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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study was to investigate effect of power in conflict management in state corporations in Kenya. The objectives of this research were to investigate the effects of power on conflict management in state corporations in Kenya. A descriptive research design was used in this study. Data was collected by use of a questionnaire and a target population 62 employees was considered for the study. The data was analysed both qualitative and quantitative. Data was presented by use of tables, graphs and charts. From the study findings, 70% of the respondents were of the opinion that power has an effect on conflict management in State Corporation. The study recommended the need for each and every part involved in looking for conflict resolution to highly consider the power of those particular individuals chosen to manage conflict, embracing of the norms, values and believes aimed at supporting effective conflict management, enhancing democratic style of leadership which gives individuals involved in conflict management capability of making autonomous decision without any interference. Also, there is need for the parties involved in conflict management to consider having positive attitude towards others. It was concluded that power affects conflict management in State Corporation.

Key Words: Conflict, Power, Management, Conflict Management, Leadership Style

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Psychologists and sociologists have given different meanings. It is being defined as a process by few, an obstructive behavior, and goal incompatibility by others. Conflict can be expressed

as: Conflict is a process, where perception (real or otherwise) leads to disruption of desirable state of harmony and stability in an interdependent world. Characteristics of conflict include; conflict is a process; conflict is inevitable; conflict is a normal

part of life; perception; opposition; interdependence and interaction; everyone is inflicted with conflict and conflict is not unidimensional (Maltz and Kohli, 2000). Conflicts are natural in all walks of daily life – both at workplace and home. Thus, conflict is ever present and both charming and maddening. But conflict is a complex and big subject. There are many sources of conflict. Conflict occurs when individuals or groups are not obtaining what they need or want and are seeking their own self-interest. Sometimes the individual is not aware of the need and unconsciously starts to act out. Other times, the individual is very aware of what he or she wants and actively works at achieving the goal. It would be better to identify conflict at an early stage and come to an understanding (Rahim, 2002).

Conflict management is the principle that all conflicts cannot necessarily be resolved, but learning how to manage conflicts can decrease the odds of non-productive escalation. Conflict management involves acquiring skills related to conflict resolution, self-awareness about conflict modes, conflict communication skills, and establishing a structure for management of conflict in the organizational environment.' All members of every organisation need to have ways of keeping conflict to a minimum – and of solving problems caused by conflict, before conflict becomes a major obstacle to ones work (Furnham, 2000). Conflicts may be distributive and integrative. Distributive conflict is approached as a distribution of a fixed amount of positive outcomes or resources, where one side will end up winning and the other losing, even if they do win some concessions. On the other hand, integrative – Groups utilizing the integrative model see conflict as a chance to integrate the needs and concerns of both groups and make the best outcome possible.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Power plays a role in most conflicts. Popular misconceptions about power include the belief that it has some physical location, that there is only a fixed amount of it, that it operates in only one

direction, and that the use of power is basically adversarial or competitive. Some theorists emphasize "power over"--the ability to compel someone to do something. This view suggests a view of power as coercive and competitive. Other theorists have developed the concept of "power with," which emphasizes the effectiveness of joint or cooperative action. A third set of theorists focus on issues of powerlessness and dependence, while other explores the obverse: empowerment and independence. Empowerment theorists employ the notion of "power to," as in the power to act effectively without constraint or disability (Mogensen, 2006).

Power can be usefully conceptualized as a mutual interaction between the characteristics of a person and the characteristics of a situation, where the person has access to valued resources and uses them to achieve personal, relational, or environmental goals, often through using various strategies of influence. Power is understood in relational terms, and power itself is distinguished from sources of power, the effective use of available power, and strategies for deploying power (Mozes et al., 2011).

There is the need for one to know which aspects of persons and of situations are most relevant to power. Personal factors include different cognitive, motivational and moral orientations regarding power. In their concepts of power, people may adopt any of the four perspectives commonly found in the social sciences. In terms of motivation, some people have an authoritarian orientation that stresses obedience to authority (Mukhtar and Habbib, 2010). People may be motivated to pursue personal power, or power for their group. Peoples' moral orientations toward power vary with their degree of moral development, their degree of egalitarian sentiment, and with their perception of the scope of justice (Treven and Treven, 2010).

Understanding situational factors requires examining the larger structural and historical context. One significant aspect of situation is role a person plays. Also significant is the individual's

place in the hierarchy. Culture is also an important factor, influencing, for instance, peoples' attitudes toward power inequalities. This approach to understanding power has significant implications for understanding conflict. Given this understanding, power conflicts are then viewed as win-lose competitions, thus impairing their chances of a satisfactory resolution. More emphasis on cooperative, dependent and independent power is needed. Cooperative conflicts, for instance, actually generate power, understood as "power with." Second, parties' conceptions of power shape the strategies the employ in conflict (Somech at al., 2009).

