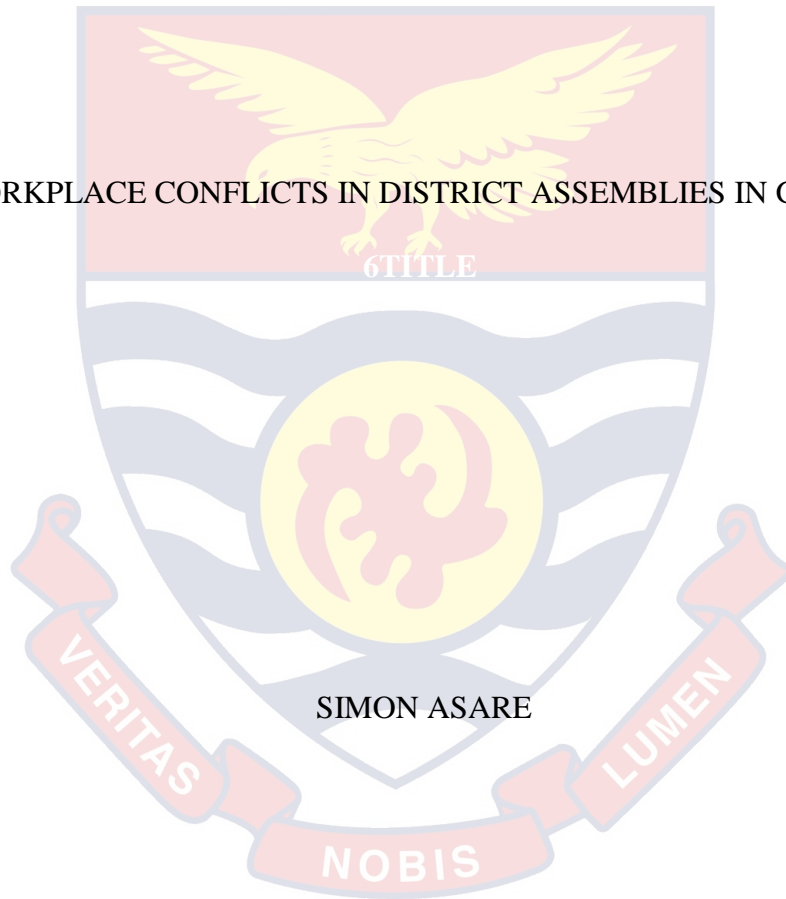PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, GHANA

FACULTY OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

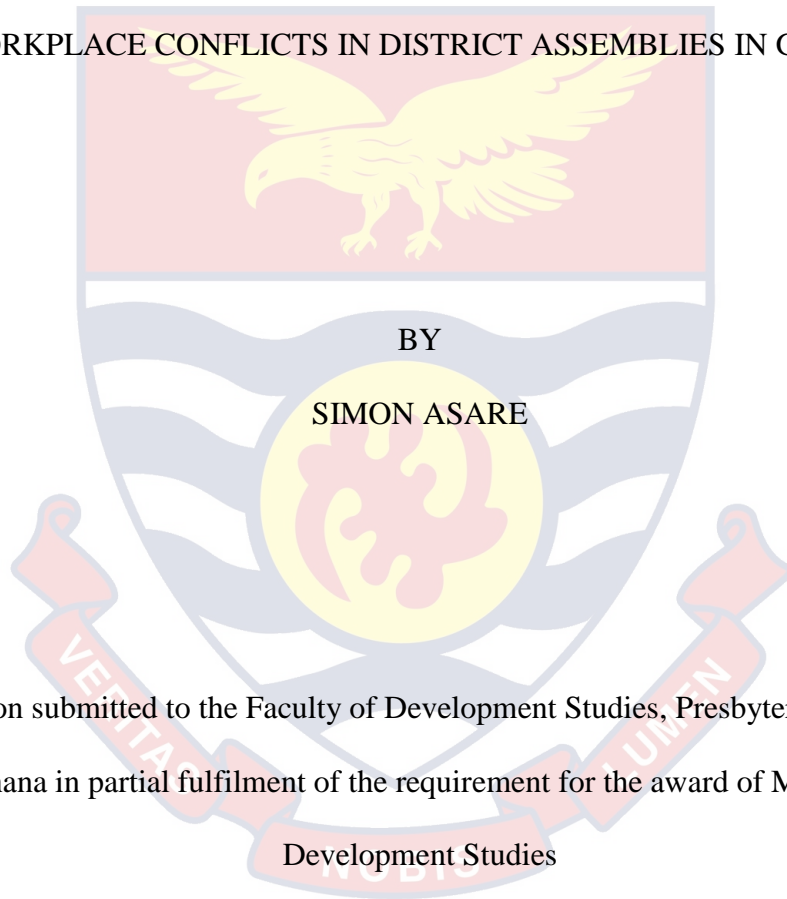WORKPLACE CONFLICTS IN DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES IN GHANA

SIMON ASARE

2019

PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, GHANA

FACULTY OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

WORKPLACE CONFLICTS IN DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES IN GHANA

BY

SIMON ASARE

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Development Studies, Presbyterian university

College, Ghana in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Master of Arts in

Development Studies

SEPTEMBER, 2019

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this term paper is the result of my own original research and that no part

of it has been presented for another degree in this University and elsewhere.

Name: Simon Asare

Candidate's Signature:………………………………… Date:……………………………….

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the term paper were supervised in

accordance with the guidelines on supervision of project work laid down by the Presbyterian

University College, Ghana.

Name: Rev. Benzies Isaac Adu-Okoree (PhD)

Supervisor's Signature:……………………………….. Date:…………………………………

ABSTRACT

The study focuses on assessing workplace conflicts in the District Assemblies in Ghana through literature review and quantitative analysis of primary data. The study seeks to bring to fore the need for managers of District Assemblies and by extension other Public Institutions to identify early warning signs or prevalence of workplace conflict, the undercurrent issues, appreciation of the consequences and where appropriate, managing it expeditiously. The study indicates that management style is a key factor determining high and low points of a destructive workplace conflict in an organisation, although not a grounded theory. It therefore specifically identifies personality clashes and warring egos as well as poor management as critical and complex factors affecting levels of destructive conflict in organization; gender differences also cause conflict when accompanied by disrespect but might not necessarily be problematic. The paper therefore recommends the pragmatic measures of improving management of workplace conflict and other grey areas of possible further research in the subject area.
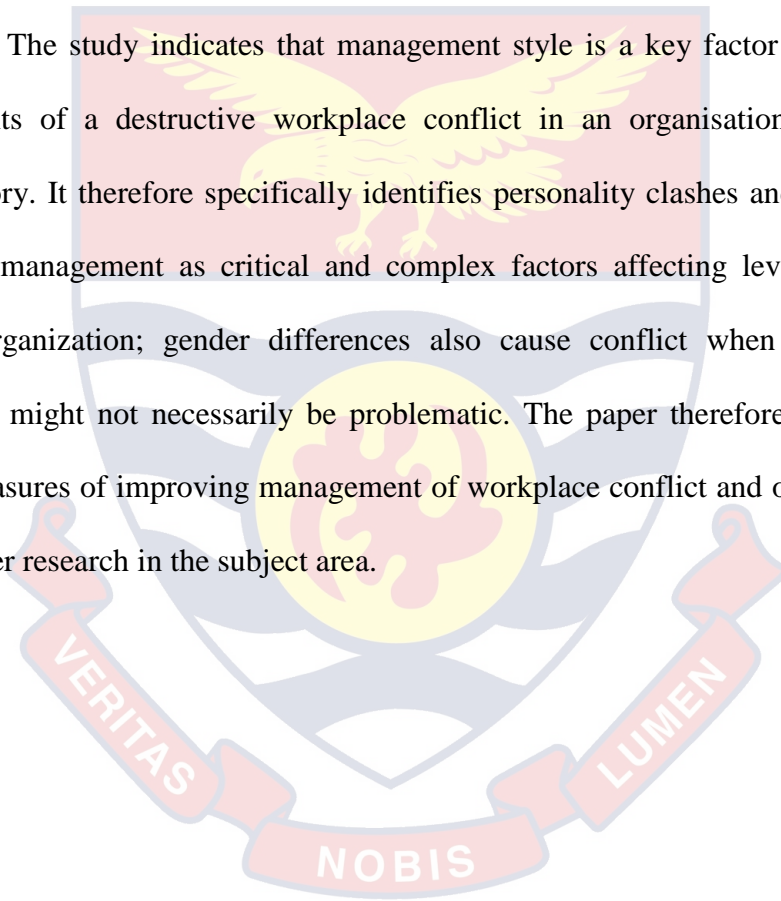
DEDICATION

This dedicated to my kids namely Eugene Asare, Daphne Asare, Makayla Asare, as well as

Elliana Asare and to challenge them to be equally accomplished both academically and

professionally.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My wife Ms. Vida Ntim has been a source of support during my year(s) of study and hereby acknowledge the sacrifices she made in order for me to complete this master's programme.

My supervisor Rev. Dr. Benzies Isaac Adu-Okoree who has been a pillar of academic support, provoking my thinking with numerous suggestions for enhanced output of this thesis.

Moreover, Mr. Akowuah Ababio, District Planning Officer at the study area who assisted me in diverse ways throughout the course, I shall forever be grateful to you. To all participants in this research work, I feel humbled by your willingness to share your work experiences with me. Thanks very much!
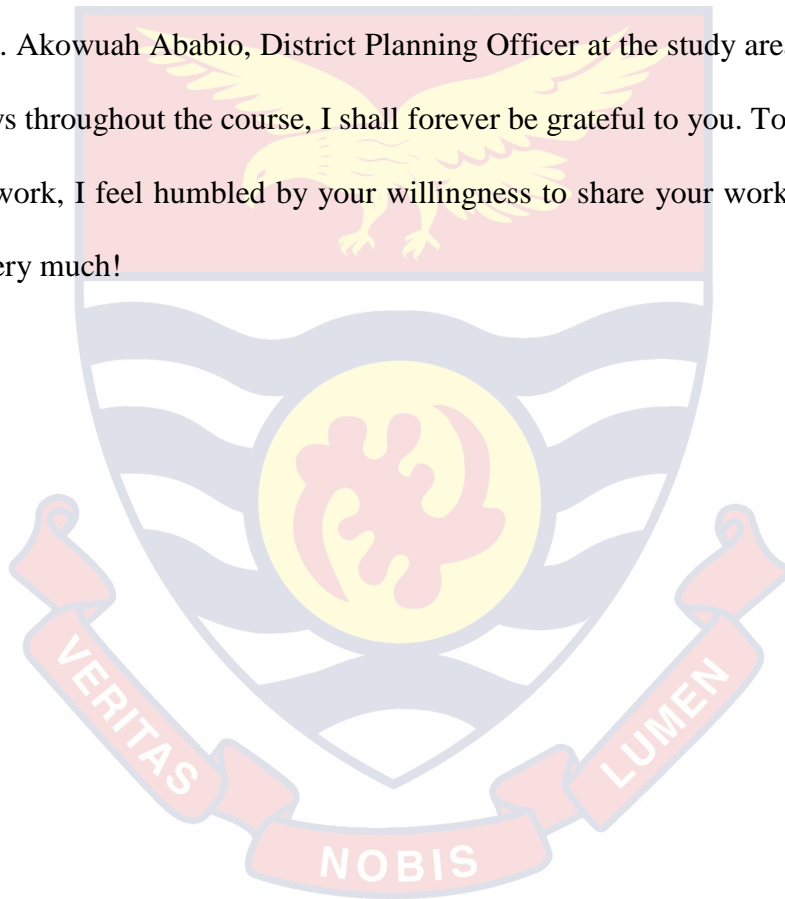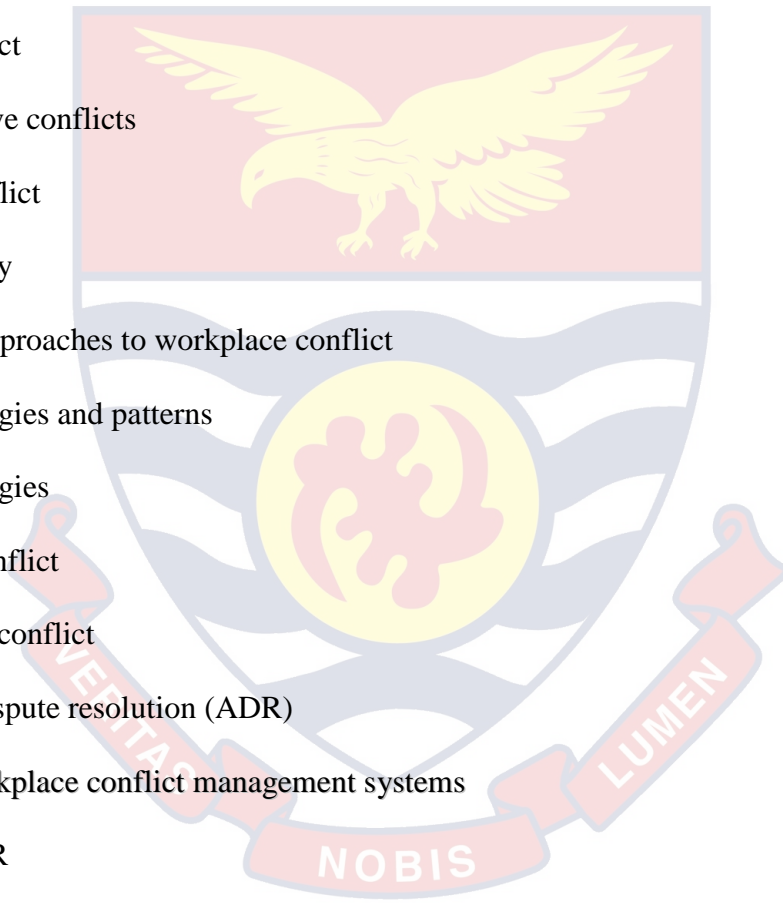
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

"Peace is a prerequisite for any meaningful development" in all spheres of human endeavours. In other words, there cannot be meaningful progress and attainment of organizational objectives if peace becomes an illusion. This finds expression in the UN Sustainable Development Goal 16 which seeks to "Promote Just, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies". This is a call for all member states to promote peaceful co-existence among people.

It is sad to state that world's attention has been on civil wars, international migration, ethnic violence, terrorism among others at the expense of other equally critical but silent issues. These so-called major issues have taken the centre stage in the world politics and have overshadowed issues of workplace conflicts which have some repercussions on economies at all levels. Workplace conflict is a macrocosm of the local's and national's conflicts. Undoubtedly, peace at the workplace is a building block of the prevailing national peace.

According to Scott (2010) if you work with at least one other person, it is safe to say that you would have disagreements and face difficulties at times. It is normal, natural and nothing to fear. Every day in office and any number of other workplaces, people are having conflicts with co-workers with the District Assemblies being no exception.

Contrary to widely accepted notion that conflict is inherently bad (Destructive conflict), when managed strategically it can create positive outcomes such as improved personal and working relationships, help drive creativity and produces major innovations resulting in enhanced performance both at the individual and organizational levels (Constructive conflict). In the nutshell, the paradox of conflict is that it is both the force that can tear relationships apart and the force that binds them together (Adetula, 2006).

The three (3) work sectors where frequent conflict is most common are government, education and non-for-profit. This appears that conflict occurs more often in the service-oriented sectors than those that are driven by a profit motive and the study area perfectly fit into the government sector.

