruett, Kisirikoi, Dimba, & Ronoh, 2021; Mwangi, 2021). The study will aim at addressing these research gaps and answer the research question; what is the influence of conflict management practices on performance of public hospitals in Kenya: case study of Kenyatta National Hospital?

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objective was to determine the effect of conflict management practices on performance of public hospitals in Kenya: case study of Kenyatta National Hospital.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Contingency Theory

Contingency Theory, proposed by Fiedler, (1967) is an important development in organizational behaviour and management. It is a framework for understanding decision-making in organizations, with the idea that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to any given problem. The Contingency Theory of Fred Fiedler highlights the importance of understanding context when evaluating a situation and managing groups. This approach enables leaders to be able to leverage their strengths and adjust styles based on the group, task and situation. This theory encourages leaders to become flexible and proactive in managing their teams, providing strategies and approaches that are tailored to the circumstances.

Contingency theory is an approach used to understand the risks present in organizations and decision making. The theory recognizes that there is often an element of uncertainty present in any situation, which cannot be anticipated (Chen *et al.*, 2020). This unpredictability may make decision making more difficult, as outcomes are not always as expected. It is important to be aware of the various risk factors when making any type of decision, and contingency theory can help to identify these risks. By doing so, organizations and decision makers are able to make more informed decisions and adopt strategies to mitigate any potential risks (Kuipers, 2006).

Contingency theory has demonstrated its utility as a framework for understanding the dynamic nature of organizational management. It allows organizations to respond fluidly to changes in their political and environmental environment, tailoring their practices to the specific context of their unique situation. It further reinforces the need for leaders to recognize that no single approach can work universally, and that it is essential to apply creative, adaptive strategies to ensure organizational success. It is through this perspective that organizations can become more effective and maximize their potential.

The proposition of the theory is that the optimal course of action is contingent upon the internal and external constraints which include the managerial assumption about the employee, the size of the organization, how its adapts to its environment, differences among resources and operation activities, strategies and technology used. It asserts that when managers make a decision, they take into account all aspects of the current situation and act on those aspects that are key to the situation at hand. The management at KNH should analyze a situation and determine what variables

influence the decision to implement a specific strategy for conflict management in the organization.

2.1.2 Theory of conflict transformation

Theory of conflict transformation was introduced by Lederach, (1992) in explaining the causative factors of conflicts and appropriate conflict resolution mechanisms (Miall, 2021). The theory of conflict transformation is a paradigm shift from the traditional way of understanding and handling conflict, which often results in a short-term resolution with little to no focus on systemic change in the underlying causes. According to Krebs (2019), conflict transformation attempts to create positive change in the conflictual dynamics, as well as a shift in the power dynamics structure and power structure, through addressing and responding to underlying concerns and grievances. It ultimately results in a mutually beneficial outcome that supports and strengthens the relationship. By leveraging the principles of conflict transformation, organizations can leverage collaborative methods of problem solving and conversation to reach a solution that resolves an issue for all stakeholders.

The theory postulates that conflicts occur in a transformational manner based on the people involved and prevailing determinants. This differs a great deal from the theories of conflict, conflict resolution and conflict management due to its detailed manner (Ledarch, 2003). This theory emphasizes the importance of "addressing the structural roots of conflict by changing existing patterns of behavior and creating a culture of nonviolent approaches that proposes an integrated approach to peace-building aimed at bringing about long-term changes in personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions," as well as "addressing the structural roots of conflict by changing existing patterns of behavior and creating a culture of nonviolent approaches.

The importance of the theory is that it provides organizations with insight into how to effectively manage and resolve conflicts by recognizing the underlying issues and providing an alternative approach. Through increased understanding of differences and use of mediation, collaboration is possible and violent conflict can be prevented. Additionally, conflict transformation as a model offers practical strategies to organizations, such as developing a shared understanding of the conflict, understanding the stakes involved, exploring alternative and creative solutions, and utilizing collective capacity during resolution (Ganus & Holder, 2015). It is essential that organizations invest in conflict transformation strategies to create an atmosphere of trust and understanding where all parties involved can feel safe and express their unique needs and values.

2.1.3 Conflict Resolution Theory

Conflict Resolution Theory differs from Conflict Management Theory in ignoring external influences on the view of conflicts. The theory proposed by Schellenberg, (1996) posits that in cases of communal and identity conflicts, people cannot afford to compromise on their fundamental needs. The theory argues that it is possible to transcend conflicts if only parties can be helped to explore, analyse and question and reframe their positions and interests. Conflict resolution theory is based on the idea that disputes can be resolved using good communication and compromise, however it is largely fallacious and should not be used in serious situations. There is limited evidence to support the effectiveness of conflict resolution theory, and many researchers such as Stebbing *et al.* (2013) have found that when applying conflict resolution in practice, it often leads to outcomes which are unsatisfactory and can make the underlying issue much more complex.

