

**AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS IN WORKPLACE CONFLICT
MANAGEMENT DIALOGUES: THE CASE OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
IN NAIROBI COUNTY**

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DECLARATION

I hereby affirm that this project is my original work and has not been presented in part or wholly to any other institution of learning for the award of any degree or examination.

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This research project has been submitted with my approval as the University Supervisor

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DEDICATION

For Dylan and Lavyrle

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CMM	Coordinated Management of Meaning
UN	United Nations
KII	Key Informant Interviews

ABSTRACT

This study sought to analyse communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County. The objectives of the study comprised; to investigate communication hurdles that necessitate the use of dialogue in workplace conflict management; to establish the different types of dialogue in workplace conflict management; to explore the factors that influence the main communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues and to establish the conditions necessary for constructive dialogue in workplace conflict management. The coordinated management of meaning theory was used to illuminate the understanding of communicative actions during these dialogues. The spiral of silence theory was used to expound on why and how silence is used during workplace conflict management dialogues. The study design was descriptive, and the research approach was qualitative. To collect primary data, the researcher conducted key informant interviews using an interview schedule. Informants were purposefully selected based on the inclusion-exclusion criteria. The data was analysed thematically using Lanigan's simplified three-step qualitative data analysis method and presented in the form of narratives. Confidentiality, adherence to University of Nairobi research regulations as well as other ethical considerations were observed. The findings of this study showed that within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County, passive communicative actions like silence derailed the dialogue process whereas communicative actions like empathic listening aided in achieving a desirable outcome. The findings also intimated that dialogue is preferred in managing workplace conflicts for its suitability in maintaining workplace relationships, but its use is usually informal as it is not ingrained in the workplace conflict management policies. Gender too was a factor that influenced the dialogue process. This study concluded that workplace conflicts can be managed best using dialogue when the dialoguers are cognizant of the communication dynamics taking place and the factors influencing them. This study recommends that workplace conflict management dialogue be considered as one of the official ways of managing workplace conflicts.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter presents the background to the study, statement of the research problem, research objectives, research questions, justification, and significance of the study as well as the scope and limitation of the research.

1.1 Background

Communication is defined in variable ways by different scholars. However, this study adopts Griffin Em's definition of communication as being "the relational process of creating and interpreting messages that elicit a response" (Griffin, 2011, p.6). This simple but succinct definition alludes to the fact that communication is an intentional process whose effectiveness depends on the interlocutors' ability to have a common ground for understanding as well as a common language. Equally, before generating a response, the interlocutors need to listen to the opinions of the other and express their opinions in a dialogic process.

At workplaces, communication happens at multiple stakeholder levels, such as between superiors and subordinates and among superiors or subordinates (Wrench & Punyanunt-Carter, 2012). Miller (2012) considers workplaces as factors of their communication, implying that a workplace is as good as its communication. This consideration means that communication determines how well the workplace's culture, mission and vision are articulated to and among stakeholders; and consequently, plays a pivotal role in achieving workplace goals. When the communication is not immediate, efficient, and reliable, there is potential for conflict to arise, and reversibly dealing with the conflict requires the use of communication. The omnipresence of

conflicts in workplaces (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014a) underscores the value of workplace communication strategies in managing them. Dialogue is one such communication strategy as true dialogue is ultimately essential for any workplace (Roman, 2005).

1.1.1 Communication in Workplace Conflict

Workplace conflict can be defined as a perceived and communicated state of disaccord and or incompatibility within and or between individuals, teams, departments, and workplaces that results into and from competition, collaboration, cooperation, contention, unity or disunity (García et al., 2015; Gergen et al., 2004; Mitchell & Gamlem, 2015). Workplace conflicts stem from incompatibilities within various aspects of the workplace. The existence of these incompatibilities sets the stage for the occurrence of conflicts but does not necessarily result in conflict. Conflict arises where there is interdependence that warrants the expression of these incompatibilities (Miller, 2012). This need for expression means that communication is an essential component of workplace conflicts as it is through communication that functional and dysfunctional conflicts are detected and dealt with (Miller, 2012). How employees view communication acts underlines the vitality dialogue will be accorded as workplace communication culture determines the efficacy of dialogue in situations of conflict (Rieker & Thune, 2015). Where communication acts are seen as individual in lieu of group, dialogue which relies on the relational matrix is overlooked (Gergen et al., 2004).