Contributing to the discussion on workplace conflicts, Bernstein, et al (2015) stated inter alia that "Conflict is unavoidable, but that does not mean it has to put a crimp in business or leave anyone in danger". This connotes that successfully making shift from over dwelling on negative side of conflict to the prospect for positive change is a solid footing for resolving disagreements.

Admittedly, there are scant literature on workplace conflict in Ghana and Africa at large contrarily to Europe, North America and the Far East. In similar fashion, there is limited conflict literature written in English with global focus. Notwithstanding the limitations, critical study of New Zealand research indicates that New Zealand experiences similar levels of workplace conflicts to other countries (Harris, 2011) with Ghana being no exception.

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"Employees in the United States companies spend approximately 2.1 hours each week involved in conflict. This amounts to around $359 billion in hours paid that are filled with and focused on conflict instead of on positive productivity. The figure is the equivalent of 385 million days on the job going toward the goal of arguing, as opposed to being put toward collaboration - A full day of productivity each month and two and half weeks of productivity each year" (CPP Inc, 2008).

The 2008 CPP Global Human Capital Report as cited by Harris (2011), shows that staffs in nine countries spend approximately one to three hours a week in conflict. The latest research findings by Adare HRM Survey revealed at a Human Resource Seminar in Shannon portrays that 18,000 labour days were lost in 2017 due to conflict in the workplace - a dramatic rise on the 1,100 figure in 2016 when over 250 companies responded to the research survey that covered more than 50,000 Irish employees (Carey, 2017). What is problematic about workplace conflict is that in the US, where there has been widespread introduction into workplaces of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) based conflict management systems, levels of workplace conflict are still increasing (Masters & Albright, 2002).

Problem statement

The figures of and situations in advanced economies as made evidently clear in the preceding paragraphs are likely to be better than that of developing countries like Ghana which has lower human development index. I have observed that the frequent postings and more specifically the recent one in 2017, just after the 2016 general election, affected almost all

classes of staff of the Local Government Service (MMDAs staff). The exercise was underpinned mainly by staff rationalization yet without losing side of the fact that some were politically motivated whilst others had undercurrent issue of other forms of workplace conflicts.

The staffs of the local government service per the rules of engagement are bound by the Local Government Service Protocols and a breach of which leads to conflicts at the workplace. Some of the action and inactions of staff which cause some infractions to the collectively agreed rules and acceptable behaviours are competition, usurping of authority, role conflicts among others. In line with the X and Y theory, some staffs naturally obey rules whilst others are deviants, flouting rules and orders, precipitating Workplace Conflicts. This is usually fueled by the activities of conflict entrepreneurs at the Workplace i.e. the profiteers of conflicts.

Workplace conflicts could come in constructive or destructive form. Constructive Workplace Conflicts bring healthy competition which could stimulate creativity, innovativeness etc. to the advantage of the individual and organization. On the flip side, destructive Workplace Conflicts have adverse consequences including petty arguments, minor quibble, loggerheads, bad mouthing, open confrontation etc which could breed Job dissatisfaction, low productivity, high attrition rate, etc on the part of the staff. The organization on the other hand could suffer low productivity, high attrition rate, loss of institutional memory

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In summary, Workplace Conflicts may become cancerous throughout the organization, impeding workflow, thwarting productivity, propelling high turnover of staff etc, ultimately derailing the attainment of organizational objective(s).

Therefore, the propensity of WC to adversely affect the realization of corporate object cannot be underrated, hence the need for its proper management in all enterprises

This situation coupled with my personal interest in this area, informed my (i.e. the researcher's) determination to investigate the causes, effects and management mechanisms of workplace conflicts in District Assemblies. The study takes a critical overview of workplace conflicts in order to appreciate the challenges in the area and possible prospects embedded. This involved a broad range and in-depth literature review. While reviewing the little literature available on workplace conflict, the consistency in views expressed in primary data gathered and analyzed were likely to be representative of current viewpoints in this area.

Objective of the study

General Objectives

The focus of this study is to critically assess workplace conflicts in District Assemblies through literature review and quantitative analysis of primary data. The study seeks to bring to fore the need for managers of District Assemblies to identify early warning signs or prevalence of workplace conflict, the undercurrent issues, appreciation of the consequences and where appropriate, managing it expeditiously.

Specific objectives

The following are the specific objectives the study intends to achieve:

     (i)   To explore causes of conflicts in the District Assemblies.

     (ii)   To examine the effects of conflicts in the District Assemblies.

     (iii)   To examine the conflicts management mechanisms in District Assemblies.

Research questions

The following are the questions that emanated from the background study:

    i.   What are the causes of workplace conflicts in the District Assemblies?

    ii.   What are the effects of workplace conflicts on the District Assemblies?

    iii.   How are workplace conflicts in the District Assemblies managed?

Significance of the study

The study would bring to the limelight both constructive and destructive consequences of workplace conflicts in the District Assembly and by extension the public sector. The nature of workplace conflicts and potential escalating factors will be highlighted for early detection to avert them. In addition, workplace conflicts management mechanisms at the study area would be evaluated to establish their effectiveness and where found appropriate or otherwise, prescribe better alternatives for consideration by policy and decision makers.

Expected limitations of the Study

The scope of the study involves identification of the undercurrents, effects of workplace conflicts in the District Assemblies with the Ahafo Ano South West District Assembly as a case study. Only one out of the 254 Districts was studied.

Special focus is on the following:

i.   Establishment of causal factors of workplace conflicts in the District Assembly and to some extent the public sector.

ii.   Determination of the extent of effects of workplace conflicts on service delivery of the Assembly and

iii. Assessment of conflict resolution mechanisms in the Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly.

The key issues of limitations to the study include the following:

i.   There is scant literature on the subject area as such hinder thorough secondary literature reviews

ii.   Most functional heads do not keep and update records of conflict incidence at the workplace except those with criminal connotation. Therefore, answers are provided from memory and might not be too accurate which has the propensity to adversely affect the result.

iii. Reluctance of some respondents to provide information as a way of shielding weaknesses – individual and corporate image protection.

iv.   The responsiveness of the respondents to the questionnaire could not be 100%.

Organisation of the study

The study is divided into five chapters, with the first being introduction which covers the background; problem statement; purpose and objectives of the study. It also covers the relevance and scope of the study. Chapter two provides a review of relevant literature while Chapter three explains the methodological approaches adopted in collecting and analyzing the data of the study which is followed by Chapter four which presents the analysis and discussion of the findings. Finally, Chapter five provides the summary of the work and draw conclusions from the findings to answer the research questions and subsequently provide some recommendations to deal with work place conflict when they arise.

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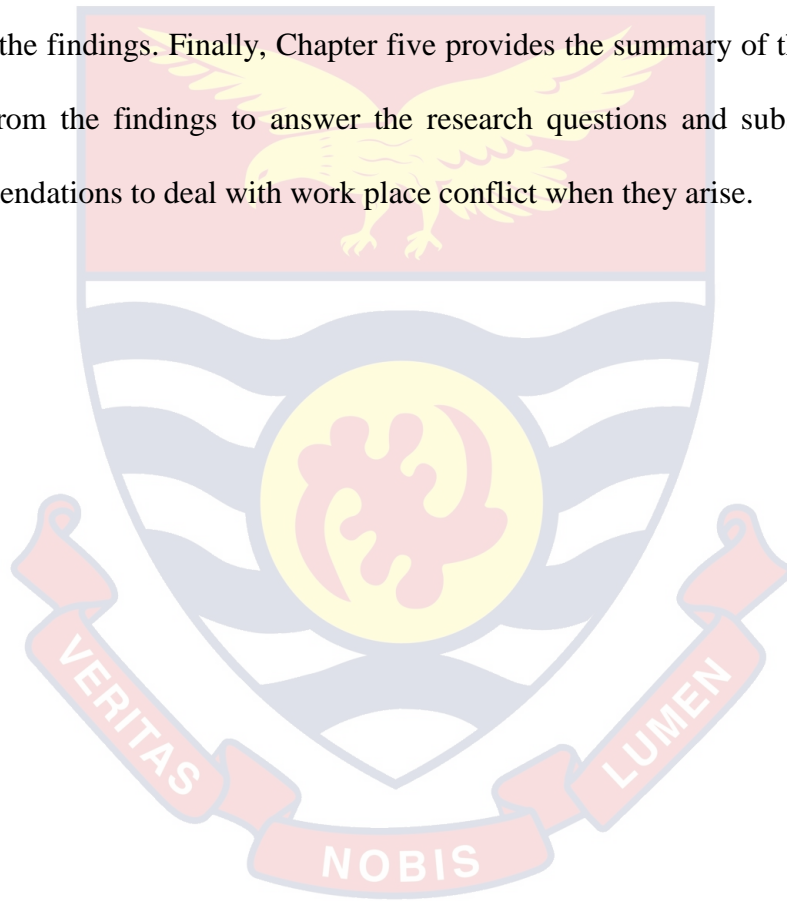
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of conflict

Conflict resolution is a recent concept in social science which has not developed a consensual understanding like many others. Sociologists define conflict as a social fact in which at least two or more parties are involved and whose origins are differences either in interest or in the social position of the parties (Imbusch, 1999). Folger, Scott, Poole and Stutman (2005) define conflict as the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatibility as and the possibility of interference from others as a result of this incompatibility.

The underlying issue recognized by the proponents of these definitions is that technically at least two parties need to recognize that conflict exist before it exists. However, where one party only recognizes there is a conflict, Cahn and Abigail (2007) has successfully stepped in to distinguished real conflicts from unreal and non-substantive conflicts. Collaborating this view, Masters and Albright (2002) state that conflict exists when it is felt by psychologically by at least one of the parties, that interdependence is a core aspect of conflict and that conflict can be either real or perceived.

According to De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) "This definition is based on a process view of conflict and requires a distinction between latent and manifest conflict to be made for it to be fully understood" and then define latent conflict as felt or perceived by one party and manifest conflict refers to conflict dynamics that occur between people or groups.

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Features of conflict

Conflict has peculiar traits and such unique characteristics of it helps in easy identification whenever it rears its ugly head. The key features are discussed below:

Conflict is neutral

There are countless misconceptions about conflict which many social scientists have joined the fray. Harris (2011) explains that at the moment conflict is neither constructive (positive) nor destructive (negative) but best perceived as neutral. It is what happens subsequently, how the parties choose to behave once they realize that there is a conflict, which determines whether the conflict manifest positively or negatively. The warning is clearly made by Tillet and French (2006) that "Fighting and arguing should not be looked at as being conflict but as responses to or manifestation of conflict".

Conflict as a normal function of Society

Conflict is simply part of life and therefore inevitable. The most captivating exposition on conflict as part of life is the one offered by Burton (1972) which depicts that

> *"Conflict, like sex is an essential element of in human relationships. It is the means of change, the means by which social values of welfare, security, justice, and opportunities for personal development can be achieved. The existence of a flow of conflict is the only guarantee that the aspirations of society will be attained. Indeed, conflict, is like sex is to be enjoyed"*

The above definition of conflict affirms the view of system theory that conflict is essential for development and warns that without conflict there would be stagnation and decay.

Interdependence

Wilmot, et al (2007) reveal that the view on conflict resolution has evolved over time from the notion that it deals with unalterable opposition to the standpoint of focusing on interdependence. However, while there is broad consensus over the role of interdependence in conflict resolution there are a range of views as to what interdependence actually means (Harris, 2010).

Cahn and Abigail (2007, p.4) as cited by Harris (2010) assert that "Interdependence occurs when those involved in a relationship characterize it as important and worth the effort to maintain". This is also problematic as they claim conflict has interdependence as an essential feature. This means from their perspective conflict cannot occur between people who do not have a relationship that they think is "important and worth the effort to maintain" (Cahn & Abigail, 2007, p.4).

Masters and Albert posit that interdependence mean that conflict cannot be resolved so that there is a mutually satisfying outcome without mutual effort. This definition has overcome the flaws in various ones put forward by writers in the field of study.

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Types of conflict

Attempts by social scientists to categorize conflicts on common grounds have yielded little success. Harris (2011) asserts that the absence of an accepted theoretical explanation of conflict contribute to the lack of consensus as to what types of conflict actually exist.

Notwithstanding Harris' view expressed above, some efforts of researches have to be considered. Ellis and Anderson (2005) propose three types of conflict namely interest conflicts which stem from scarcity, value conflicts which stem from cultural differences and cognitive conflicts which stem from either misunderstanding, disagreement over facts or differing world of views or ideas about how to achieve results.

Lulofs and Cahn (2000) differentiate conflicts into four types – unreal conflicts, non-substantive conflicts, mere disagreement and real/substantive conflicts. By way of illumination, unrealistic conflicts are those perceived by one person but do not exist or do exist but are misperceived by those involved. Substantive conflicts refer to those where there is a real issue involved whilst non-substantive conflicts involve behaviours like aggression, competition and bickering where there is no real issue involved. In disagreements are divergent views and position on an issue which has no propensity to affect relationship between the parties.

The study concurs with the school of thought that believes that every situation tends to involve the same dynamics, making it difficult if not impossible to draw a clear line of demarcation between one type of conflict and the other. Capping it, Tjosvold (2008) states

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that reasons for categorization of conflicts should not be taken seriously as stereotypes are incorrect.

Theories of conflict

There are various theories of Conflict. Most of the perspective given by the Conflict theorists were much informed by the area of specialty. Notwithstanding, there are salient issues that run through all of them .in other words, there are points of agreement and disagreement. The key theories discussed in the study are Political and Psychological Theories.

Political theory of conflict

Weber's political theory of conflict as cited by Harris (2011) is undoubtedly very insightful reflection of the dynamics of political power and remains valid in this age and time. However, critics like Eunson (2007) claim that he was too shallow in his theory. This stems from the realization that most researchers now agree that conflict is a normal function of society (Tillet and French, 2006).

Contributing to the discourse, Burton (1990) proposed the need for a theory of behavior that explains conflict and that once this had been identified it would be possible to develop appropriate means for handling it. In addition, he advanced a genetically based human needs theory claiming there was a link between frustration and human needs for identity, security, recognition, autonomy, dignity and bonding but was shot down by criticism from Scimecca (1993) on the basis that Burton's theory failed to consider culture, social and institutions and the relationship amongst them. Moreover, the fear was that conflict resolution could become

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social control tool in the absence of theoretical base underpinning it. Burton (1990) highlights that Alternative Dispute Resolution offers opportunities for the powerful to again manipulate the outcomes of disputes to their advantage and warns accordingly.

Psychological theories of conflict

Psychological Theories give us insight into our behavior and provide answers as to why we do the things we do. Some of those could even change your life. Psychological theories include attribution theory, psychodynamic theory, uncertainty theory and social exchange theory.

The proponents of the social exchange theory Kelley and Thibault (1978) assert that parties in a relationship assess their relationship in terms of what they putting into the relationship and what they are receiving. Conflict arises when one party feels that he is not getting as much back as what he is putting in under the wrong assumption that human beings are rational and behave rationally. Psychodynamic theory defined by Cahn and Abigail (2007) are conflicts where the frustration is taken out on someone different to the one that caused it. The displacement or misplacement may arise out of nowhere.

As per Sillars, Colletti Parry and Rogers (1982) contribution to knowledge in this field, they state inter alia that people behave in conflict situations due to motives and ideas that they attribute to the other party that may not be accurate. They reveal that Attribution theory explains why parties escalate unreal conflicts that can be applied to real conflicts – retaliatory behavior.