Utilizing conflict resolution as a way to diffuse heated conversations and build bridging solutions is a simplistic view of conflict resolution, and can be damaging if it is not properly managed. Conflict resolution theory is an important way to understand how people interact with each other. It provides various strategies for understanding and managing conflict in interpersonal relationships. It can help us to identify the underlying issues at play in a conflict, the various emotions attached to the issue, and different ways to address those issues (Gibson, 2017). Conflict resolution theory can also provide insights into how different people seek to resolve conflict in different ways. It can help us to uncover and examine our own beliefs, feelings and thoughts while also providing a platform on which we can build a sense of mutual understanding and trust (Draper & Stockwell, 2018).

This theory suggests that effective conflict resolution is achievable when faced with a variety of difficult and potentially volatile conflict scenarios that can arise from interpersonal relationships, work, or even within larger societal systems. Conflict resolution theory can make it easier to come to a resolution that everyone involved can be happy with. By focusing on the parties involved, their current and historical circumstances, and their willingness to make changes, Schellenberg's theory provides a dispassionate yet effective way to resolve conflict. It encourages both parties to remain open to communication and compromise in order to reach a mutually beneficial solution. This theory thus provides a helpful and nonthreatening method for addressing and resolving conflicts.

2.1.4 Organizational Culture Model (OCM)

Organization Culture Model (OCM) was introduced by Denison (1990). The model is based on four core cultural characteristics: mission, adaptability, consistency, and demonstrated involvement. The organization will be more effective if all four of these are integrated (Denison, 1990). While adaptability ensures that the demands of the environment are adequately addressed, involvement describes the commitment that employees place in their assigned duties, consistency describes the source of the firm's stability, and mission shapes the organization to ensure the organization's goals and targets are successfully attained (Denison *et al.*, 2006). The foundation of the theory is the notion that an organization's environment is influenced by its members' values and behaviors. The theoretical model's central tenet is that organizational cultures vary widely and are strikingly distinct from one another.

According to this theory, organization culture entails the shared values and beliefs of the members of an organization that define what behaviors are seen as acceptable, and ultimately influences the way individuals act (Wechsler, 2017). It is an important organizational trait because it has a substantial effect on the way employees interact with each other, and thus how work is being done in the organization. Organization culture is thus a powerful tool to improve the levels of motivation, productivity and overall quality of the organization (Marios & Kasapaki, 2015). Moreover, it is closely linked to organizational performance, meaning that if an organization has a strong, positive culture, its performance can be expected to improve. OCM can be used to bring about positive change within an organization by helping to create an environment and climate where all members of the organization feel valued and respected, which can allow them to communicate their ideas and concerns more clearly, resulting in a healthier work environment (Hahn, 2019).

The theory is important to the study because it offers a framework for the development and maintenance of effective corporate cultures. The theory will therefore be useful in defining how

organizational culture affects the conflict management process. Understanding cultural dimensions will help people with different cultural inclinations work together more, associate more, and communicate on a daily basis. According to this proposition, hospitals employ people from a variety of backgrounds and ethnic groups, each of which has its own distinct culture. Lack of awareness of these cultural aspects causes workplace conflict, which has a detrimental effect on both customer happiness and productivity. It would therefore be beneficial to thoroughly examine the organizational cultures of the public hospitals to ascertain how they are influencing their performance either directly or indirectly.

2.2 Empirical Literature Review

Agusioma (2019) conducted a study on the impact of staff dispute resolution on employee performance at Kenya's Public Service Commission. Data was mostly gathered through the use of semi-structured questionnaires. To meet the study's aims, path regression analysis was performed. The study discovered that dispute resolution had a favorable and significant impact on employee performance. The study also discovered that staff participation had a partial mediation influence on the association between employee performance. This implied that staff conflict resolution has a strong and beneficial impact on employee performance at the Public Service Commission. Employee performance will thus be measured by the resolution of staff conflicts. According to the study, staff dispute resolution has a favorable and significant impact on employee performance at the Public Service Commission. Staff participation in conflict resolution and conflict resolution are crucial parts of conflict resolution. Thus, conflict resolution is critical for improving employee performance and, by extension, organizational performance. However, effective conflict resolution outcomes cannot be accomplished without employee participation.