When evaluating the balance of power between parties in conflict, it is important to note that some of the parties' power may be irrelevant or useless in that particular situation. Assessments of relative power must focus on relevant power. Similarly, parties should reflect carefully on their goals in a conflict, and ask themselves which types of power could be effective, and which detrimental, in reaching those goals (Szablowski, 2007). High-power groups "tend to like power, use it, justify having it, and attempt to keep it. They pay less attention to low-power people, and have an "unreflective tendency to dominate. High-power groups tend to alienate low-power groups, and to elicit resistance. Low-power groups, on the other hand, tend to be shortsighted and discontent. They may express their discontent by projecting blame onto even less powerful groups, undermining their ability to empower themselves through cooperation and coalition building (Ahmed at al., 2010).

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

In this study, descriptive research design was used by the researcher. As Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) notes when the purpose of research happen to be accurate description of a situation or of an association between variables, then the suitable design is the one that maximizes reliability and minimizes biasness of the data collected and analyzed. It therefore had an approach of establishing various variables which determined effective conflict management in any state corporation for the purpose of enhancing effective conflict management.

In addition, descriptive research design was used to provide facts and suggestions on major connections between variables and their apparent course and the population described what, why and how factors like; power, organization culture, leadership style and attitude affect conflict management in state corporations in Kenya. This involved field survey whereby the research design enabled subjects to be observed in the natural set up without any manipulation of the environment, it clearly dealt with a defined problem and objectives as the was collected from relatively a larger number of cases for it to be more representative and address the problem.

Target Population

Target population is the complete set of individual events or things of interest that the researcher wishes to investigate (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). The target population that was investigated adds up to a total of 62 employees as shown in the table 1 below:

Table 1: Target Population

Category	Target Population	Percentage
Top Level Management	3	5
Middle Level Management	5	8
Support Staff	54	87
Total	62	100

Source author (2016)

Sample Design

Mugenda and Mugenda, (2003) argues that sampling is the process by which alternatively small number of individual, object or event is selected and analyzed in order to find out something about the entire top from which it was selected. A sample is a small proportion of target population selected using some systematic form. The researcher used census of 62 employees instead of the sample size because of the size of the target population being

small. Due to the use of the census, the researcher did not use any sampling technique. Census involved the use of the entire target population. Kothari (2004) argues that the benefits or rather advantages of the use of the census in research is that it increases confidence interval level and maximum chance of identifying of negative feedback.

Table 2: Census

Category	Target Population	Census	Percentage
Top Level Management	3	3	5
Middle Level Management	5	5	8
Support Staff	54	54	87
Total	62	62	100

Source: Author (2016)

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) asserts' that the accuracy of data to be collected depends on the data collection instruments in terms of validity and reliability. The researcher used questionnaires to gather information, because, it was fairly economical in terms of cost and time and there was a possibility of checking the responses accuracy and incompleteness however, Kothari (2004), points out that a questionnaire provides evidence of a pattern amongst large population.

Questionnaires were hand-delivered and collected after a few days. The types of questions used included both open and closed ended. Closed ended questions were used to ensure that the given answers were relevant to the study, while open ended questions provided relevant explanations about the research questions posed by the researcher to respondents, which gave them freedom to express their feelings. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) opines that this method is effective to the study in that it creates confidentiality among the respondents as it allows the freedom of response, thus stimulating the respondent to think about his feelings or emotions and expresses what he considers to be important.

Validity of Research Instruments

Authority was obtained from relevant departmental sections of the organization to circulate questionnaires. According to Kothari (2004) validity is the degree to which result obtained from the analysis of data actually represents the phenomenon under study, however Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) states that reliability is the measure of the degree to which research instruments yields consistent results. In this study, reliability was ensured by pre-testing the questionnaire on five respondents. These respondents were not included in the final study. The questionnaires were then corrected before the final distribution.

Data Analysis Methods

According to Kothari (2004), data analysis procedure includes the process of packaging the collected information putting it in order and structuring its main components in a way that the findings can be easily and effectively communicated. Editing, coding and tabulation were carried out. The data collected was analyzed using qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative method involved content analysis and evaluation of text material while quantitative method involved the use of diagrams such as tables, charts and graphs. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), state that

qualitative research technique allows a researcher to be able to collect data and explain phenomena more deeply and exhaustively however quantitative

method follows a logical and distinct steps of identifying the objectives, hypothesis, the variables and testing the hypothesis.

FINDINGS

Table 3: Response Rate

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Response	54	87
Non response	8	13
Total	62	100

Source: Author (2016)

From the table 3 the response that was obtained from the respondents was good enough for the analysis process. The researcher prepared 62 questionnaires, from which 87% of the sample

population was acceptable figure. On the hand 13% of the sample population was an unacceptable figure.

Table 4: Gender Analysis of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	41	76
Female	13	24
Total	54	100

Source: Author (2016)

According to table 4 the number of male response or rather those who responded was 76% of the sample population, while the number of female was

24% of the sample population. From the study, it can be concluded that the number of male response was greater than that of females.