1.1.2 Dialogic Communication

A simple dictionary definition of dialogue is that it is an exchange of ideas and opinions (*Definition of DIALOGUE*, n.d.) For ideas and opinions to be exchanged, the interlocutor should be aware of their existence within the self and this calls for self-introspection (Yankelovich, 2001). By deeply looking into the self, the interlocutors can appreciate the assumptions held by

the self and the other. The surfacing of these deeply held assumptions opens the way for creating mutual understanding between the interlocutors. Griffin et al. (2019) define dialogic communication as talking with each other as opposed to talking to or at each other. When used in situations of conflict, dialogue demands that the conflicting factions collaborate to come up with solutions that are acceptable to all (Feller & Ryan, 2012). The focus on collaboration is reinforced by (Nixon, 2012) who defines dialogue as “productively thinking together”. Juxtaposed with communication, dialogue is deemed as a more meaningful engagement, as it endeavours to “get the right people to talk about the right issues in the right way and in the right time and space” (Nixon, 2012, pg10). Dialogue is however encompassed with a myriad of challenges such as modern communication technologies that have made people less and less conversational and consequently lose their dialogic skills (Nixon, 2012). This disconnect between commonplace everyday dialogue and ideal dialogue creates a “dialogue gap”. Nixon (2012) argues that deliberately bridging this dialogue gap is key for a meaningful worthy life at home, at work and in the larger society.

The efficacy of dialogic communication depends on dialogic listening (Cowan, 2003; Helin, 2013), which is dependent on the antithesis of phonic language-silence. During dialogue, silence is used to give the other an opportunity to organize and voice their thoughts but it can also be a metaphorical response laden with nuanced meaning (Jensen, 1973). This relational process of expressing the self then keeping silent to listen and allow the other to speak before responding is vital in dialogic communication. It results in reflexively creating shared meanings between the interlocutors.

1.1.3 Communication Dynamics in Dialogues

Dialogues are imbued with communication dynamics. Communication dynamics are the shifting patterns of communicative behaviour at different times and contexts (Myers & Myers, 1985; Scott et al., 2017). These communication changes are a consequence of situational or contextual, process, institutional, and personality attributes. They encompass both verbal and non-verbal communicative actions evident in face to face communication interactions and in technologically mediated communication. They range from passive silence on one end of the continuum to overt aggressiveness and even violence on the other end. Passive communicative actions focus on preserving relationships by focussing on the needs of the other over those of the self, whereas aggressive communicative actions disregard the needs of others and are solely for self-aggrandisement (Elgoibar et al., 2017). In the middle of this continuum lies assertive communication actions that endeavour to protect the interests of both parties.

1.1.4 Dialogue in Workplace Conflict

Interest in how dialogue can be potentially used in conflict management and resolution has grown over time (Rieker & Thune, 2015). Nixon (2012) affirms that dialogue is an opportunity in waiting in situations where conflicts exist and adds that societies that have cultivated the dialogic culture are more innovative and less conflictual. The role of dialogue is contextual and also dependent on the type of conflict (Rieker & Thune, 2015). Dialogue is more productive in situations where mutual trust is high and power disparities are not overwhelming (Yankelovich, 2001). Dialogue is a vital skill in the process of meaning making that creates genuine workplace consciousness.

In a dialogic process, the interlocutors have the duty to reflect on their own presumptions before expressing themselves as well as hearing and listening to the other people (Randolph &

Kormanik, 2007). Bohm (2013) sees this iterative process as having the potential to reveal contrarities in personal thoughts to facilitate the discovery and creation of shared meanings among a group of people. When dialogue in the form of reflexive conversations takes place, it is more likely that sustainable solutions to workplace conflict challenges will be found (Jacobs & Coghlan, 2003).

1.1.5 Dialogue in Workplace Conflict Globally

To highlight the significance of dialogue in workplaces, the United Nations conducts annual leadership dialogues aimed at discussing a number of ethical challenges faced by the employees in their day to day work (*Leadership Dialogue 2018: Speaking-up When Does It Become Whistle-Blowing?* 2018). Every senior leader conducts the guided dialogues until every UN staff has participated and been exposed to the dialogue materials. The leadership dialogue guide indicates that the decisions made during the interrogation of these issues play a critical role in the collective success of the workplace. In the year 2018, the dialogue topic was “Speaking up: when does it become whistle blowing?”. The focus was on how employees can respectfully express divergent opinions, raise concerns about inter-personal and work place conflicts as well as speak up or report wrong doing in the workplace (*Leadership Dialogue 2018: Speaking-up When Does It Become Whistle-Blowing?*, 2018). Essentially, this is the focus of this study the only divergence being a focus on the communication dynamics in these dialogues.