Abdullah (2015) examined the effects of conflict resolution on the Ministry of Higher Education's firm effectiveness. The study aimed to investigate the elements that led to interpersonal conflicts and conflict management practices used in conflict situations in the Ministry. According to the findings of the study, one of the conflict management tactics that had a negative impact on organizational effectiveness in the Ministry was avoidance. According to the study, avoidance resulted in a delayed response to variables contributing to organizational conflicts, which exacerbated them. The study recommended that the country's Ministry of Higher Education implement other dispute resolution techniques besides avoidance in order to improve organizational effectiveness.

Adewole, et, al., (2019) examined the relationship between effective conflict management and organisational performance in Nigeria. The study covers matters such as causes of conflict, types of conflict, conflict development and strategies for managing conflicts as well as means of managing conflict in an attempt to enhance organizational productivity. Systematization literary approach for solving the problem is Simple Regression Analysis. The major instrument used for the collection of data for this study was a questionnaire. One hundred (100) set of the questionnaire were distributed, out of which ninety-eight of them were properly filled and returned. The restatement of the hypothesis revealed that conflict management leads to improve organizational performance. The result also revealed that there is a positive relationship between conflict management (independent variable) and improved organizational performance (dependent variable).

Nabidae (2017) investigated the impact of dispute resolution techniques on employee performance at the Nyamache Tea Factory in Kisii County, Kenya. In this study, descriptive statistics,



particularly mean scores and percentages, were used in data analysis. Tables, charts, and graphs were used to present the analyzed data. According to the study's findings, there are various variables that employees must consider while implementing dispute resolution processes. These characteristics included leadership style in conflict resolution, business performance, team performance, and employee language. Management should instill an employee service culture comprised of policies, ideas, values, traditions, and attitudes. The factory's training procedures may have an impact on both staff motivation and organizational commitment. The authority should teach its personnel in order to equip them with the essential abilities to accomplish their duties, which can lead to high levels of enthusiasm and dedication from employees who perceive the chance they are given.

Biswas and Chakraborty, (2019) aimed to enumerate empirically that the phenomenon of the new intricate industrial set up has given rise to complicated, indirect, and impersonal industrial relations which enkindle industrial disputes and entangle entire organizations that need to be unraveled through the manifestations of a culture of mutual understanding and shared feeling. Organizational culture determines the standard of behavior of its employees and guides their words and deeds, thereby mollifying the disagreements and disputes. A descriptive cross sectional survey was conducted through a formalized and concealed questionnaire. Multistage sampling was used. Structural equation modeling was used on the proposed conceptual model to conduct confirmatory factor analysis. The research revealed the major fact that compassion towards employees had a strong positive impact on organizational culture, which also had a crucial as well as positive role on curbing industrial disputes.

Roome, et, al., (2014) assessed HRM in post-conflict settings: workforce supply, workforce distribution, and workforce performance. We searched published literatures for articles published in English between 2003 and 2013. The study used context-specific keywords (e.g. post-conflict, reconstruction) in combination with topic-related keywords based on an analytical framework containing the three functional areas of HRM (supply, distribution, and performance) and several corresponding HRM topic areas under these. The study established that many publications have focused on health workforce supply issues, including pre-service education and training, pay, and recruitment. Apart from in-service training, workforce performance is particularly under-researched in the areas of performance-based incentives, management and supervision, work organisation and job design, and performance appraisal. Research is largely on HRM in the early post-conflict period and has relied on secondary data. More primary research is needed across the areas of workforce supply, workforce distribution, and workforce performance.

Iskamto et al., (2022) focused on the human resource strategies element of crisis management, comparing classical and modern approaches to dealing with the consequences of crises on human capital. According to the survey, the success of an organization is mostly determined by the employees' abilities and competence, as well as their ongoing professional development. As a result, the quality of training, skills, expertise, and experience of human resources department workers has a significant impact on the judgments they will make. In this regard, a human resources department led by specialists will play an important role in crisis management and recovery. The human resources department is an important organizational element that serves as the foundation of a company and develops labor management strategies. Human resources departments' success or failure affects the entire firm; therefore, they should invest in human capital through training before a crisis occurs.



Mmbwanga (2021) did a research on how conflict resolution tactics affect the effectiveness of microfinance institutions. The study employed a census method. The research instrument was a questionnaire. The researcher confirmed the instrument's validity by discussing it with research project supervisors who are specialists in research. The researcher conducted a pilot test to confirm the instrument's dependability. The surveys were distributed using the drop and pick approach. The information gathered was coded and then analyzed using SPSS. In summary, the regression model revealed: a significant inverse relationship between accommodating strategy and MFIs in Nairobi; a significant positive relationship between dominating strategy and MFIs in Nairobi; a significant negative relationship between compromise strategy and MFIs in Nairobi; and a significant direct relationship between collaborating strategy and MFIs in Nairobi. According to the study, managers should avoid accommodating and compromising methods until absolutely essential, and they should always utilize dominating and collaborating techniques because they have a direct association with organizational success.