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Interestingly, the above three theories best describe conflict dynamics like unreal conflict and behavioural but lack comprehensive explanation of conflict. To make up for the shortfall, a better theory with wider application is introduced below.

Cahn and Abigail (2007) offer that Uncertainty theory creates uncertainty in the relationship in which it occurs. They argues that the theory is useful as it identifies the role of uncertainty in conflict and should be a part of every conflict professional's check list.

Of all the above, the most relevant and significant to workplace conflict is system theory which perceives conflict as a normal and essential aspect of every system and so normalizes conflict.

Nature of workplace conflict

According to the UN Ombusman (2016) conflict at the workplace can be defined as any opposition or difference of wishes, needs, statements, arguments, actions or principles between two or more staff members or between staff members and the organization.

The world has witnessed evolution and revolution over time and so is workplace conflict. Organizational conflict has its origin in the industrial revolution where workers concerned about their loss of freedom (control) and autonomy began to resist and rebel against capitalist employers (Jaffee, 2008). Further revelation made by Edward (1979) point to three forms of control organizations employed to ensure staffs succumb to guidelines. First off is technical control where technologies regulate the workers pace of work. Second one involves boss

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direct control of subordinate. Lastly, bureaucratic control controls workers through as formal structures of the entity.

The close control of workers led to scientific management, an approach that reduces an employee to a unit of production and tends to eliminate the rights and welfare of employees.

Another phase in the development is Hawthorne experiments (Jaffee, 2008). Researchers experimented to gauge the effect of changes in physical environment on productivity. The results were confusing as they showed productivity rising regardless of physical changes in work environments (Joffee, 2008). He added that it eventually attributed to team development and led to recognition that harmonious work environments were desirable. Human Relations era followed suit which in ultimate sense the objective of human relations era was to make employees productive and it was realized that employee's satisfaction is the best means of making the employee productive.

Unfortunately, the human relations era failed because of the tension associated with the top-down bureaucratic structure which is seen as antithetical to productive and efficient organizational process. The control mechanism was misconstrued as lack of trust which workers react with hostility and resentment towards management resorting in low morale (Jeffee, 2008).

Hecksher (1994) indicates that while bureaucracy is based on formalization, rational legal authority and instrumentalism, post bureaucracy on the other hand is based on persuasion,

dialogue and trust. Actions must be guided by professional principles and not based primarily on formal job definitions, informal sharing and decision making driven by problems rather than top-down orders, as argued by Jeffee (2008).

Sources of workplace conflict

Although workplace conflict is an area where few research works have been carried out, it has wide spectrum of opinions on sources of workplace conflicts. Some stems from individual tensions whilst others consider the division of labour as the source (Jeffee, 2008). Of all these, the best fit for this study is the proposition of De Dreu and Gelfand (2008). The researchers grouped workplace conflicts into three broad sources namely identity conflict, scare resource, worker dignity and socio-cognitive.

Identity conflict

Efforts geared towards promoting or maintaining a positive impression of self is regarded as identity and value conflicts. According to Sedikedes and Strube (1997) as cited by Harris (2008), the self is the entirety of distinct yet interrelated psychological phenomena that are associated with reflective consciousness. They claim "people generally strive for a positive self-view and try to convince both themselves and others that they are worthwhile individuals through self-enhancement strategies" often resulting in an inflated view of the self.

Sedikedes and Strube (1997) say the level of success people enjoy with their self enhancement determines their level of self-esteem. De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) agree with recent research findings that "People with an unstable self-view are more likely to escalate

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conflict than those with a stable self-view". They further indicate that efforts at maintaining a positive self-view inevitably create situations where people either intentionally or inadvertently hurt the self-view of others.

Moreover, De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) contend that people take their inflated self-views into conflicts and this leads them to believe they are more cooperative than they really are and that their counterparty is more hostile. All of these factors are sources of identity conflicts based on a threatened self.

Another dimension is the holding of consensually shared and socially validated opinions and beliefs which give rise to socio-cognitive conflicts of understanding. The exposition is made in the subsequent paragraph.

Socio-cognitive conflicts

Cited by Harris (2011), according to De Dreu & Gelfand (2008) socio-cognitive conflict theory has three basic assumptions. Firstly, people try to have accurate perceptions of themselves. Secondly, people have limited ability to be rational as they are restricted in the amount of information they have available. This leads them to develop different understandings and beliefs about identical objects of perception. Finally, people seek social validation of their beliefs and this is a source of conflict if others do not share these beliefs. Socio cognitive theory is not consistent with the research regarding identity conflicts described in the previous paragraph which contradicts the first of these assumptions.

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De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) claim that "more often than not, workplace conflicts are about a mixture of opposing interests clashing values and incompatible beliefs" (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008 p.22). Harris (2011) contends that Quantitative Research confirms accuracy of the claim. The CPP Global Human Capital Report (2008) identifies the most common types of workplace conflict as personality clashes and warring egos.

Resource conflict

The general view held by many social scientists is that scarce resources and conflicts of interest normally produce resource conflicts. De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) assert that the scarcity or finite nature of resources within organisations has given rise to competing demands for them. This results in conflict at all three major levels in organizations: the individual level, group level and organisational level.

They hold the view that resource conflicts is much appreciated when one understands interdependence theory which assumes that participants within any social system depend on each other to attain positive outcomes and avoid negative outcomes. This explains a continual conflict of interest situation as people continually struggle with deciding whether it is better to act selfishly for individual benefit or to cooperate and achieve a superior collective benefit as conceived by De Dreu and Gelfand (2008).

This depicts that individually rational employee will show up to work late, and when at work, will work slowly, pilfer and not contribute much if any at all. On the flip side, an individual who is collectively rational will work hard and help out but has inherent risk that if it

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becomes too widespread the organization may fail and employees rendered worse off. This is better put by De Dreu & Gelfand (2008), "That a continual conflict of interest situation exists between collectively rational and individually rational employees and it applies at all levels of organizations".

The conclusion is that "As individual rationality is collective irrationality and vice versa there is a dilemna with interdependence theory as participants must decide whether to be individually or collectively rational" (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008).

Worker dignity

Worker dignity is observed as a key element of workplace conflict. Hodson (2001) perspective is that workers struggle to achieve dignity and gain meaning and self-realization from their jobs and propose four conditions in workplaces that can create conflict. First off is "Mismanagement" which is defined as a state where irresponsible, incompetent and poorly trained managers create a disorganized work environment. Second is "Abuse" which involves the arbitrary, inconsistent and inappropriate use of power over employees.

The third one is "Overwork" which is a concept that Carl Marx identified as a way in which workers are exploited and "Challenges to autonomy" which focuses on where skilled workers have their decision-making power taken from them and efforts to recover this power are a common response. The final Hodson (2011) identified is "Contradictions of employee involvement" where there are non-bureaucratic team-based structures in operation. In such

situations if there is an inconsistency between the true intentions of management and their rhetoric of worker participation, employees will tend to use strategies to bridge the gap.

Hodson (2001) also looked at how workers responded to factors that create conflict. He purported that the key motivator involved is a desire to maintain dignity. The main way workers respond to losing dignity is through resistance; include both passive (i.e sabotage, confrontations, etc) and active forms (i.e non-cooperation, etc).

Theoretical approaches to workplace conflict

Harris (2011) criticizes Jaffee (2008) and De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) gave no attention to power in their intellectual arguments. Hodson (2001) touched on power and dualism on the basis that employees maintain their dignity when employers threat them with respect and consideration. The challenge is that Hodson's study relegated to the background appropriate concept of respect which has a thin line with dignity. Notwithstanding, it is a common knowledge and wholly accepted by many researchers in this area of study that there are many different sources of workplace conflicts. In line with systems theory, Jeffee (2008) summarizes the condition that conflict is a permanent feature of all organizational systems.

Conflict strategies and patterns

There are numerous Conflict Strategies and Patterns. The study limited itself to the   few which are discussed below:

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Conflict strategies

Five conflict strategies that can be used to manage conflict widely accepted by key researchers such as Kilmann and Thomas (1977), Scott (1990) Wilmot and Hocker (2007), Cahn and Abigail (2007), Lulofs and Cahn (2000) as well as Masters and Abigail (2007) are Avoidance, Accommodation, Competition, Compromise, and Collaboration and are explained below:

Avoidance: it is a strategy usually that seeks to put off conflict by delaying or ignoring the conflict with the view that the problem resolves itself without a confrontation. Wertheim et al. (1998) states that avoidance is a destructive conflict strategy and that using it means conflicts never get resolved as more often than not the other party turns to fighting in order to get a response Kilmann and Thomas (1977) say avoiders score low on both assertiveness and cooperativeness.

Accommodation: Accommodating style is one of sacrifice, selflessness, high co-operation and low assertiveness to maintain the illusion of harmony. Wertheim et al. (1998) believes accommodation is a destructive strategy because it often leads to a build up of negative emotions. Resentment can develop for the accommodator and guilt or contempt for the victor.

Competition: Competition portrays competing as a power driven mode being high in assertiveness and low on cooperativeness (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). It puts parties in a

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win-lose relationship where one attempts to achieve his/her goals at the expense of another. Wertheim et al. (1998) see competition as a destructive conflict strategy.

Compromise: Compromise means neither party get what they want from a conflict yet both parties feel satisfied that they have reached an acceptable solution. Cahn and Abigail (2007) say compromise delivers half win- half win outcomes. For these reasons while compromise is better than the destructive strategies it is not comparable to collaboration.

Collaboration: Harris (2011) has affirmed that there is broad consensus amongst researchers that collaboration is the best conflict strategy as it offers a approach that can achieve the win- win outcomes required for conflict to be resolved (Lulofs and Cahn (2000).

However, in escalated conflict where a third party facilitates resolution, staff are denied skills in conflict management. Others argue from the perspective of game theory that if the parties understand the situation occurs once then they will forgo the benefits associated with co-operation for personal gain but where likely to repeat, then the parties would value the benefits of co-operation.

Per Harris (2011) analysis, collaboration uses "integrative behaviours and developing mutually satisfying agreements to solve the problem" (Cahn & Abigail, 2007, p. 82). Cahn and Abigail (2007) view integrative behaviours as being aspects of teamwork such as mutual assistance, cooperation and collective action. Collaboration is non-dualistic behaviour as it requires the parties to think of the best interests of both sides rather than just their own

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interests. Theoretically, collaborative conflict resolution appears good but suffers major setbacks in its consistent application because of negotiators dilemma. Harris (2008) sums up the whole discussion in Table 1.

Table 1: Conflict Strategies

CONFLICT STRATEGY	DEFINITION	OBJECTIVE	BEHAVIOR/TACTIE
Avoidance	Withdrawal	Lose-lose	Physically absent silent
Accommodation	Acquiescence	Lose-win	Give in; don't make waves
Competition	Aggression	Win-lose	Selfish, argumentative
Compromise	Trade-offs	Win and lose	Wheeler Dealer
Collaboration	Mutual satisfaction	Win-win	Supportive of self and others

Source: Harris, 2011

Patterns of conflict

Stride, and Ifeka (1971) describe patterns or stages of conflict as "No conflict, latent conflict, emergence, escalation (hurting) stalemate, de-escalation, settlement/resolution, post conflict peace building and reconciliation". Conflict can repeat stages several times. Latent conflict stage is the stage where people begin to conceive or develop different needs, values or interests. Emergence stage is actually the beginning of the obvious conflict.

On their part, Cahn and Abigail (2007) differentiate patterns of constructive conflict from patterns of destructive conflict with the assertion that constructive conflict has five phases explained in the ensuing paragraph.

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- Patterns of constructive conflict

Phase One - The "Prelude to conflict" which Cahn and Abigail (2007) refer to the four variables that combine to make it possible for conflict to occur. These are the participants, the relationship between them, other interested parties and the social and physical environment that the conflict occurs in. Phase Two - The "Triggering event" is the earliest act that started the conflict as perceived by at least one of the parties involved (Cahn and Abigail, 2007). Phase Three - The "Initiation phase" means the point where both parties realize there is a conflict. Phase Four – The Differentiation phase" which they refer to the time when the parties interact about the conflict. Cahn and Abigail (2007) assert it involves the participants using both constructive and destructive strategies and both sides revealing how they see the issues and what outcomes they would like. Phase Five - The "Resolution phase" is when both sides agree to an outcome which may fully or partly resolve the conflict.

- Patterns of destructive conflict

First under the destructive conflict is conflict avoidance cycle which encompasses avoiding initiation of conflict and when it arises, one trying to withdraw. Second one is the chilling effect whereby one person withholds grievance from the other due to fear of his reaction. This approach, according to Cahn and Abigail (2007) leads to less communication in relationships and can result in chickening out of the relationship. Lulofs and Cahn (2000) assert that competitive conflict cycle is the most common and it involves a pattern where people go over the same issues repeatedly, bring up past grievances and add them to the present but make no effort at finding lasting solution. Whether a conflict is resolved or

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escalates is the mindset of the parties (Wertheim, et al (1998). He adds the final factor that, it becomes destructive when the parties involved in the conflict are entrapped in protracted conflict.

Diversity and conflict

Harris (2011) in-depth literature review on the diversity and conflict role in workplace conflict reveals that gender, culture, personality, and group dynamics do not provide ample explanation as to the levels of destructive conflict vary. With reference to CPP Global Human Capital Report (2008) results he stated that levels of destructive conflict at workplace varied and the worst 10% of organizations had levels of destructive conflict three times that of the remaining 90%. He concluded that organizational culture and personality are critical variables that affect the levels of destructive conflict.

Having understood factors that partially or wholly account for conflict and its escalation at the workplace, it is prudent that we focus on resolution.

Alternative dispute resolution (ADR)

According to Harris (2011), the National Conference on the Causes of Popular Dissatisfaction with the Administration of Justice in 1976 concluded that the pressure on the congested legal system could be eased by utilizing alternative forms of dispute resolution. The acronym ADR became a key concept of conflict resolution following this conference and ADR rapidly evolved. A key part of this evolution has been that what ADR represents

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has expanded to the point that it became apparent that the word alternative was no longer particularly appropriate (Scimecca, 1993).

An Ad Hoc Panel on "Dispute Resolution and Public Policy" in 1983 defined ADR as including "all methods practices and techniques, formal and informal, within and outside courts, that are used to resolve disputes" (Administrative Conference of the U.S., 1987, p.12). Scimecca (1993) objects with this definition and suggests that it should be defined to cover alternatives to the court system rather than being all inclusive.

As there is confusion about what constitutes ADR and the acronym ADR clearly does not reflect what ADR has now become there is a strong argument for replacing ADR with a term that clearly defines what ADR now represents, such as "Conflict Management", Lipsky et al. (2003). Most researchers now regularly use the term "Conflict Management" to describe the processes that ADR now cover, although they do not propose that ADR be renamed "Conflict Management".

ADR and workplace conflict management systems

According to Bingham and Chachere (1999) as cited by Harris (2011), ADR based workplace conflict management systems have become so widely accepted that by 1999 in the US about half of the major private employers in the US had ADR-based workplace conflict management systems.