Table 5: Age of the Respondents

Age of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Below 25 years	2	4
25 years to 30 years	19	35
31 years to 36 years	15	28
37 years to 42 years	13	24
43 years and above	5	9
Total	54	100

Source: Author (2016)

Table 5 shows the analysis of the respondents who participated in the study. According to the analysis, 4% of the respondents were aged below 25 years. 35% of the respondents were aged 26 years to 31 years. 28% of the respondents were aged 31 years

to 36 years. 24% of the respondents were aged 37 years to 42 years. 9% of the respondents were aged 43 years and above. It was clear from this analysis that the organization is composed of a strong work force.

Table 6: Highest Level of Education

Level of Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary	6	11
College	32	59
University	16	30
Total	54	100

Source: Author (2016)

According to table 6 of the data collected and analyzed on the level of education, 11% of the respondents had attained a secondary level of education, 59% had attained the college level of education, and 30% of the respondents represented

those with university level of education who had attained a degree. From the study it can be deduced that majority of the respondents are college and university level graduates.

Table 7: Working Experience

Working Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Below 1 year	3	6
1 year to 3 years	8	15
4 years to 6 years	19	35
7 years to 9 years	12	22
10 years to 12 years	8	15
13 years and above	4	7
Total	54	100

Source: Author (2016)

In accordance with table 7, 6% of the respondents had a working experience below 1 year, 15% of the respondents had a working experience of 1 year to 3 years, 35% of the respondents had a working experience of 4 years to 6 years, 22% of the respondents had a working experience of 7 years to 9 years while the remaining 15% and 7 % of the

total number of the respondents who participated in the study had a working experience of 10 to 12 years and 13 years and above 7 years respectively. From the study, it can be concluded that majority of the workers have a working experience of 3 years to 4 years.

Table 8: Effects of power on conflict management

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	38	70
No	16	30
Total	54	100

Source: Author (2016)

Table 8 shows the analysis of the effects of power on conflict management. 70% of the respondents stated that power has effects on power on conflict

management. 30% of the respondents stated that power has no effects on power on conflict management.

Table 9: Effects of power on conflict management

Response	Frequency	Percentage
High	26	48
Moderate	15	28
Low	9	17
Not at all	4	7
Total	54	100

Source: Author (2016)

Table 9 shows the analysis of the effects of power on conflict management. According to the analysis 48% of the total number of the respondents who participated in the study indicated that power has high effects on conflict management, 28% of the total number of the respondents who participated in the study indicated that power has moderate effects on conflict management, 16% of the total number of the respondents who participated in the study indicated that power has low effects on conflict management and 2% of the total number of the respondents who participated in the study indicated that power has no effects at all on conflict management.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the research study findings, 48% of the total number of the respondents who participated in the study indicated that power has high effects on conflict management. Twenty eight percent of the total number of the respondents who participated in the study indicated that power has moderate effects on conflict management. Seventeen percent of the total number of the respondents who participated in the study indicated that power has low effects on conflict management and 7% of the total number of the respondents who participated in the study indicated that power has no effects at all on conflict management.

From the research study findings, it can be concluded that power has an effect on conflict management. This information was obtained from the majority of the respondents who participated in the research study. The reason that was concluded for these effects was that due to the parties

involved in conflict management not having power to influence the solution making towards the arising conflicts, this tend to make management of conflicts very difficult.

From the data obtained from the research study, it can be concluded from the majority of the respondents' response that organization culture has high effects on conflict management. The reason that was stated and concluded from these effects was that existence of negative believes, norms and values in the organization, better conflict management usually tend to become very difficult. In that most of ways used in conflict management such as mediation usually get to be looked as not providing the desired results. For instance, one party may have an option of being compensated on the offense he or she has faced from the other party yet when the mediator for instance get to look at the matter very clearly, he or she may have an option of no compensation.

From the study, it can be concluded from the majority of the respondents' response that attitude affects conflict management. The reason for this effect was that the way the parties in conflict inn an organization perceive the conflict solution makers tend to determine the effectiveness of conflict management. For instance, if the parties in conflict looks at the other party intended to bringing solution to arising conflicts in a negative way for instance that the party is not competent to such matters, this tends to hinder effective conflict management.

The study recommended that, in consideration of power, it is important for the organization with the

main aim of enhancing effective conflict management to consider various powers that parties involved in conflict management should possess. One of the important power to be considered is the legitimate power. This is the power that comes from having a position of power in an organization such as being the boss or a key member of a leadership team. This power can be brought about as a result of the organization making sure that its employees recognize the authority of the individual. The other way to enhance conflict management is through the organization consideration of the power that comes from experiences, skills and knowledge which is usually termed as expert power. The other type of

power to be considered to enhance conflict management is the referent power. This power comes from being trusted and respected of the conflict manager by the parties involved in conflict.

Suggestion for Further Study

There is a need for further study to be carried out on how employee-employer relationship affects conflict management in state corporations in Kenya. Further research need to be carried out on how conformance to employment act affects conflict management in state corporations in Kenya. Lastly but not least, more research need to be carried out on how organization policy affects conflict management in state corporations in Kenya.

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