Anindo (2021) investigated the impact of dispute resolution tactics on the performance of youth projects: A case study of Amani Kibera, a community-based youth group. Spearman correlation was utilized in this study to assess the degree of relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The impact of integrating strategy on the performance of youth programs A Composite Mean of 4.00 was discovered, as well as a strong correlation value of 0.770. A Composite Mean of 3.44 and a moderately favorable correlation value of 0.454 were discovered for the impact of Dominating technique on youth project performance. A Composite Mean of 3.68 and a moderate positive correlation value of 0.500 were discovered in the influence of comprising strategy and youth project performance. A Composite Mean of 3.81 and a moderately positive correlation value of 0.509 were obtained for the influence of accommodating conflict management method on youth project performance. The study concluded that the independent factors in Amani Kibera positively influenced the performance of youth projects.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study adopted a positivism research philosophy. Positivism is a research philosophy that seeks to explain accurately the phenomena within the social context. Positivism holds that de facto long-term and fixed relationships between variables constitute the realm of social life and that by making empirical observations, we can discover the objective laws that govern social reality (Lloyd, 2018). It is a naturalistic form of inquiry aimed at explanation and understanding, wherein the researcher focuses on uncovering the immediate determinants of social phenomena, rather than their underlying meanings. This scientific method allows researchers to rigorously test theories and ensure that they are not only logical but also reliable hence its appropriateness (Leydesdorff, 2021). This study adopted a descriptive research design. Descriptive research design is an important tool in helping researchers understand phenomena and uncover meaningful insight on the subject. It focuses on providing a detailed and accurate portrayal of the population and their characteristics (Silverman, 2020). Compared to other research designs, descriptive research design produces data that is quantifiable, objective, and unbiased. Therefore, it is increasingly used to observe and analyse data in order to gain greater understanding of their subject. Ultimately, descriptive research design can be used to better understand relationships between variables and improve our understanding of a given population.

The population for this study comprised the employees working at KNH. As at 1st January 2022 there were a total of 6400 employees, and this constituted the study targeted population (see Table

1.) The population included management, health workers, and support staff employed at the hospital. This study employed Nassiuma's (2009) formula to calculate the size of the sample as shown below.

The sampling formulae thus gives a sample size of 376 respondents. Stratified random sampling was used in selection of the respondents for the study. Stratified sampling is when the population is divided into different subsections and a random sample is taken from each of these subsections (Azzalini *et al.* 2019). It is where a subset of individuals are chosen at random from a larger set, with all individuals having the same probability. Because the subset of the bigger group is picked at random, each individual in the vast population set has the same chance of being chosen. This results in a balanced subset with the highest potential for representing the broader group as a whole.

The study used primary data methods including questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were used in the collection of quantitative data for the study. The preference of questionnaires is due to them being economical and able to collect both qualitative and quantitative data within the shortest time possible. The questionnaire was semi-structured, blending both open-ended and closed-ended questions to enable comprehensive data collection. The questionnaires were organized into sections, each addressing a specific research objective. Questionnaires were used because they are fast to administer, and respondents can fill them at their convenience. Questionnaires are also cost effective and give the respondents an opportunity to confirm the information being sought before responding to the questions (Kothari, 2014). Questionnaires were issued to the health workers and support staff.

To supplement data collected through surveys, key informant interviews were held with purposively selected managerial employees. These informants included medical staff, patients and government health official. They were chosen because they can offer perspectives on how conflicts among healthcare professionals or with patients impact performance and patient care. Interviews are conversations held with a purpose in mind to gather data about the research study. These interviews have the least number of questions as they lean more towards a normal conversation but with an underlying subject. In-depth interviews are important in obtaining in depth details from the respondent giving them a chance to express themselves fully. They enable the researcher to probe for depth and therefore to obtain information that could not be captured through questionnaires. The key informant interviews were conducted with the aid of an interview guide which contained necessary topics to cover, questions to ask and areas to probe. The advantage of reliance on interview guides was that it allowed an in-depth exploration of the study topic (Polit & Becker, 2018).

To prepare the data collected by the study for analysis, the data was checked for completeness, coded and data entry done. The researcher used theory-driven thematic analysis (deductive approach) to analyze qualitative data. Thematic analysis consists of identifying, analyzing and reporting themes (patterns) in a qualitative data set. Thematic analysis offers a systematic approach to summarizing an enormous amount of data into momentous and expressive patterns or themes and has the ability to summarize sophisticated qualitative data through discovering the hidden themes that emerge within the dataset gathered (Braun & Clarke, 2016). The findings were presented in narratives and conclusions drawn from them.