The logic behind the adoption of ADR systems by organisations in a way that is consistent with systems theory. He argues that all effective organisations have goals. As conflict exists in all areas of life and can be dealt with constructively or destructively, all organisations presumably share a goal of wanting to deal with it constructively. He believes successful organisations manage conflict in a way that improves relationships and leaves everyone satisfied with the processes used to arrive at solutions to conflicts, even if they do not agree with the actual solutions, Stitt (1998) explains. Surprisingly, Stitt (1988) could not explain how it is possible for someone to be satisfied with an agreement they do not agree with. The discretion offered by ADR systems could be a powerful reason for organizations adopting them in this modern time.

The Alternative Dispute Resolution Act, 2010, Act 798 is the law governing arbitration in Ghana which according to legal colossus in Ghana, it is based on UNCITRAL Model Law. As a hybrid, there is court connected ADR practice in Ghana. The Ghanaian ADR model has been developed to the point that it comprehensive, modern and forward looking with the possibility of being gaining the seat of arbitration references in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

Effective ADR

There are several mechanisms employed under ADR to resolve conflicts. I discuss here the two most effectively used in workplace conflict management, Arbitration and Mediation.

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Arbitration

Cahn and Abigail (2007) define arbitration as a process whereby a neutral third-party listen to both sides of a dispute and makes a binding ruling. The advantages of arbitration are that it can deliver quick decisions and those involved have some degree of control over the process (Pitchforth, 2007). This means they can have input into areas such as where and when the arbitration will take place and who the arbitrator is. Another advantage of arbitration is that it is usually relatively cheap and the awards it delivers are final, meaning disputes end with arbitration.

The flaws as identified by Pitchforth (2007), are that the law does not allow arbitrators to use some techniques that mediators are allowed to use, that in some cases one of the parties could be better served by the law rather than having an arbitrator giving a practical ruling, that it utilizes an adversarial process that results in win-lose outcomes. Arbitration delivers outcomes that Lulofs and Cahn (2000) describe as conflict management rather than conflict resolution.

Mediation

Kruk (2000, p.4) gave a well sound definition of mediation which is in quote below:

> *"Mediation is a collaborative conflict resolution process in which two or more parties in dispute are assisted in their negotiation by a neutral and impartial third party and empowered to voluntarily reach their own mutually acceptable settlement of the issues in dispute. The mediator structures and facilitates the process by*

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which the parties make their own decisions and determine the

outcomes in a way that satisfies the interests of all the parties in the

dispute".

- The Mediation Process

There are three basic stages, which are analyzed below:

Pre-mediation

The first phase occurs prior to the mediation and sees an agreement between the parties to

seek mediation and the appointment of a neutral unbiased mediator (Cahn & Abigail, 2007).

The parties then meet separately with the mediator as this both establishes rapport and is

consistent with a critical requisite of mediation. This is that the parties believe the mediator

will listen to them attentively (Doherty& Guyler, 2008).

The mediation session

Masters and Albright (2002) say the typical mediation session begins with an opening

statement, purpose of the mediation and the procedures and communication rule, hearing and

cross examination as well as written mutual agreement that both sides are at least

comfortable with, as espoused by Lulofs and Cahn (2000).

The ending phase

The final phase is described by Kruk (2000) as the ending phase. This involves generating

and evaluating options and then settlement of the dispute. This results in the production of a

written list of steps that both sides have agreed to. As agreements are   voluntary it is important.

ADR mechanisms employed in managing Workplace Conflicts in the District Assembly. In the District Assembly, mediation is used when relationship exist between the disputants after the dispute, and their preparedness for a speedy settlement. On that basis, the matter is referred to a neutral and experienced Human Resource Manager or a line officer to settle.

The mediator meets separately the disputants to establish their voluntary submission to the processes, deepen rapport and agree on the sessions as well as guiding rules/principles including parties respect time constraints, refrain from interrupting each other, take turns talking whilst the other party listens. The complainant presents the complaints first and the respondent explains his side of the issue(s).

The mediator gives a summary of issues raised and the position the party took on these issues, setting the stage for the discussion and negotiation - exploring needs and interests and generating options for settlement (Kruk, 2000). There could be in-camera meetings with either one or both and once they arrived at a consensus either win-win or win-lose. This results in the production of a written list of steps that both sides have agreed to which implementation is monitored by management. Where stalemate occurs, the mediator recommends higher authority to step in with arbitration which offers the disputants less privileges. Arbitration is rarely employed in Workplace Conflict management due to dissatisfaction with outcomes in most cases.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Study area

In order to test the propositions of the study and examine the main questions raised, the following methodology was employed. The stages in the process used include sources of data, population, sampling techniques, data collection instruments, data analysis techniques. The study is on workplace conflicts in the District Assemblies in Ghana.

The host organization for the research, the Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly was established by LI 2323 in March 15, 2018. It is one of the 40 Districts in Ashanti Region and has Mankranso as the District capital, which is about 35km from Kumasi, capital of Ashanti Region.

The choice of the study area for this research is informed by the fact that it is within the middle belt of Ghana and has all tribes of workers which could offer fair representation of Workplace Conflict in the District Assemblies in Ghana. The researcher works in the District which makes it easy for data accessibility. More forcefully, it has a unique population data which shows dominant sex to be women.

Vision

The vision of the Assembly is "To be a first class Local Government Institution focused on providing excellent service delivery to meet the socio-economic development of the people".

Mission statement

The Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly exists to improve the living standards of the people through the implementation of pragmatic projects and activities targeted at addressing the infrastructural, socio-economic and other identified development gaps to meet the aspirations of the people in the District.

Location of the District

The District is located on the North-western part of the Ashanti Region and covers a total surface area of approximately 645.54km^2 representing 2.6 percent of the region's total surface area (24,370.5km^2). It lies between longitude 1º 45"W and 2º 20"W and latitude 6º 42"N and 7º 10"N. The District shares boundary with four districts, in the North with Ahafo Ano South-East District, Atwima Mponua District to the South, Atwima Nwabiagya Municipal to the East and Ahafo Ano North Municipal to the West all in the Ashanti Region. The location of the District falls within the forest zone of Ghana.

However, the location of the District in Ashanti Region of Ghana offers it the opportunity to interact with the Brong Ahafo Region of the country. Mankranso, the capital is more in the North-west of the District, about 35km from Kumasi. Figure 1 shows the Ahafo Ano South-West District Map in Regional context.
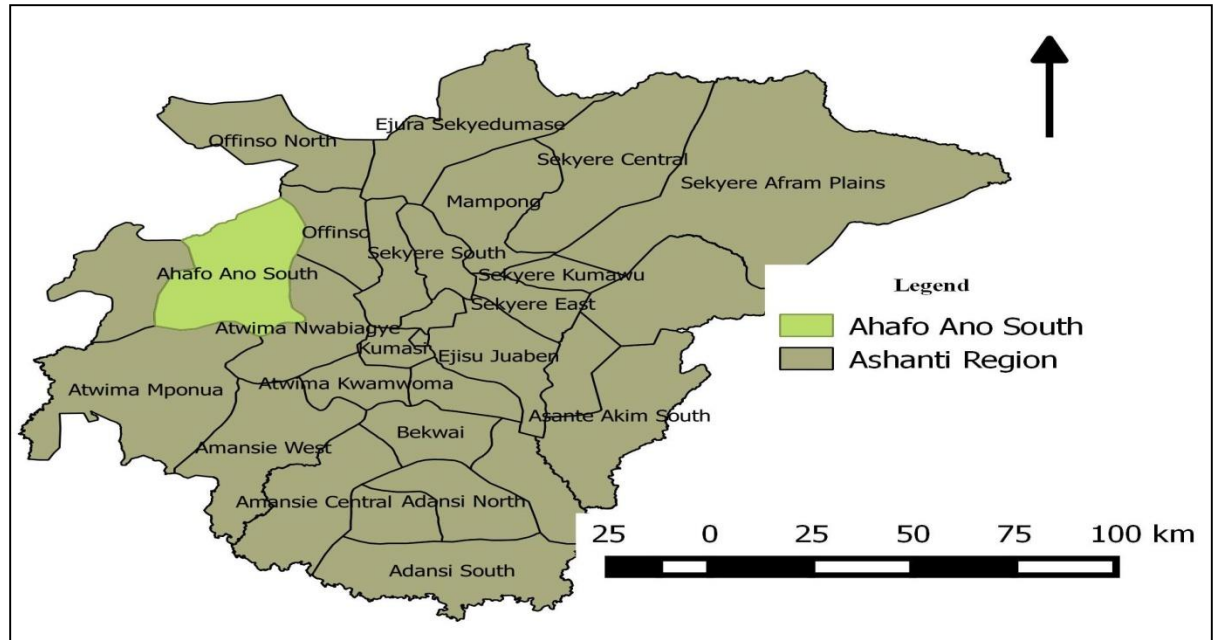
Figure 1 Ahafo Ano South-West District in the Regional Context

Source: Ahafo Ano South-West DPCU library

Demographic characteristics

The National Population and Housing Census of 2000 put the District population at 62,529 with a growth rate of 0.94% per annum. Per projection, the current population is estimated to be 67,487. About 49.1% of the population was females and 50.9% males. This gave a sex ratio of 1:1.04 (i.e. 1:2) males to females.

Climate, temperature and rainfall

The climatic condition in the District is wet semi-equatorial. Like most areas that lie in the wet semi-equatorial forest zone in Ghana, the District is marked by double maxima rainfall seasons. The major rainfall period begins from March to July peaking in May. The average annual rainfall for the major season is about 1,200 millimetres – 1,850 millimetres per year.

The minor rainfall period begins in September tapering off in November with an average minor annual rainfall of 1,000 millimetres – 1,250 millimetres per year.

However, from December to March is dry, hot and dusty. The dry season normally begins in December and ends in March with relative humidity ranging between 70-75 percent. The average temperature is about 27ºC with variations in mean monthly temperature ranging between 22ºC to 32ºC throughout the year with the maximum being March and April just before the first rain sets in. The mean annual temperature is 30°C with the lowest of 26.1°C.

Vegetation and forest resources

The District lies within the semi deciduous forest (green) belt. The over-bearing vegetation is moisture laden semi-deciduous. Rainfall and ground water supplies determine the typical vegetation. The forest reserves are rich in tropical hardwoods like Wawa, Esa, Kyenkyen, Odum, Ofram, Fununtum, Kokrodua and among others. The total land area of the two forest reserves is about 199.87km^2 representing 31.0 percent of the total land area of the District.

Statutory functions of Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly

The functions of the Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly, like all other MMDAs, basically derived from its Legislative Instrument 2323, 2017 as mandated by the Local Governance Act 2016, Act 936 and the Legislative Instrument 1961, 2009. The Assembly exercises political and administrative authority, provides guidance, gives direction to, and supervises all other administrative authorities in the District.

In addition, the Assembly exercises deliberative, legislative and executive functions as outlined in the Act 936. These functions, which are 7 broadly aimed at attaining the vision and fulfilling the mission of improving the quality of life of the people in the District as stipulated in Sections 12 to 16 of the Local Governance Act 2016, Act 936, are to:

i.   Be responsible for the overall development of the District.

ii. Formulate and execute plans, programmes and strategies for the effective mobilization of the resources necessary for the overall development of the District.

iii. Promote Local Economic Development (LED) activities in the District.

iv. Promote and support productive activity and social development in the District and remove any obstacles to initiative and development.

v.   Sponsor the education of students from the District to fill particular manpower needs of the District especially in the social sectors of education and health, making sure that the sponsorship is fairly and equitably balanced between male and female students.

vi. Initiate programmes for the development of basic infrastructure and provide municipal works and services in the District.

vii. Be responsible for the development, improvement and management of human settlements and the environment in the District.

viii. Be responsible for the maintenance of security and public safety in the District.

ix. Ensure ready access to courts in the District for the promotion of justice.

x.   Act to preserve and promote the cultural heritage within the District.

xi. Monitor the execution of projects under approved development plans and assess and evaluates their impact on the people's development, the District and National economy.

xii. Initiate, sponsor or carry out studies that may be necessary for the discharge of any of the duties conferred by this Act or any other enactment.

xiii. Perform any other functions that may be provided under another enactment.

Organizational structure of the Assembly

With the enactment of LI 1961, 2009, the District has all the 11 Mandatory Departments namely; Central Administration, Finance, Physical Planning, Works, Education - Youth and Sports, Health, Social Welfare and Community Development, Agriculture, Trade and Industry, Disaster Prevention and Natural Resources Conservation. The newest to be added to the Departments is Human Resource. Administratively, the functions of these departments are clearly spell-outs in the LI 1961, 2009 and the LGS Scheme of Service.

These functions are performed in relation to the implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and communication of the DMTDP. The relationship between the Assembly and these departments is consultative as shown in the organizational structure (organogram) of the Assembly in Figure 2. Per the relationship and functions of the Departments as exhibited in the organizational structure, the District Assembly has adequate potential to prepare, implement, monitor and evaluate, and communicate the DMTDP.

Like other District Assemblies, the Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly as a spatial unit is made up of different sub-systems, parts and units, which work together towards a common goal. The parts interdepend on each other as depicted in the organogram.
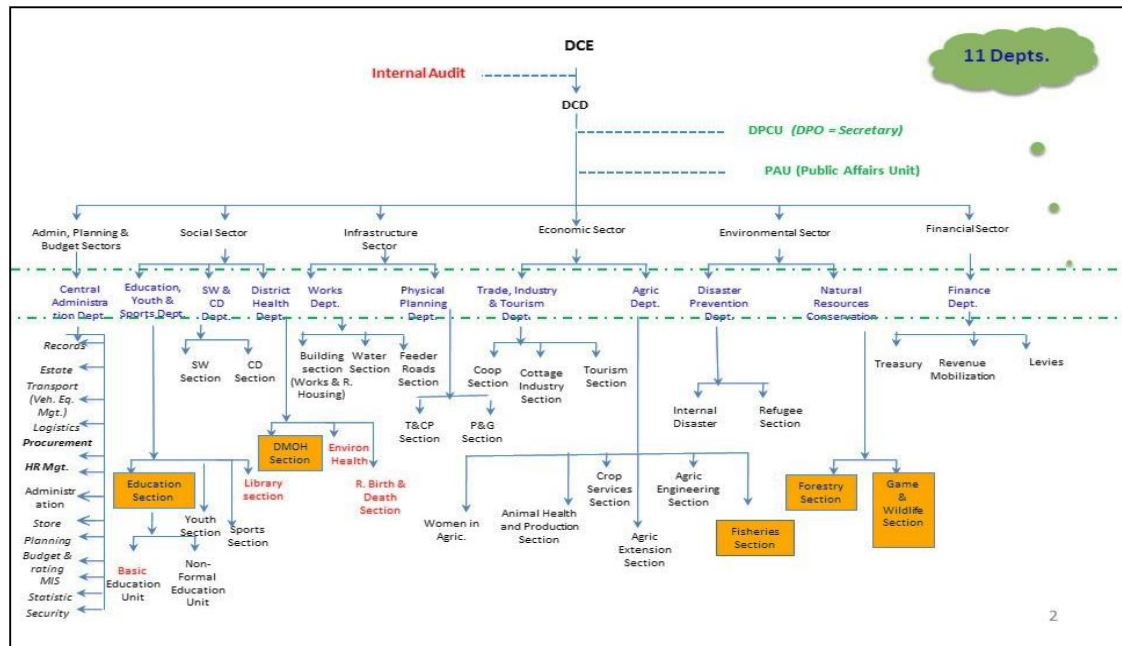
Figure 2 Organizational Structure of the AASWDA (Functional)

Source: LI 1965

Human resource of the Assembly

The LI 1961, 2009, prescribes for Metropolitans, Municipals and Districts to have 16, 13 and 11 Mandatory Departments respectively. Recently, Human Resource was upgraded to a status of Department. Within these Departments, there are a number of Units established with the required number of staff as well as the Head of Department per the Staffing Norms of the Local Government Service. Currently, all the 12 Departments have been established with a staff strength of 240 made up of 82 females (34%) and 158 males (66%).