Quantitative data on the other hand was interpreted using descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages. Correlation and regression analysis were conducted to establish the relationship between the independent and dependent variables in the objectives. The coefficient of



determination (R^2) was obtained so as to assess the strength of the bivariate relationships. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 28 to analyze the data. The analyzed data was presented using tables and figures. Before commencing the study, a written approval was sought from the University, the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI) and Nairobi County offices. The researcher also obtained permission from the management of KNH. The study participants were informed of the potential benefits of the study and that participation is purely voluntary. Participants were notified that they can opt out of the study at any time. Respondents were represented by special codes rather than names. The study's purpose and objectives were properly stated to them. Some respondents may be hesitant to participate in the survey due to ethical, motivation, or privacy issues. The researcher told them that the study is entirely academic in nature. Furthermore, complete secrecy and privacy was guaranteed throughout the study. Questionnaires were destroyed once the research and study are completed. All sources and methods used to obtain and analyse data should be properly disclosed to guarantee accurate data analysis. This prevented readers from misinterpreting the results and eliminated any type of bias.

4.0 Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

4.4.1 Conflict Management Styles

Table 1 Weighted Mean for Conflict Management Styles

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| There is the use of competing which involves aggressively pursuing one's own interests at the expense of others. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.68 | .759 |
| Confronting is utilized which addressing the conflict head-on, in order to resolve it as quickly as possible. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 3.92 | 1.627 |
| Conflict management entails avoiding which involves avoiding or postponing the conflict in the hopes that it will resolve itself. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.04 | 1.270 |
| There is compromising entailing finding a middle ground where both parties make concessions. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.25 | 1.068 |
| There is accommodating that involves giving in to the other party's demands in order to maintain harmony. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 3.96 | 1.347 |

Source: Research Data (2024)

From table 1, the highest mean score is observed in the use of the competing style, with a mean of 4.68 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.759. This indicates a consistent and strong inclination towards aggressively pursuing individual interests at the expense of others in conflict resolution within the hospital. Confronting, which involves addressing conflicts head-on for quick resolution, has a mean score of 3,92, and a higher standard deviation of 1.627. This suggests a more direct approach.



Conflict avoidance, represented by the style of avoiding or postponing conflict resolution, has a mean score of 4.04 and a standard deviation of 1.270. This indicates a moderate tendency to avoid conflicts within the hospital setting. Compromising, finding a middle ground where both parties make concessions, has a mean score of 4.25 and a standard deviation of 1.068, suggesting a relatively consistent use of this approach. Accommodating, involving giving in to the other party's demands for harmony, has a mean score of 3.96 and a standard deviation of 1.347, indicating a moderate tendency to accommodate others' demands in conflicting situations.

4.1.2 Communication in Conflict Management

Table 2 Weighted Mean for Communication in Conflict Management

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| There is face-to-face or over-the-phone conversations between conflicting individuals or groups. | 314 | 2 | 5 | 4.61 | .825 |
| The hospital uses written communication including emails, memo, and other written forms of communication in solving conflicts. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.65 | .863 |
| Communication within a healthcare is through the delegated team to address and resolve conflicts. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 3.18 | 1.481 |
| There is involvement of higher-level management or human resources to resolve the conflict. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 3.77 | 1.735 |
| There is direct communication between conflicting parties to reach a mutually acceptable solution. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 3.83 | 1.522 |
| A neutral third-party facilitates communication between conflicting parties to reach a resolution. | 314 | 2 | 5 | 4.80 | .515 |
| Communication during conflict management is mainly through nonverbal means including body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. | 314 | 2 | 5 | 4.65 | .735 |

Source: Research Data (2024)

Table 2 reveals that the highest mean score was observed in the used of written communication, with a mean of 4.65 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.863. This indicates the hospital effectively employs written forms of communication, such as emails and memos, in resolving conflicts among individuals or groups. The high mean score suggests that this method is widely accepted and utilized, contributing positively to conflict resolution. On the other hand, the lowest mean score was found in the communication within the healthcare through delegated team to address and resolve conflicts, with a mean of 3.18 and a higher standard deviation of 1.481. This suggests that the effectiveness of communication within the healthcare team may vary among cases, potentially indicating a need for improvement or standardization in this aspect of conflict management. The findings underscore the importance of evaluating and refining communication strategies within healthcare teams to enhance conflict resolution practices at KNH.



4.1.3 Conflict Resolution Practices

Table 3 Weighted Mean for Conflict Resolution Practices

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| Collaborating is used in the hospital that involves working with others to find a mutually beneficial solution. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.45 | 1.306 |
| The management facilitates team decision making which involves working as a team to identify the problem, generate options and make a decision together. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.43 | 1.203 |
| Problem-solving is encouraged that encompasses working with others to identify the problem, generate options and make a decision together. | 314 | 2 | 5 | 4.60 | .951 |
| There is regular evaluation of staff performance and providing feedback can help identify and address conflicts before they escalate. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.51 | .796 |
| The hospital provides the staff with access to counseling and other resources to help them manage personal and professional conflicts. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.68 | .854 |

Source: Research Data (2024)

Table 3 indicates that the practice of collaborating is well-established in the hospital, with a mean score of 4.45 and a standard deviation of 1.306. This indicates a relatively high level of consensus among respondents regarding the prevalence and effectiveness of collaborative conflict resolution in the hospital. Additionally, team decision-making has a mean of 4.43 and a standard deviation of 1.203. This suggests a consistent and widely accepted approach to involving teams in identifying problems and making decisions collectively.

Furthermore, problem-solving is encouraged in the hospital, with a mean score of 4.60 and a relatively low standard deviation of 0.951. This indicates higher levels of agreement among respondents regarding the emphasis on working with others to identify problems, generate options, and make decisions together. Overall, the data suggests a positive influence of conflict management practices on the performance of KNH.

4.1.4 Organization Culture Practices

Table 4 Weighted Mean for Organization Culture Practices

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| The hospital has a system for reporting and addressing conflicts. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.15 | 1.023 |
| The hospital provides culture of transparency and accountability. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 3.11 | 1.354 |
| There is a code of conduct that promotes ethical behavior. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.30 | .776 |



| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---|---|------|-------|
| There is encouragement of a culture of continuous improvement and learning. | 280 | 1 | 5 | 4.03 | .827 |
| The management encourages active listening and empathy. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.09 | .635 |
| There is a culture of respect and cohesiveness. | 314 | 2 | 5 | 3.69 | 1.012 |

Source: Research Data (2024)

Regarding the hospital’s system for reporting and addressing conflicts, the respondents provided a mean score of 4.15, with a standard deviation of 1.023. This indicates a relatively high level of agreement among participants that the hospital has a robust system in place for the reporting and resolution of conflicts. When examining the presence of a culture of transparency and accountability within the hospital, the mean score was 3.11, with a higher standard deviation of 1.354. This suggests a more diverse range of opinions among respondents, indicating that perceptions of transparency and accountability may vary among individuals within the organization. It is essential for the hospital to explore and address these variations to strengthen this aspect of organizational culture as advised by Kimmich, 2016.

4.1.5 Human Resource Policy Practices

Table 5 Weighted Mean for Human Resource Policy Practices

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| There is a clear policy for managing conflicts that outlines the steps to be taken when conflicts arise and the expected behaviors of staff. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 3.32 | 1.675 |
| The hospital provides staff with training on effective communication techniques to improve their ability to resolve conflicts in a professional and constructive manner. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.25 | 1.068 |
| There is an employee handbook outlining expectations and protocols for addressing conflicts. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 3.96 | 1.347 |
| There are policies promoting diversity, equity and inclusion. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 3.77 | 1.735 |
| The hospital has employee engagement and empowerment policies. | 314 | 1 | 5 | 3.83 | 1.522 |
| There are performance management and disciplinary policies. | 314 | 2 | 5 | 4.80 | .515 |

Source: Research Data (2024)

Regarding the presence of a clear policy for managing conflicts, the mean score is 3.32, suggesting a moderate level of clarity in outlining steps to be taken when conflicts arise and expected staff behaviours. However, the relatively high standard deviation of 1.675 indicates a considerable degree of variability in responses, highlighting potential inconsistencies in the perception of this policy among respondents.



On the other hand, the hospital’s provision of training on effective communication techniques receives a higher mean score of 4.25, indicating a generally positive perception among respondents. The lower standard deviation of 1.068 suggests a more consistent agreement on the effectiveness of this training in enhancing staff abilities to resolve conflicts in a professional and constructive manner. This suggests that the hospital’s efforts in providing communication training are more uniformly acknowledged and valued by the surveyed individuals.