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Economic profile of the District

The District has employment rate of 96.7% of the economically active population, while 3.3% of the cohort are unemployed. Surprisingly, 84.9% of the 96.7% population employed live below the daily minimum wage of GH¢10.65 as of 2019. The predominant occupations of the populace are farming and fishing which constitute 74.9%. About 71.3% of the farmers are into cash crops production namely cocoa – the highest in the Ashanti Region. The major livestock farming is poultry, which accounts for 76.5% of the sector.

Research design

In order to test the propositions of the study and examine the main questions raised, the following methodology was employed. The stages in the process used include brief on study area, sampling techniques, sources of data, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques. The research is on Workplace Conflict in District Assemblies of Ghana, with the case study area of the AASWDA..

Sampling technique

In this study, all the 12 departments of the Assembly, namely Central Administration; Works; Social Welfare and Community Development; Health; Trade and Industry; Agriculture; Education, Youth and Sports; Physical Planning; Disaster Management and Prevention; Natural Resources Conservation, Forestry, Game and Wildlife Division; Human Resource as well as Finance were selected. The agencies involved in the research were National Health Insurance Authority, Youth Employment Authority, and Nation Builders' Corps.

Consequently, 61% quota on the number on roll on each of the departments and agencies were recruited for this research. The respondents from each of the 12 departments and agencies were then selected systematically based on the registers (in each other manner due to the fact that some of them might misconstrue the exercise as means of targeting certain people for postings, etc) and interviewed with the aid of questionnaires accordingly. The details are tabulated in Table 2.

In all, one (1) questionnaire items were administered to the target sample to obtain their opinions. It focused on 147 individual interviews, representing 61% of the AASWDA staff.

Sources of data

Two main sources of data, namely primary and secondary were used in this study.

Primary data

The primary source involved interviews based on semi-structured questionnaires and observations by the researcher. The researcher interacted with the selected individuals of the Assembly, which afforded them the opportunity to ask for clarification on any question line. The meanings that respondents ascribed to various phenomena were understood. As the researcher observed, the truthfulness and sincerity of the answers were made crystal clear.

Secondary data

Secondary data emanated from review of literature on the topic from Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Office of the

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Head of Local Government Service, Ashanti Regional Coordinating Council, to supplement data collected from the field. Also, survey based and documentary secondary data were employed.

Furthermore, search engines like Google on the internet were used for up-to-date information on the subject and research objectives/questions..

Data collection instruments

The main data collection instruments employed for this research are questionnaires and observation. The individual interviews were by way of semi-structured questionnaire used to collect information about workplace conflicts, causes, effects and management mechanisms in Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly. Questionnaires were administered to sample size of 147 of the 240 population. The questionnaire items developed were personally administered and discussed seemingly ambiguous and other items that might not be understood by the sampling units to answer. Observation of respondents and analysis of office data were undertaken.

Data collection procedure

Population

The Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly has a staff population of 240. The details of which are tabulated below.

Table 2: Staff Population of AASWDA

Unit	No. on Roll	Sampled respondents
Core Administration	50	31
Finance	18	11
Works	7	4
Agriculture	18	11
Social Welfare and Community Dev't	11	7
Health	21	13
Trade, Industry and Tourism (BAC)	5	3
Physical Planning	3	2
Disaster Prevention and Management	20	12
Natural Resource, wildlife Conservation	20	12
Education, Youth and Sports	31	19
Other Agencies	36	22
Total	240	147

Source: Researcher's data analyzed

The primary data for this study were collected from the sampled respondents at the Ahafo Ano South West District Assembly, Mankranso between Monday, 1st to Wednesday, 31st July, 2019 by the researcher. The completed questionnaires were kept in a drawal under lock and key for safe keeping from any foreign materials and biases etc. this started from day one of the field work.

Techniques of data analysis

The data analysis involved the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches All the 147 questionnaires designed for the individual respondents were self-administered, giving response rate of 100%. The responses were presented in either table or figure and then analyzed along the outcome of the observations during the exercise. Tables and charts drawn from the completed and returned responses were converted into percentages and the highest percentage considered to represent the general opinion.

Thus, in order to realize a holistic workplace conflicts in the Assembly, information technology software Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used for a comprehensive and quantitative analysis of official statistics to produce pictorial appreciation in the form of bar and pie charts. Moreover, in some cases, simple tables were used for the analysis. Description of the tables and the charts were given for better understanding of them. Consequently, the analysis, summary of the findings, recommendations and conclusion were made

In summary, statistical methods were employed to gather view and comments from all classes of personnel. The data was statistically analyzed and findings, conclusion and recommendations were made in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter deals with an analysis and discussion of the findings from the data gathered from the field with respect to the study on Workplace Conflict in the District Assemblies; causes, effect and management mechanisms. Semi-structured questionnaires administered through individual interviews with 147 sample size out of the 240 sample frame, sought to explore the participants' views on diverse areas grounded in literature or otherwise.

The responses which validate or invalidate the research questions posited are analyzed below. The questions which answers were sought are:

   i.   What are the causes of Workplace Conflict in the Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly?

  ii.   What are the effects of Workplace Conflict on the Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly?

 iii.   How are Workplace Conflicts in Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly managed?

Demographic characteristics of respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of respondents are vital in any data analysis as it provided background information on the interviewees who participated in the study. They include Sex, Age, Birth place, Marital status, Hometown, Religion and Number of Children of respondents.

Sex of respondents

The disposition of people towards workplace conflict is largely influenced by sex. Therefore, the importance of biological difference brought to the fore the need to ensure appreciable level of representation of both sex in the study.

	Male	Female	Total
Frequency	97	50	147
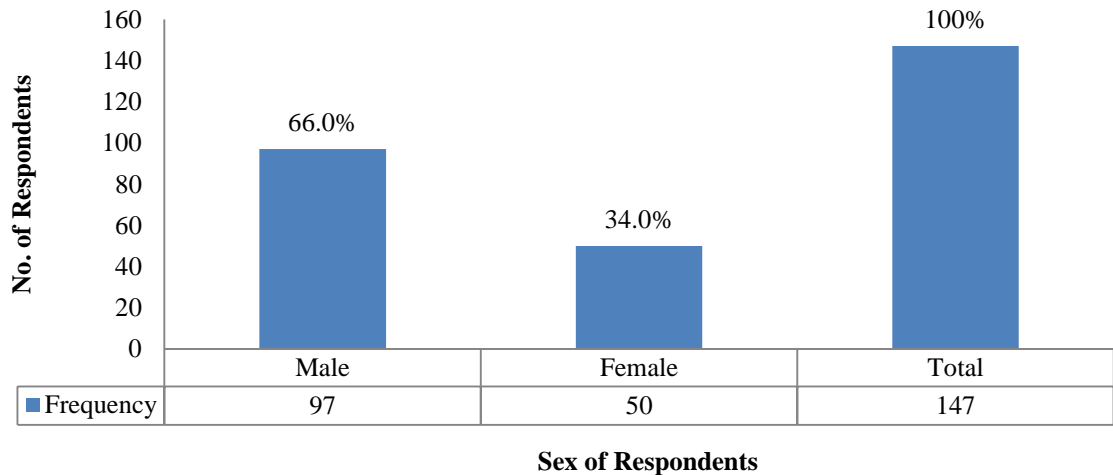
Sex of Respondents

Figure 3: Sex of Respondents

Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

As could be deduced from the Figure 3, 66% of the respondents were males while the remaining 34% were females. Comparatively, the ratio for males to females at the Assembly was the same as that of the respondents in this research i.e. 1:1.94. Obviously, this did not epitomize the sex ratio identified in the literature review, which gave the females and males population of the District as 49.1% and 50.9% respectively (in terms of ratio 1:1.04). Male dominance at workplaces in Ghana is strongly confirmed in this research. Notwithstanding the major disparity in sex, once there was a conspicuous element of fair representation, the opinions of females were not marginalized.

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Years of service of respondents

The responses of employees' years of service are tabulated in Table 3. These respondents were selected to give graphical representation of Workplace Conflict at Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly with no minimum requirement as a condition for the sample size selected.

The distribution presented represents the spread over 12 departments and agencies currently at the District Assemblies. This sample method indicates wider spread over units showing fair representation through systematic sampling which is designed for the respondents selected.

Table 3: Years of service of respondents

Years Worked	No. of Respondents	Percentage
> 0.0 < 0.5	28	19.1
> 0.5 < 2.0	24	16.3
> 2.0 < 4.0	30	20.4
> 4.0	65	44.2
Total	147	100

Source: Researcher's data analyzed

From Table 3, it was realized that 65% of respondents' length of service were 2 years and above giving credence to the fact that they came as participants with vast experience in workplace conflict. Therefore, they could speak to the very core issues of the subject. This is not to downplay the views of the remaining 35% who have worked in the service for less

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than 2 years as workplace conflict could be experienced even the very first day of assumption of duty.

Indeed, workplace conflict is the daily interplay between human beings and could be experienced anytime, any day and anywhere when two or more people meet. This is in total agreement with literature, which view conflict existing when two parties disagree and it is felt by one of the parties as posited by Harris (2011).

Causes of workplace conflicts in the District Assembly

Some of the lines of questions eliciting responses in the questionnaire were meant to test the first question on the causes of conflict as posed in the research study. The questions were primarily to ascertain the immediate causal factors of workplace conflict in the District Assemblies which by themselves have the potential to affect workflow and ultimately sustained service delivery performance. What the respondents provided to be causes of Conflict in the organization are shown in Figure 4.

On the analysis of Figure 4, it became obvious that personality clashes and warring egos as well as poor management constituted more than half (65.3%) of the causes of conflicts in the Assembly. A little over half (34.7%) of the respondents identified lack of honesty, office romance, stress, clash of values and workloads as the causal factors of problematic Workplace Conflict.

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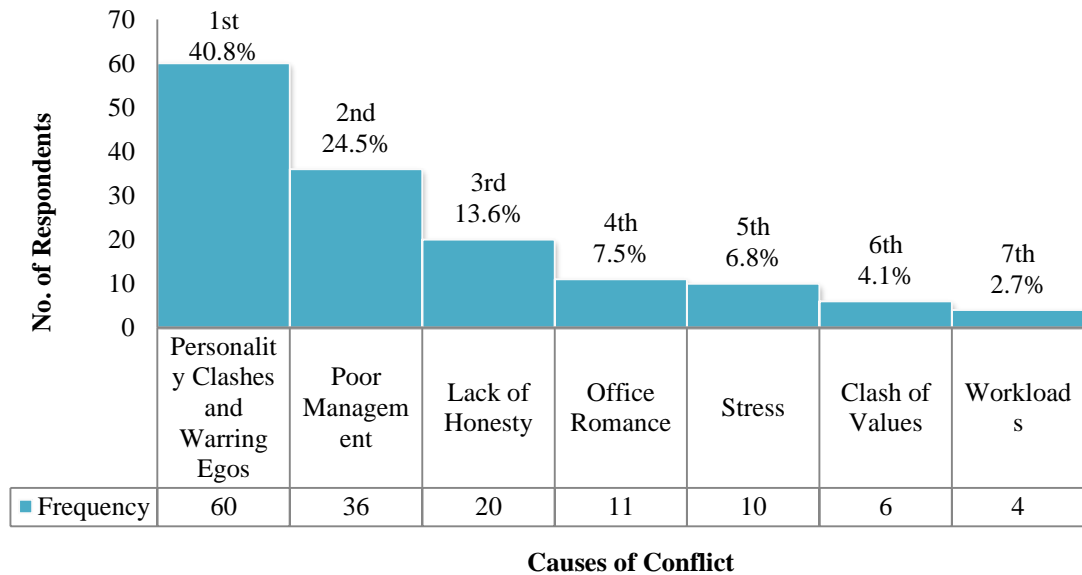
Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

Figure 4 Causes of Conflict in the Organization

According to Robbins et all (2008, p.104) personality is "The sum total of ways in which an individual reacts and interacts with others". Reviewing literature by Harris (2011), personality is critical but complex factor affecting levels of destructive workplace conflict. Staffs with difficult personalities as in being too principled or chameleon-like have higher levels of conflict and the driving forces are overly ambitious, egotistical and conflict avoidance. The Milgram experiments, social constructionist and Robbins et al (2008) gives credence to the fact that environmental factors influence personality and as the environment changes so do personality. This is contrary to the presumption that personality was stable and unchangeable.

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Critics such as Burr (2003) has a disposition that there is nothing such as a personality and his focus on discourses identifies that people behave differently in different situations. This view concurred that of situationism.

Difficulty personality is not synonymous with problematic behaviours, for situationism underpins workers behavior at any material time. It is a truism that a well-managed competitive personalities drives organization.

What respondents meant by poor management was the management style perceived to be in deviation from the standard set in the local government service by its protocols. This was construed to be abuse of power. Knowledge is a form of power according to Foucault (1977) and systemic power is a critical aspect of workplace conflict (Weber, 1948). Keeping workers in dark gives people power over the others as stated by Harris (2011). This is true to some extent as ultimate power resides in the top position yet some considerable level of it is at each level of the hierarchy. Practically, power is based on one's position. And it was realized that each worker had a complete control over his/her roles and was given authority to manage his/her roles effectively.

Power could be used constructively or destructively. Holders of power use their power to keep the role of power in conflict from being identified. It could only be diffused through openness. A significant number of respondents absolutely agree with Jaffee (2008) that Workplace conflict originated as a systemic form of conflict caused by the way employers use power.

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The remaining 34.7% were the combination of factors namely lack of honesty, office romance, stress, clash of values and workloads. They were considered as minor contributors in the Workplace Conflicts at the District Assembly. Notwithstanding, all factors identified must be monitored and managed professional at any point in time.

Simply put, good management manages difficulty personalities and conflicts situations before it aggravates to destructive level. This ensures harmonious work environment with rippling effects of higher productivity or enhanced service delivery. The ever changing environment with corresponding changes in personalities is a major threat to serene workplace which requires good surveillance and timeous interventions when the need arises. Beyerlein et al (2004) on a matter of approach stipulated that it is the "Basic underlying assumptions and informal norms that guide the way work is accomplished in an organization and not necessarily align with formal policies and procedures".

Gender dimension in workplace conflict

In delving into the role of gender in workplace conflict at the Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly, which was not meant to gender stereotyped; it came to the fore that females were in the majority (73%) as people who trigger Workplace Conflict as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Gender that trigger workplace conflict in the AASWDA

Trigger of Conflict	Frequency	Percentage
Females	108	73.47
Males	39	26.53
Total	147	100.0

Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

It is usually perceived that women are more caring and strive for harmony in most situations than men. However, this study has shown that it is not in all cases as other factors may contribute significantly in women triggering Workplace Conflicts. Harris (2011) stated inter alia that gender differences cause conflict when accompanied by disrespect and the type of conflict might not necessarily be problematic. In a quantitative research conducted in New Zealand by Harris and Crothers (2010), 91% of participants saw as rare for gender to be a factor of Workplace Conflict.