4.1.6 Performance of KNH

Table 6 Weighted Mean for Performance of KNH

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|----------------------------------------|-----|---------|---------|------|----------------|
| Flexibility of operations | 314 | 2 | 5 | 4.15 | 1.024 |
| Long term sustainability | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.52 | 1.076 |
| Employee productivity | 314 | 2 | 5 | 4.65 | .735 |
| Risks Management | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.45 | 1.306 |
| Stakeholders and customer satisfaction | 314 | 2 | 5 | 4.65 | .735 |
| Proper crisis management | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.45 | 1.306 |
| Customer satisfaction | 314 | 1 | 5 | 4.45 | 1.306 |
| Valid N (Listwise) | 280 | | | | |

Source: Research Data (2024)

Table 6 provides insights into the perceived performance of KNH in each category. The highest mean scores were observed in employee productivity (4.65) and stakeholders and customer satisfaction (4.65), indicating a strong perception of positive performance in these areas. Long-term sustainability also received a high mean score of 4.52, suggesting that respondents perceive KNH as having a good strategy for long-term success.

On the other hand, flexibility of operations, risk management, proper crisis management, and customer satisfaction received slightly lower mean scores but still remained above 4.0, indicating a generally positive perception of performance in these areas. The standard deviation reflects the variability in responses, with some indicators showing higher variability than others. Overall, the data suggested a favourable perception of KNH’s performance in conflict management practices, with a focus on employee productivity, stakeholder satisfaction, and long-term sustainability.

4.2 Inferential Analysis

4.2.1 Correlational Analysis

Table 7 Model Summary

| | KNH Performance | Human Resource Practices | Organizational Culture Practices | Conflict Resolution Practices | Communication in Conflict Management |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| KNH Performance | Pearson Correlation | 1 | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | |
| | N | 314 | | | |



| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-----|-----|
| Conflict Management Styles | Pearson Correlation | .492** | 1 | | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | (2-.000 | | | | | | |
| | N | 314 | 314 | | | | | |
| Communication in Conflict Management | Pearson Correlation | .559** | .749** | 1 | | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | (2-.000 | .000 | | | | | |
| | N | 314 | 314 | 314 | | | | |
| Conflict Resolution Practices | Pearson Correlation | .657** | .382** | .274** | 1 | | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | (2-.000 | .000 | .000 | | | | |
| | N | 314 | 314 | 314 | 314 | | | |
| Organization Culture Practices | Pearson Correlation | -.068 | -.133* | -.140* | .073 | 1 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | (2-.231 | .019 | .013 | .198 | | | |
| | N | 314 | 314 | 314 | 314 | 314 | | |
| Human Resource Policy Practices | Pearson Correlation | .397** | .815** | .812** | .337** | -.098 | | |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | (2-.000 | .000 | .000 | .000 | .083 | | |
| | N | 314 | 314 | 314 | 314 | 314 | 314 | 314 |

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Source: Research Data (2024)

The correlation between KNH performance and Conflict Management Styles is 0.492, which is a moderately positive correlation. This suggests that there is a significant positive relationship between the conflict management styles employed at KNH and its overall performance. Furthermore, the correlation between Communication in Conflict Management and KNH Performance is 0.559, indicating a strong positive relationship. This suggests that effective communication in conflict management positively influences the performance of KNH.

The correlation between Conflict Resolution Practices and KNH performance is 0.657, signifying a strong positive relationship. This implies that the adoption of effective conflict resolution practices is associated with higher performance at KNH. Additionally, the correlation between Organization Culture Practices and KNH performance is -0.068. Though this correlation is not strong, it is negative, indicating a weak inverse relationship. This suggests that certain aspects of organizational culture practices might be negatively associated with KNH performance.

Moreover, the correlation between Human Resource Policy Practices and KNH performance is 0.397, indicating a moderate positive relationship. This implies that well-structured human resource policies positively influence the performance of KNH. Overall, the results suggest that effective conflict management practices are positively associated with the performance of



Kenyatta National Hospital. However, the relationship between organizational culture practices and performance is weak and slightly negative, while human resource policies practices show a moderate positive correlation with performance.

4.2.2 Regression Analysis

Table 8 Model Summary

Model Summary^b

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Durbin-Watson |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | .800 ^a | .639 | .633 | .49962 | 1.106 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Policy Practices, Organization Culture Practices, Conflict Resolution Practices, Communication in Conflict Management, Conflict Management Styles

b. Dependent Variable: KNH Performance

Source: Research Data (2024)

The data reveals a significant relationship between the various conflict management practices and KNH performance. The model demonstrates a strong correlation ($R=0.800$) between the selected independent variables, and the dependent variable. The R Square value of 0.639 indicates that approximately 63.9% of the variance in KNH performance can be explained by the predictors. Overall, the model underscores the importance of the various conflict management practices in influencing the performance of Kenyatta National Hospital.