Naturally, irrespective of one's age, gender, educational level, no one wants to countenance any long-term pattern of disrespect and could itself precipitate Workplace Conflicts. This reaffirms the proposition in literature expressed by Eunson (2007), Cahn and Abigail (2007), Brandon and Robertson (2007), as well as Tillett and French (2006) that "Conflict is normal".

Conflict level in the District Assembly

There were four main levels of management at the District Assemblies and by extension, most public institutions in Ghana. They were entry, line, middle and senior levels of management.

Table 5 portrays that conflicts abound at the higher management level as compared with that of the lower. The incidence of 61.3% of Workplace Conflict registered at the senior management level as against that of 38.7% amongst the juniors could be attributed to the differences in the level of knowledge. Knowledge level of the work environment is usually limited at the entry level and increase with time as one progresses on the professional ladder. The bottom of the ladder is associated with naivety and at the top, assertiveness of privileges and rights which invariably contribute to destabilizing harmonious work environment.

Table 5: Conflict Level in the District Assembly

Most Conflict Level	Frequency	Percent
Entry Level	25	17.0
At Line Manager Level	32	21.8
At Middle Manager Level	47	32.0
At Senior Manager Level	43	29.3
Total	147	100

Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

It was also observed that stress was usually at its peak among the higher management staff. Workload and associated pressure render such people emotionally unstable and little provocation potentially causes problematic workplace conflict. This could be a slight on the universal claim that maturity comes along with self-control and emotional intelligence.

The Effects of Workplace Conflicts on Ahafo Ano-South-West District Assembly

Four questions were designed and appropriately asked the participants to establish the effects of Workplace Conflicts on the District Assembly. The responses provided were represented in either a figure or table for subsequent analysis.

Time Spent by Respondents on Workplace Conflict at the District Assembly

Figure 5 beneath gives strong indication that staff of the Assembly allocate time for Conflict and its related issues. Almost half (47%) of the respondents spent between 5 to 60 minutes on Workplace Conflicts while 53% of them spent less time on same.
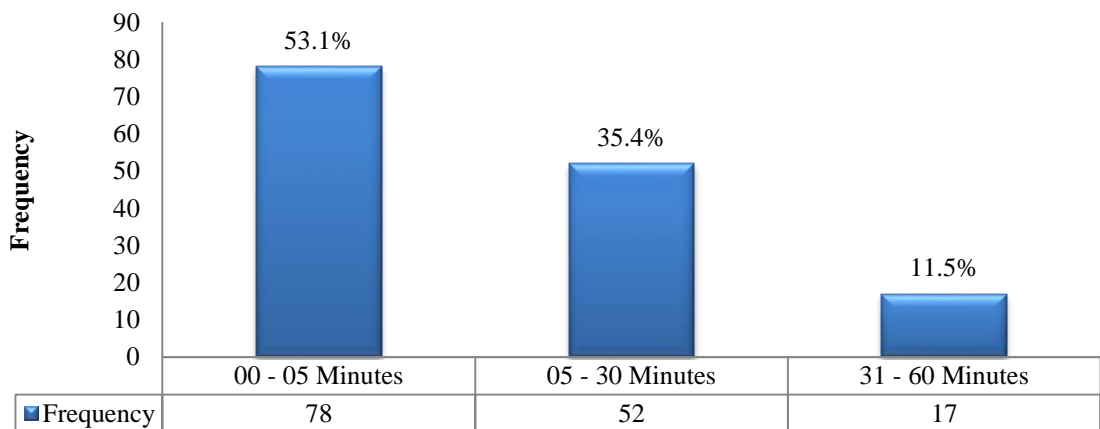
Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

Figure 5: Time Spent by Respondents on Workplace Conflict at the Assembly

Problematic Workplace Conflict has potential adverse consequences on the Assembly. Generally, man's hours are lost; concentration declined which affects the quality of outputs; missed of timelines with its financial loss and reputation damage; all together with others culminating in decline in productivity and efficiency in the service delivery. Therefore, the

direct and indirect costs of escalated conflict could run into Millions of Ghana Cedis per month to the Central Government in monetary terms and poor service delivery to the citizenry at the receiving end. Since Government and its agencies have no business doing business, any failure on the part of the agencies of state to create the needed enabling environment for private sector to flourish has an indirect cost. The rippling effects cannot be over-emphasized and might be beyond quantification.

On reflection, the literature provides evidence that the public sector is engulfed in all sorts of negative tendencies that undermine the productivity of the sector and hence the role of the sector in total national development has been ineffective. Several weaknesses have been identified in the Ghanaian public administration, and general low level of productivity (Quao 1998, pp.6-7; Ayee, 2000; Woode, 2000).

Feel of conflict at workplace by the respondents

Table 6 reveals how the participants in the study felt of Conflict at the Workplace. Half of the respondents were demotivated when they experienced Workplace Conflict. Twenty-four percent of respondents got angry and frustrated when engulfed in Workplace Conflict whiles 16percent, felt indifferent and 8 percent nervous and stressed.

Table 6: Feel of Conflict at Workplace in the Organisation

Feel of Conflict	Frequency	Percent
Demotivated	75	51.0
Angry and Frustrated	35	23.8
Nervous and Stressed	12	8.2
Excited and Energized	2	1.4
Nothing	23	15.6
Total	**147**	**100.0**

Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

These negative factors constitute 84% which points to prevalence of overwhelming level of destructive conflicts that might not be necessarily escalate to the problem levels of workplace conflict. This finding is in consistent with Pruitt's (2008) exposition that "Conflict is normal in organization and only becomes a problem when it becomes severely escalated".

Interestingly, minority (1%) of the respondents felt excited and energized in the face of Workplace Conflict. This reflects the constructive side of Workplace Conflict, confirming the assertion by many theorists of conflict that not all conflicts are destructive and not all destructive conflicts exacerbate into problem level of Workplace Conflict. In Pruitt's (2008) view, conflict escalation as normal and that mild escalation could be beneficial as it identifies issues and motivate the parties in the conflict to resolve them. The respondents in this cohort answers affirm what Pruitt posited.

Outcomes of Workplace Conflicts

Table 7 shows that almost equal number of the respondents (51% and 49%) in this study held the view that Workplace Conflict could have either positive or negative outcomes. The outcomes of Workplace Conflicts determine its negativity or positivity. In other words, some respondents perceived conflicts to be negative while others significantly viewed it as normal, daily interplay between human beings. Depending on its level, it could be destructive or constructive.

Table 7: Outcomes of Workplace Conflict by Respondents

Experience of Conflict	Frequency	Percent
i. A Positive Outcome:		
- Yes but cannot explain	43	29.3
- Better Understanding	16	10.9
- Improved Work Relationships	11	7.5
- Higher Performance	4	2.7
- A Better Team Environment	1	0.7
ii. A Negative Outcome:	72	49.0
Total	**147**	**100**

Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

Pruitt (2008) cited by Harris (2011) identified that destructive conflict assumes problematic status when caused by conflict escalation engendered by retaliatory behaviours. Literature from Brandon and Robertson (2007) projected the general misconception of Conflict as being purely negative. However, some conflict theorists and conflict management practitioners

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challenged this position and the study has reiterated the stance. The study re-echoed some

conflict scholars' view that conflict is normal and part of life.

Consequences of conflicts in the organisation

Table 8 shows absolute majority (69%) of respondents identified the major consequences of

Conflict in the Assembly to be Inter-Departmental Antagonism. This could be explained as

non co-operation among departments and agencies of the Assembly with the far reaching

implications of slow workflow, duplication of efforts and needless waste of scarce resources

– i.e. productivity and efficiency decline with eventual failure looming in such situations.
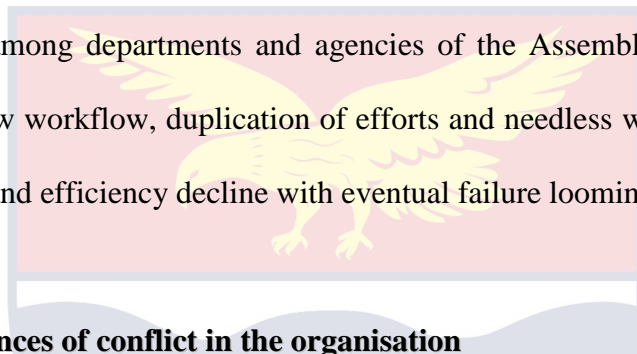
Table 8 Consequences of conflict in the organisation

Results of Conflict	Frequency	Percent
Inter-Departmental Antagonism	102	69.4
Staff Taken Time off Sick due to Conflict	13	8.8
Staff Leaving the Organisation	9	6.1
Project/Programme Failure	13	8.8
Staff Posted/Transferred to different Departments or District	3	2.0
Staff avoided a Colleague following a Conflict	3	2.0
Staff stayed away from Work related Social Event	4	2.7
Total	**147**	**100**

Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

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The District Assembly is a system and various departments and agencies are all intergral part of it. To knit them together, a legal regime was introduced as part of the reforms to deepen decentralization in Ghana. The Local Governance Act, 2016, Act 936 section 81, prescribes District level Inter-service and Inter-sectoral collaboration and Co-operation. The import of this piece of legislation is to ensure collaboration and co-operation between Departments of the Assemblies and other organizations.

The Gourmont of phenomena which qualified as destructive conflict namely taken time off sick due to Conflict, staff leaving the Organisation, Project/Programme failure, staff posted/transferred to different departments or District, staff avoided a colleague following a conflict and staff stayed away from work related social event constituted 31% of views expressed by the participants of the research. These adverse factors enumerated by the respondents increase attrition rate, decrease the caliber of human resources, their efficiency and productivity thereby thwarting the attainment of project or programme objectives.

It is important to appreciate that time spent in conflicts represents only part of the cost of workplace conflict. According to McCrindle (2004) there are both measurable and immeasurable costs that should be considered. Measurable costs include recruitment costs, staff turnover and training costs, absentee costs, productivity costs and legal costs. Immeasurable costs include lost motivation, damage to the relationship between employers and employees and damage to the relationship between a company and its customers.

McCrindle (2004) furthermore points out that the costs of destructive workplace conflict are not limited to the actual sums spent in handling it and do not stop once the conflict is over. In order to appreciate the full cost of destructive workplace conflict it is necessary to consider the health costs as well as the operational ones.

Spector and Bruk-Lee (2008) identify that interpersonal conflict is linked to numerous negative emotional states, including anxiety, anger, depression and frustration. Evidence supporting this position comes from Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler and Schilling (1989) who concluded that interpersonal conflict was the most important factor affecting psychological distress. Bolger et al. (1989) found interpersonal conflict accounted for more than 80% of the experience of the negative emotions, anxiety, hostility and depression. Furthermore, Spector and Bruk-Lee (2008) provide research showing that employees who report higher levels of interpersonal conflicts in the workplace also report lower levels of job satisfaction and stressed that what is important is not the specific emotional response to conflict but the overall experience of negativity.

Management of Workplace Conflicts in the District Assembly

One should not be oblivious of the fact that the savings that organisation might achieve through better management of conflict could justify to some extent any investment in this area.

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Occurrence of Conflict in the Organisation

The Study tested the incidences of Workplace Conflict in the Assembly. As shown in Figure 6, majority (67.3%) responded that the Workplace Conflict occurred occasionally, while 11.6 percent, 4.8 percent, 8.2 percent and 8.2 percent were of the view that it happened frequently, always, never and never knew of its respectively.
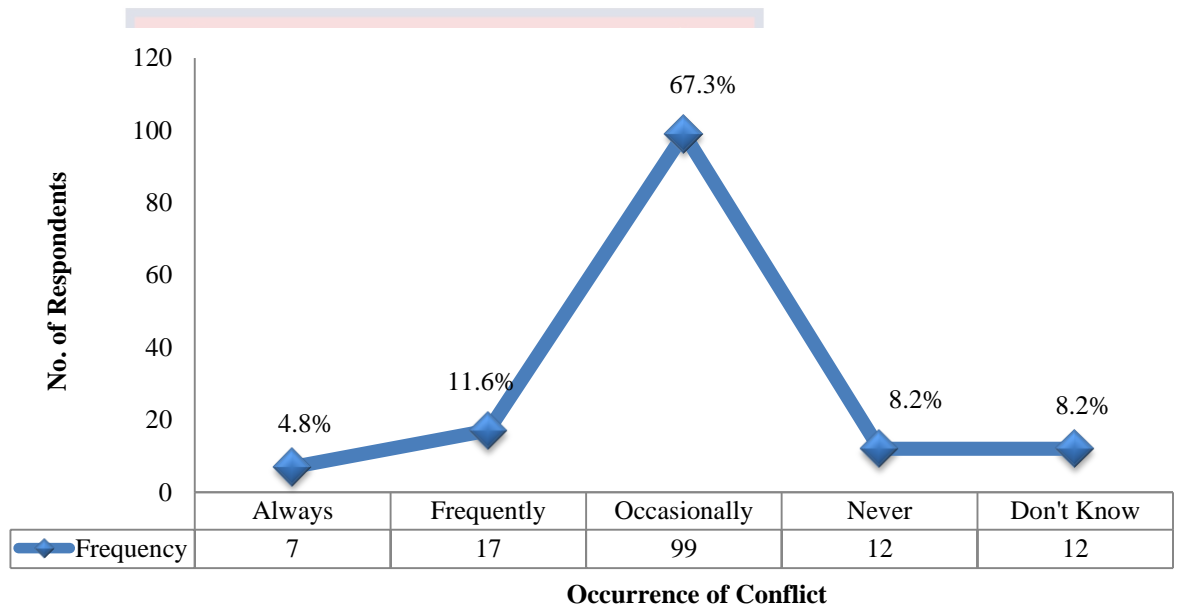
Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

Figure 6: Occurrence of Conflict in the Assembly

The majority view affirms the correctness of broad consensus in literature to the effect that conflict is part of everyday life and therefore normal. (Brandon and Robertson, 2007; Eunson, 2007; Tillet and French, 2006). Workplace Conflicts assume problematic position only when they become excessive level of escalated destructive conflict with retaliatory behaviour as propagated by Pruitt (2008).

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The literatures identified that there were various propositions on workplace conflict management mechanism. However, specific type of workplace conflict could be resolved by a tailored conflict management mechanism. In this sense, one-fit-all strategy is not applicable.

Brief account of workplace conflict management in the organisation

Table 9 depicts that over two-third (76.2%) of the respondents stated that culprits are advised and counseled by management whenever Workplace Conflict occurred. The rest which forms less than one-third (23.8%) responded that disciplinary committee was set up to handle the issue (4.1%), engagement of adhoc investigative committee to resolve the conflict (8.8%), conflict resolution meetings are held by management for staff (4.1%), conflict resolution meetings are held for the victims by management (4.8%) as well as alternative conflict resolution and establishment of effective counseling team (2.0%).