Table 9 ANOVA

ANOVA^a

| Model | | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| 1 | Regression | 136.217 | 5 | 27.243 | 109.140 | .000 ^b |
| | Residual | 76.883 | 308 | .250 | | |
| | Total | 213.100 | 313 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: KNH Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Human Resource Policy Practices, Organization Culture Practices, Conflict Resolution Practices, Communication in Conflict Management, Conflict Management Styles

Source: Research Data (2024)

The overall model, as indicated by the ANOVA test, is statistically significant ($F=109.140$, $p<0.001$), suggesting that at least one of the predictors has a significant impact on KNH performance. The ANOVA results explain a substantial portion of the variance in KNH performance ($R^2=0.639$), with the predictors collectively contributing 136.217 units to the total sum of squares. This indicates a strong relationship between the selected conflict management practices and the performance of Kenyatta National Hospital.



Table 10 Coefficients

| | | Coefficients ^a | | | | |
|-------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|------|
| | | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
| Model | | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | -.516 | .332 | | -1.552 | .122 |
| | Conflict Management Styles | .132 | .058 | .142 | 2.262 | .024 |
| | Communication in Conflict Management Practices | .804 | .075 | .652 | 10.681 | .000 |
| | Conflict Resolution Practices | .725 | .047 | .578 | 15.423 | .000 |
| | Organization Culture Practices | -.072 | .058 | -.043 | -1.241 | .216 |
| | Human Resource Policy Practices | -.490 | .076 | -.447 | -6.414 | .000 |

Source: Research Data (2024)

The model's constant term is -0.516, though not statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that when all predictor variables are zero, the dependent variable is expected to be -0.516. Conflict Management Styles demonstrates a statistically significant positive effect with a coefficient of 0.132 ($p=0.024$), suggesting that as conflict management styles increase, the performance of the hospital tends to improve. Furthermore, communication in Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution Practices exhibit strong positive effects with coefficients of 0.804 ($p=0.000$) and 0.725 ($p=0.000$) respectively, indicating that enhancing communication and conflict resolution practices significantly contribute to better hospital performance. On the other hand, Organization Culture Practices and Human Resource Practices do not appear to have statistically significant effects on performance ($p=0.216$ and $p=0.000$, respectively). These results suggest that focusing on communication and conflict resolution practices may be particularly crucial for improving performance in Kenyan public hospitals.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The study concludes that there is a significant positive relationship between the conflict management styles employed at Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH) and its overall performance. As conflict management styles increase, the performance of the hospital in general also tends to improve. The research findings indicate a strong positive relationship between effective communication in conflict management and the performance of KNH. Enhancing communication significantly contributes to better hospital performance, as evidenced by the strong positive effects observed.

The study concludes that effective conflict resolution practices are associated with higher performance at KNH. The strong positive relationship and significant positive effects of conflict resolution practices on performance highlight their importance in contributing to better hospital performance. The study concludes that there is a weak inverse relationship between organizational



culture practices and KNH performance. While the correlation is not strong, it implies that certain aspects of organizational culture practices might be negatively associated with KNH performance. However, organizational culture practices did not have statistically significant effects on performance. The study concludes that well-structured human resource policies at KNH positively influence its performance. The moderate positive relationship between human resource policy practices and performance indicates that these policies contribute to the overall effectiveness of the hospital. Overall, the study affirms that effective conflict management practices are positively associated with the performance of Kenya National Hospital. The relationship between organizational practices and performance is weak and slightly negative.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommended that KNH should invest in training programs and workshops to enhance the skills of its staff in various conflict management styles. This enabled the hospital to proactively address conflicts, fostering a positive work environment and ultimately improving overall performance. The study also recommended that KNH should establish clear and effective communication channels within the organization. This may involve regular training on communication skills for staff, implementing communication protocols, and fostering a culture that encourages open and transparent communication. Improved communication contributed to better conflict management and, subsequently, enhanced hospital performance.

Additionally, the study recommended that KNH should institutionalize and promote effective conflict resolution practices throughout the organization. This can include creating a dedicated conflict resolution team, providing mediation training for staff, and developing clear procedures for resolving conflicts. The study recommended that KNH should conduct a comprehensive review of its organizational culture practices to identify specific areas that may be negatively impacting performance. Addressing these aspects through targeted interventions, such as culture-building initiatives, can help align the organizational culture with the goals and values that contribute to improved performance.

Additionally, KNH should continue to prioritize and enhance its human resource policies. This could involve regular reviews and updates to ensure alignment with the best practices and evolving organizational needs. Investing in the development of comprehensive and employee-friendly policies contributed to the positive influence of human resource practices on the hospital's performance. The study also recommended that KNH should regularly assess its performance metrics and outcomes to identify areas for improvement. Continuous monitoring and evaluation helped the hospital to adapt its conflict management practices, organizational culture, and human resource policies to better align with the evolving needs and challenges, ultimately contributing to sustained and improved performance over time.

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