Table 9: Brief account of workplace conflict management in the organisation

Management of Conflict	Frequency	Percent
Alternative Conflict Resolution and establishment of effective counseling team	3	2.04
Conflict Reconciliation Meetings are held for the victims by management	7	4.76
Conflict Resolution Meetings are held by management for staff	6	4.08
Culprits are advised/counseled by management	112	76.19
Disciplinary committee is set up to handle the issue	6	4.08
Engagement of Ad-hoc Investigative Committee to resolve the conflict	13	8.84
Total	147	100

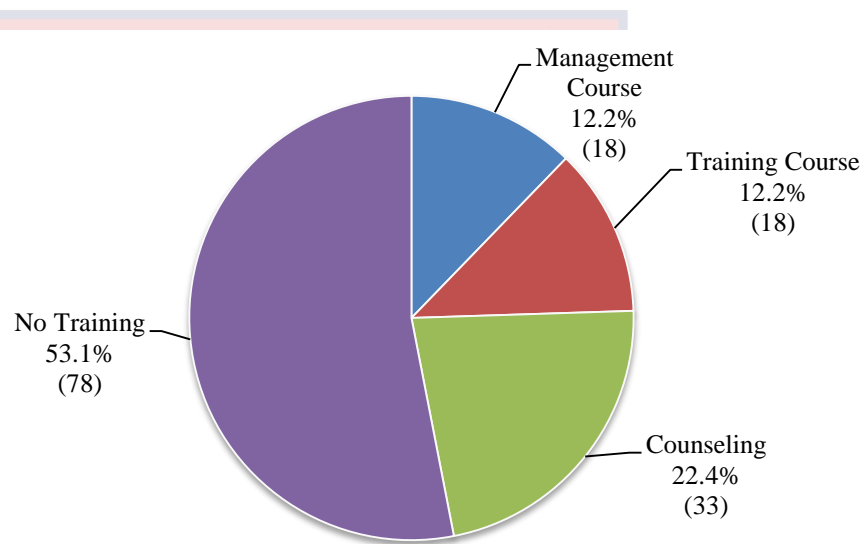Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

This study has confirmed ADR as not the best of approaches used in many organisation these days and whenever employed, the timeless is equally important (Pruitt, 2008). Masters and Albright (2002) argued that in literature review doubts were raised over the usefulness of Alternative Dispute Resolution based conflict management systems. This stems from the evidence that in spite of the ADR systems practiced in many workplaces in the United States of America, levels of destructive workplace conflict continued to rise as posited by Masters and Albright (2002).

Harris and Crothers (2010) contributing to the discussion stated inter-alia that conflict management systems just simulates how organizations try to use process to deal with people rather than management. Mediation assumes existence of interpersonal problem without much consideration given to systematic issues. On that premise, when only the feud between individuals is dealt with, the systematic source could cause the conflict to re-occur. Lasting solution lies in holistic approach to Conflict Management.

It could be inferred from the above that, the management strategy on conflict was skewed towards the culprit who in most cases advised or counseled based on the code of conduct of the Local Government Service. The propensity for the victim to exhibit retaliatory behaviour is high and might fuel the workplace conflict to excessive level for it to become problematic workplace conflict. The solution lies with workplace conflicts becoming everyone business as discussed in the later part of this chapter.

Training in Conflict Management in the Organisation

Figure 7 reveals that, less than half (46.9%) of the respondents has ever had training in Workplace Conflict though Management Course (12.2%), Conflict Management Course (12.2%) and Counseling (22.4%). On the flip, 53.1 percent indicated that they had had no training in Conflict Management.

Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

Figure 7: Training in Conflict Management in the Organisation

Knowledge is a form of power and most people are what they do. This lends credence to the major role personality play in the absence of proper training in conflict management although other factors like culture, management style etc count. Robbins et al (2008) defined personality as "The sum total of ways in which an individual reacts and interacts with others". Literature confirms that personality can change with good management and people

behave differently under different situation (Burr, 2003). Notwithstanding, the knowledge base is critical but not the only determinant of how one manages conflict at the workplace.

Mode of conflict management training in the Organisation

Table 10 above shows that, of the 69 respondents, over half (52.3%) of the respondents shared that they received training in Workplace Conflict Management through external course in the subject. Twenty-one point seven percent (21.7%) of respondents had theirs through internet, whilst 13.0 percent, 7.2 percent and 5.8 percent received training from peers, line managers and church respectively.

Table 10: Brief account of workplace conflict management in the organisation

Source Mode	Frequency	Percent
External Course in Conflict Management	36	52.3
The Internet	15	21.7
Peers	9	13.0
A Line Manager	5	7.2
Church	4	5.8
Total	**69**	**100**

Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

The finding in this research collaborates literature reviews which grounded training, as the most effective tool in dealing with destructive conflict in an organisation (CPP Global Human Capital Report, 2008). However, it is underutilised as only a minority of staff ever receive any training in dealing with conflict as depicted in Figure 7.

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Most essential of conflict management in the organization

Table 11 reveals that about half (50.4%) of the respondents placed premium on better leadership from both top and line managers as crucial factor for Workplace Conflict Management. About a quarter (23.8%) also viewed clearly defined and applied roles as paramount whilst the remaining quarter (25.8%) of respondents considered timely intervention in Conflict Management, Availability of better Conflict Management Services as well as better self-Empowerment worthy of note.

Table 11: Most essentials of effective conflict management

Essentials to Conflict Management	Frequency	Percent
Better Leadership from Top and Line Managers	74	50.4
More clearly Defined and Applied Roles	35	23.8
Better Staff Empowerment	13	8.8
Better Conflict Management Services	7	4.8
Address underlying tensions before Conflict erupts	18	12.2
Total	147	100

Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

Undoubtedly, power and dualism are two often overlooked factors that are present in many conflicts. The workplace conflict research identified in this literature review consistently found that systemic factors are a crucial aspect of workplace conflict. The vast majority of conflict theorists identified in the literature review did not acknowledge that systemic factors could cause conflict. Hodson (2001) also looked at how workers responded to factors that create conflict. He argues that the key motivator involved is a desire to maintain dignity. The

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main way workers respond to losing dignity is through resistance, a term Hodson (1995) says can include both passive and active forms.

Examples of active resistance include sabotage, strikes, walkouts and confrontations (Hodson, 1995). Passive resistance measures include not cooperating and withholding effort and commitment. The report by Harris et al (2010) clearly identified the major role that systemic factors play in some workplace bullying in New Zealand, which is confirmed by one of this research findings. There are management styles that create, encourage and feed conflict i.e. divide and rule strategy, the ego my team and all these could be classified as poor top management style.

Pruitt (2008) identified timing as critical with conflict management systems and he advised third parties look for a ripe moment where the parties might discuss differences directly or at least allow third parties to communicate with them. This proposition had been reiterated by the findings of this study with the call for the need to address underlying tensions timeously before Conflict erupts.

Suggested Opinions to Workplace Conflict Management in the Organisation

Table 12 makes a strong case for organisation of Conflict Training programmes as one of the key strategies in Conflict Management and the whooping number (47.6%) of respondents attest to that. A little over half (52.4%) of the respondents suggested formation of guidance and counseling unit (17.0%), working under cordial relationship (22.4%) and eschew of negative attitudes such as gossip, shared hatred, envy, greed, bickering, harassment, cheating,

backbiting etc as other complementary strategies to better manage Conflict at the Workplace. This satisfied one of the two main streams of research on Workplace Conflict which is the style of conflict management (Spector and Bruk-Lee, 2008).

Table 12: Suggested opinions to conflict management in the organisation

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Formation of Guidance and Counseling Unit	25	17.0
Negative attitudes to conflict should stop (Gossip, Hatred, Envy, Greed, Hatred, Bickering, Insults, Harassment, Cheating, Backbiting)	19	12.9
Organisation of Conflict Training Programmes	70	47.6
Working under cordial relationship	33	22.4
Total	147	100

Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

The CPP Global Human Capital Report (2008) found that training staff in conflict management was highly effective. According to CPP, 95% of the participants to their questionnaire who had received training agreed that the training they had received had helped them in some way. Furthermore a staggering 58% of those participants that received training said they now looked for win-win outcomes from conflict. This indicates that training might be highly effective in changing staff attitudes about conflict as cited by Harris et al (2010). Half of the respondents also expressed the same viewpoint that Training is the most effective tool in Workplace Conflict Management not only in the developed world but also the underdeveloped.

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Presented in literature review, Harris et al (2010) was of the view that Conflict Management systems should focus on both management of the process and people and not one sided. In Masters and Albright (2002) submission, it might have the tendency to cause destructive Workplace Conflict to continue to rise. The factors identified in this study cut across the two key areas of people and process as such in synch with the stance of literature reviewed.

Approach to workplace conflict management

Figure 8 shows that over half (62.6%) of the respondents held the view that conflict management should be the business of each and every staff of the organization. Almost a quarter (20.4%) of them pointed to Senior Managers as the ones to manage conflict at the Workplace whilst 10.2 percent, 3.4 percent and 3.4 percent of the participants in the study proposed those involved, line managers and conflict professionals respectively are more effective in Workplace Conflict.

|	Everyone	Line Managers	Those Involved	Senior Managers	Conflict Professionals
■ Frequency	92	5	15	30	5

Managment of Conflict
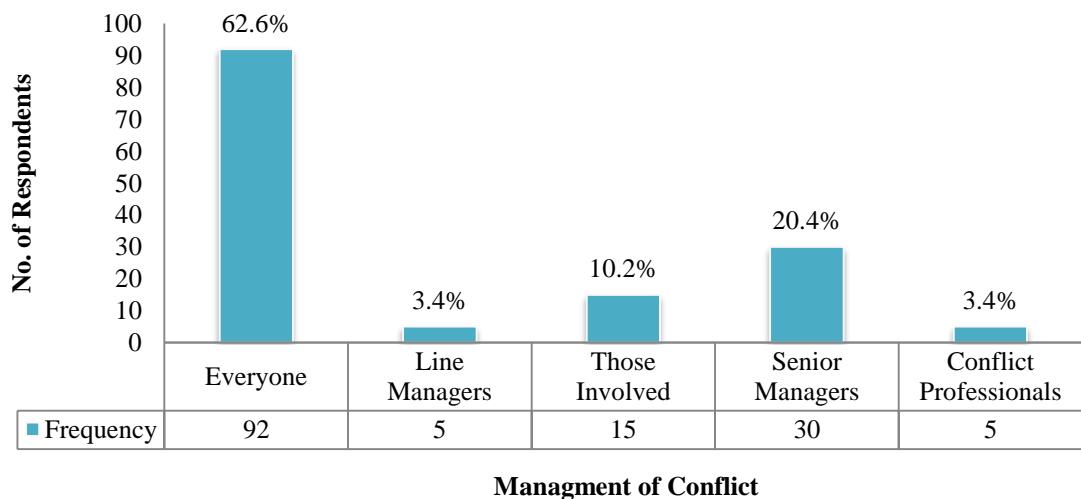
Source: Author's Field Survey, June, 2019

Figure 8: Approach to Workplace Conflict Management in the Organisation

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Lulofs and Cahn (2000) contend that conflicts often follow a pattern in the way they progress. This means the phases of conflict are reasonably predictable. Furthermore, they claim that there are common processes that occur in most conflicts. Lulofs and Cahn (2000) believe that it is as important to understand these phases and processes as it is to understand the various conflict strategies. Cahn and Abigail (2007) differentiate patterns of constructive conflict from patterns of destructive conflict.

Workplace Conflict is deemed to be part of everyday life hence the attestation by the study to the need for each and every one to be involved in its management. The idea of involvement of Conflict Professionals affirms the proposition for mediators and arbitrators whenever the parties could not find common grounds for the minds to meet. The parties in the conflict could resolve their differences when they collaborate for win-win situation as espoused by the collaborative theorists. Simply put, Lulofs and Cahn (2000) assert that it is only through achieving win-win outcomes that conflict can be resolved. In all, timing of the process determines its effectiveness. There is an iota of truth in the cliché that "A stitch in time saves nine".
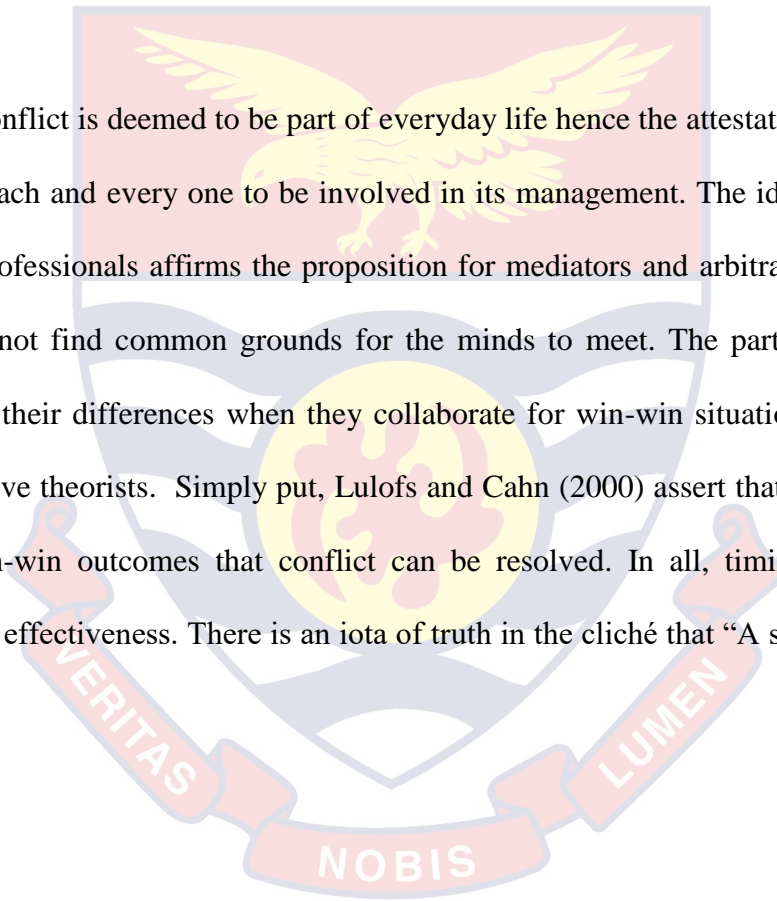
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Meaningful development takes place where there is peace and this is applicable to any organization, which desires to achieve its objectives and targets for any given time. The prime focus of the study was to take a critical overview of workplace conflict in order to appreciate the challenges in the area and possible prospects embedded. On this premise, the Ahafo South-West District Assembly was chosen as the study area.

The objectives of the research were to identify causes of workplace conflict, explore the effects of workplace conflicts on the organisation examine workplace conflict management mechanism there. In order to elicit the right responses from the respondents, three (3) main questions were posed:

  i.   What are the causes of workplace conflicts in the AASWDA?

  ii.   What are the effects of workplace conflicts on AASWDA? and

  iii. How are workplace conflict in AASWDA managed?

A total of 147 respondents were sampled from a staff population of 240 for the exercise. Questionnaires were administered by the researcher which resulted in 100% return rate. SPSS was used to run the data gathered and generated chats and tables which were thereafter interpreted to give meaning into them. Analysis of their responses to the questions spelt out in the Questionnaire as well as personal observations revealed some findings

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Conclusions

From the above findings, the following conclusions were drawn which informed   the

recommendations i.e. overview of the findings of the study subsequently.

1. The management style is a key factor determining high and low points of a destructive workplace conflict in an organisation. Divide and rule as well as laisse faire attitude fuel Workplace Conflict. On the flip side, teamwork and open-door policy minimizes it.

2. The critical factor in problem levels of destructive conflict is systematic although not grounded theory.

3. Personality clashes and warring egos as well as poor management are critical and complex factors affecting levels of destructive conflict in organization. It is established that people behave differently in different situations.

4. Gender differences cause conflict when accompanied by disrespect but might not necessarily be problematic.

5. Although cost of Workplace Conflict was not the main focus of this research, it was established that a significant number of staffs spent time on Workplace Conflict which invariably affect productivity.

6. Conflict has both positive and negative outcomes and should be viewed as normal way of life.

7. Major consequence of Workplace Conflict in the organisation is inter-departmental antagonism.

8. Workplace Conflict culprits are advised and counseled by management whenever it occurred which has potential for retaliation.

9. Majority of staff had no training in Workplace Conflict management and this has dire consequences for the organisation.

10. The minority of staff with training had it through external course mostly via internet.

11. Good leadership by power figures and levels in the organisation through respect for the less powerful for better conflict management in the organisation.

12. Training in Workplace Conflict management is one of the key strategies in concerted management of conflict. Management of Workplace Conflict is everyone's business if success of it is the prime focus.

Recommendations

By way of improving the management of Workplace Conflicts at the District Assemblies in Ghana, the following recommendations are being suggested from the study:

1. **Effective management style reduces incidence of problematic workplace conflict**

   It is truism that the management style has inverse correlation Workplace Conflict. Despite the fact that each situation determines the type of management style or blend of them to apply, the potency of the one employed could either contain or aggravate workplace conflict in the organisation. The management style is therefore a key factor determining high and low points of a destructive workplace conflict in an organisation. For instance, divide and rule as well as laisse faire attitude fuel Workplace Conflict. On the flip side, teamwork and open-door policy minimizes it.

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The workable strategy is to manage the undercurrent factors that exacerbate Workplace Conflicts whilst improving the existing positive gains. Management ought to observe good leadership by power figures and levels in the organisation through respect for the less powerful for better conflict management in the organisation.

2. **Some personal attributes spur destructive workplace conflict**

Personality clashes and warring egos are critical and complex factors affecting levels of destructive conflict in organization. It is established that people behave differently in different situations.

Detailed work schedules could put to check and reduce warring egos and to some extent role Conflicts to its barest minimum despite the prevalence of Pareto principle (80:20) which states that 20% of staff do the 80% of work in a given organisation. Education and improved workplace culture might greatly curb the frequent personality clashes. These approached could contribute in diverse ways in taming Workplace Conflict from erupting into destructive level.

3. **Workplace conflict is double-edged in its outcomes**

Conflict has both positive and negative outcomes and should be viewed as normal way of life. Minds might not always meet but meet in certain situation. The positive outcomes of Workplace Conflict engender competition and innovation which help the organisation to grown and maintain its competitive edge over others or improve the service delivery. The negative outcomes are deemed problematic only when it

assumes destructive level with its far-reaching adverse consequences. On this score, management should devise robust surveillance and effective intelligence gathering for timely response to potential problematic Workplace Conflict.

4. **People and processes should be prime focus in management of workplace conflict**

The critical factor in problem levels of destructive conflict is systematic although not grounded theory. In management of Workplace Conflict, focus should not only be on the staff but also the processes in a holistic manner. Any attempt to skew focus to one side only could lead to the other side untamed causing mayhem commotion in the organisation.

5. **Reconnoitering training as a tool of change in conflict management**

False knowledge is more dangerous than ignorance and as universally accepted, knowledge is power. Majority of staff had no training in Workplace Conflict management and this has dire consequences for the organisation. More seriously, the minority of staff with training had it through external courses mostly via internet. Not oblivious of the fact that training in Workplace Conflict management is one of the effective strategies in its management, making it everyone's business calls for mainstreaming of it into the organizational culture as part of every day's life.

Education and Training come at a cost to every organization but ultimately pay off through harmonious work environment, low turnover, increased productivity,

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enhanced service delivery with competitive edge. All things being equal, the cost of investment in staff training would never outweigh the cost of returns to the organization. It therefore, behooves Assemblies to adhere to their training programmes and implement them to the latter in order to enjoy the inherent benefit.

6. **Minimizing cost of problematic workplace conflict**

Although cost of Workplace Conflict was not the main focus of this research, it was established that a significant number of staff spent time on Workplace Conflict which invariably affect productivity. The study firmly established the major consequence of Workplace Conflict in the organisation as inter-departmental antagonism which could affect workflow and just in time service delivery.

The loss of man hours due to Workplace Conflicts could be avoided if effective surveillance is put in place for timely response to and management of retaliatory tendencies so as to thwart their escalation into destructive conflict.

7. **Introduction of workplace conflict policy**

From the study, Workplace Conflict culprits are advised and counseled by management whenever it occurred has propensity for retaliation. As effective antidote, a comprehensive Workplace Conflict Policy should be developed and implemented in the organization. This could create an enlightened staff with deep knowledge in the management of Workplace Conflict. Sanctions and rewards should be applied appropriately to encourage good behaviour and deter deviants.

8. **Gender differences accompanied by respect neutralizes workplace conflict**

It is established that Gender differences cause conflict only when accompanied by disrespect but might not necessarily be problematic. One of the core values of the Assemblies is respect for clients and fellow co-workers. Demeaning any person is a potential cause of conflict because such attitude is deemed as belittling and looking down on the person. Respect is reciprocal and efforts must be made to instill mutual respect in staff through strict adherence to existing protocols. Disrespect becomes problematic only when it leads to misunderstanding and left unchecked to escalate to destructive Workplace Conflict. This should be curbed when management intervention is timely and appropriate.
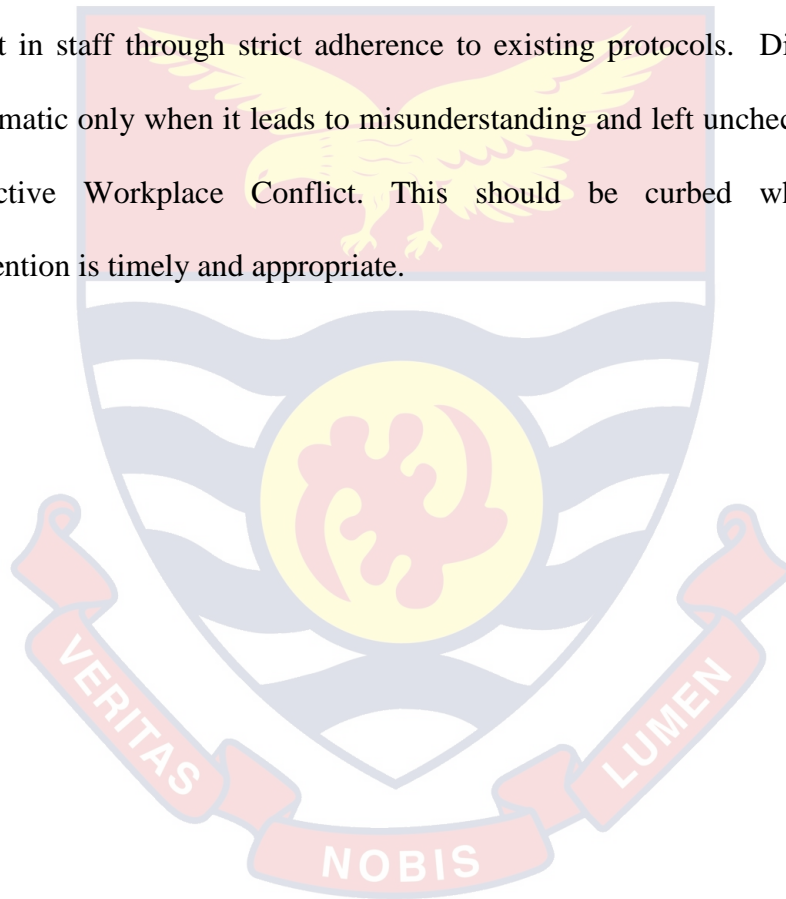
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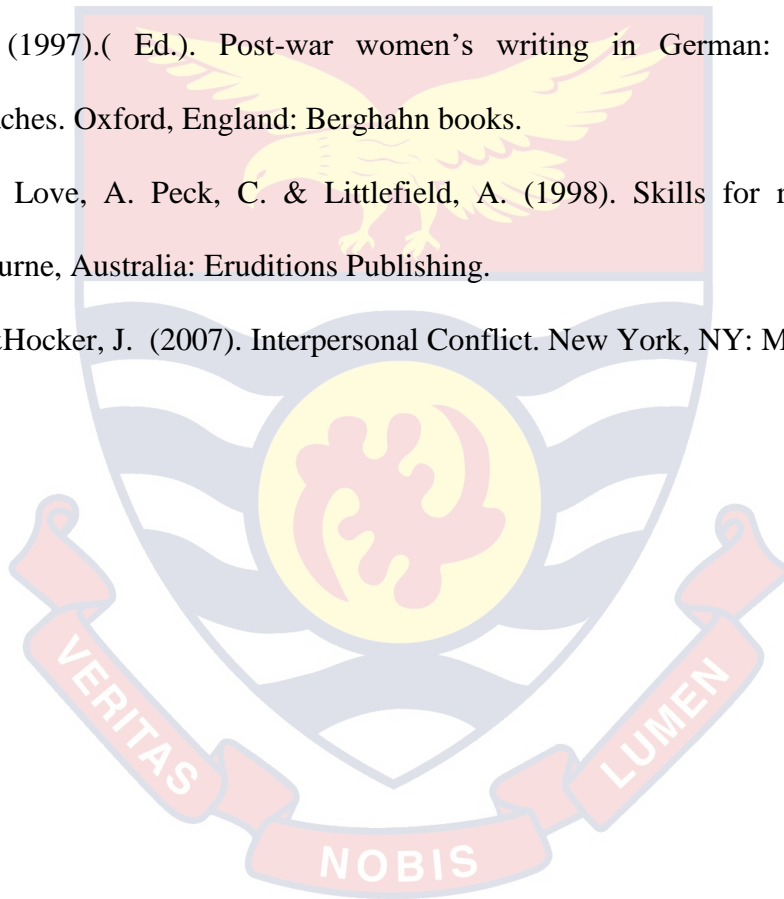
APPENDICES

UESTIONNAIRE

Project Title:

Workplace Conflicts in District Assemblies

Aims and Purpose of Study:

The object of this research is to evaluate the magnitude and features of the workplace conflict in the District Assemblies with the Ahafo Ano South-West District Assembly as the study area as well as compare findings in terms of similarities and dissimilarities to the results of international studies.

Ethical Issues:

The interview you are involved is to be conducted in the language that you understand and each question explained in a plain language you understand. You consent that the interviews should be audio taped and/or transcribed and that the information from the interview should be used only for academic exercise and possibly the findings for policy makers' consideration. You have full control over what and how much information you wish to share with the researcher. You appreciate that your comments may be used in the report but your identity will be kept confidential. In a nutshell, there are no real or potential hazards anticipated for you or anyone taking part in this study.

The responses to this questionnaire may require 60 minutes of your precious time. Thank you.

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Please, kindly underline the answer that is applicable in each case. Where multiple answers are required, you may do so.

Section One: Personal Data

1. Name:…………..

2. Sex: (a) Male   (b) Female

3. Place of birth:…………………………………………………………………

4. How old are you? (a) 18-25   (b) 26-35   (c) 36-45   (d) 46 and above

5. Marital status: (a) Single (b) Married (c) Divorcee (d) Co-habited

6. Where do you come from?...

7. What is your Religion? (a) Christian (b) Moslem (c) Traditionalist (d) Other (specify please)………………………………………. ……………………………………

8. How many children do you have?..

Section Two: Organizational Data

9. Which department of the Assembly do you work?..

10. What is your job title?...

11. How long have you worked in this Organization?

    (a) < 0.5 year   (b) < 0.5 ≥ 2 years (c) < 2 ≥ 4 years (d) < 4 years

12. What level of the organization do you work at?

    (a) Entry level (b) Line manager level (c) Middle manager level (d) Senior manager level

Section Three: Causes of Workplace Conflicts

1. At what level of the organization do you observe most conflict? (a) Entry level (b) At line manager level (c) At middle manager level (d) At senior manager level

2. What do you observe to be the causes of conflicts at work? Rank in order of incidence, please (a) Office romance (b) Personality clashes and warring egos (c) Stress (d) Workloads (e) Clash of values (f) Poor management (g) Lack of honesty (h) Other(s)……………………………………………………(specify please)

3. Which of the following frequently trigger workplace conflicts? Rank them, please

    (a) Females……………………..

    (b) Males………………………

    (c) Young………………………

    (d) Old………………………….

4. Which of the following category of officers frequently trigger workplace conflicts? Rank them, please

    (a) Senior Officers……………………..

    (b) Junior Officers……………………….

    (c) Meddle Management Officers………………………

5. What are the other known factor(s) that precipitate workplace conflict(s) at Ahafo Ano South West District Assembly?..

Section Four: Effects of Workplace Conflicts

6. On the average or in a typical day, how many minutes do you spend on disagreements and conflicts (a) Less than 5 minutes (b) 5-30 minutes (c) 31-60 minutes (d) Other……………………………………………………………….(please specify)

7. Conflicts can result in the following (Consequences): Underline as many as possible.

    (a) Inter departmental antagonism

    (b) Staff taken time off sick due to conflict

    (c) Staff leaving the organization

    (d) Project/programme failure

    (e) Staff posted/transferred to different departments or District

    (f) Staff fired

    (g) Staff avoided a colleague following a conflict

    (h) Staff stayed away from a work related social event

8. How does conflict make you feel if you have ever been involved (underline all that are appropriate)? (a) Demotivated (b) Angry and frustrated (c) Nervous and stressed (d) Confident (e) Excited and energised (f) Nothing

9. In a conflict that you have been involved, which of the following did you experience (outcome)? Choose as many as appropriate (a) A positive outcome (b) A negative outcome (c) Better understanding (d) Improved work relationships (e) Higher performance (f) A better team environment

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Section Five: Conflict Management Mechanisms

10. How often do you deal with conflict in the workplace? (a) Always (b) Frequently (c) Occasionally (d) Never (e) Don't know

11. Whose job do you think it is to manage workplace conflict? (a) Everyone (b) Line managers (c) Those involved (d) Senior Managers (e) Conflict professionals

12. If you are a manager how well do you think you do at resolving workplace conflicts?

    (a) I do a great job (b) I do a good job (c) I do my best (d) I find it difficult (e) I do nothing

18. Who handles conflict in your organization most effectively? (a) Senior management (b) Line management (c) Human resources (d) No one

19. Who do you think handles conflict the best?

    (a) Older people (b) Younger people (c) Men (d) Women

    (e) Those who are more senior (f) Those who are more junior

20. Give brief account of how conflict is managed in your organization:……………..……

21. What are the most important things that could be done to help with conflict management? Underline in order of importance (a) Better leadership from top and line managers (b) More clearly defined and applied roles

    (c) Better staff empowerment (d) Better conflict management services (e) Address underlying tensions before conflict erupts

22. Do you handle workplace conflicts differently now than earlier in your career? Multi answers permissible, please (a) No, they affect me the same as they always have (b) They get to me less (c) I am more proactive (d) I'm less likely to cause a fuss (e) I now seek advice from colleagues (f) I Now seek advice from people outside work (g)

I appreciate the value of conflict more h. I have learned not to win

23. What forms of training in conflict management have you received? (a) Management course (b) Training course (c) Counseling (d) No training

24. If you received conflict training how did it make you feel? (a) More confident in handling conflict (b) More determined to avoid conflict (c) It helped me get more positive outcomes for both parties (d) It helped me get what I want from conflict situations (e) It helped me give in more gracefully.

25. Where did you receive conflict training from?

    (a) External course in conflict management   (b) The internet (c) Peers

    (d) A line manager (e) Other (s) specify (please)………………………………

26. Any other relevant comments, please?..