1.1.6 Dialogue in Workplace Conflict in Africa

Zoogah & Beugré (2013) regard conflicts as being pervasive in African societies including workplaces. However, the volatile nature of Africa’s geopolitical landscape has meant that much focus has been put on violent inter-state or inter-ethnic conflicts (Musingafi Chando et al., 2011). The frequently used conflict management strategies during such conflicts are

negotiations, mediation, dialogue, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and litigation. However, dialogue in such instances is deemed non official and bordering on just a preparatory phase of the conflict resolution process (Gergen et al., 2004; Rieker & Thune, 2015).

Traditional African conflict management and resolution methods oscillated around the value of relationships (Musingafi Chando et al., 2011) and socialization. For instance, elders and chiefs (seniors and managers in workplaces) would be slow to act when there is conflict because they are socialized not to be impulsive (Zoogah & Beugré, 2013). Therefore, the conflict management strategies employed were those deemed to have least adverse effects on the fabric of relationships. Extrapolating this to workplaces implies that workplaces could structure their conflict management strategies on relationship preservation as it is central to African conflict management. Dialogue, being a relational communication strategy stands in good stead during such conflicts.

1.1.7 Dialogue in Workplace Conflict in Kenya

Research on workplace conflicts in Kenya shows that conflicts are inherent within workplaces (C. Mwangi & Ragui, 2013). These conflicts are caused by a number of factors such as personality attributes of the employees (Gitau, 2016), task interdependence and communication barriers as well as unclear lines on resource allocations (Njuki, 2011). A number of studies on workplace conflicts in Kenya have concentrated on the causes of workplace conflicts (Omayo, 2018), effects of conflicts on project performance (Gitau, 2016), employee performance (Eunice, 2015) as well as employee commitment (Barasa et al., 2015). They also interrogate how work place conflicts influence the management of workplaces (Njuki, 2011) and how employee job satisfaction is influenced by the conflict management strategies employed (Momanyi & Juma, 2016). The organisations studied include institutions of learning, banks,

hotels, the air transport industry, government departments such as the department of immigration, the Kenya seed company and Kenya power.

Deviating from the common interrogation of workplace conflict management strategies of avoiding, accommodating, collaborating, competing and compromising, a study on dialogue as a management tool for conflict resolution at Rongo University concluded that the employees of Rongo University were not conscious of the importance of dialogue in conflict resolution and had not fully embraced it (Okuthe, 2018). This perhaps implies that even though dialogue, is commonly turned to in times of conflict, its usefulness in workplace conflict management has not been fully explored within the Kenyan context.

1.1.8 Civil Society Organisations in Kenya

Civil Society Organisations “CSOs”, comprise individuals pursuing shared interests in the public domain devoid of government and market influences (Keter, 2014). CSOs include trade unions, community-based groups, faith-based organisations, think tanks, foundations as well as national and international non-governmental organisations operating within the country, among others. CSOs form an integral part of society and are considered the third arm of society after the government and the business or commercial sector (Maingi, 2016). The Kenyan Civil Society is lauded for its vibrancy in the region. It employs about 350,000 people contributing up to 15% of the country’s gross domestic product, “GDP”, and is actively involved in about 26 sectors of the economy (Keter, 2014).

These organisations are involved in issues of public interest such as eradicating poverty through sustainable agriculture, creating awareness on issues of governance, human rights and social justice, environmental conservation, providing humanitarian aid in times of distress, among others. The choice to focus on CSOs is informed by the fact that much of the research

available on workplace conflict in Kenya has focused on corporate and government organisations leaving out CSOs yet they play a key role in society. Equally, the semi-structured nature of most CSOs, the diversity in membership, the reliance on financial aid, the temporality or short-term nature of their job contracts increases the likelihood of occurrence of workplace conflicts and makes them a compelling area of study.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In spite of the fact that dialogue is commonly resorted to in times of conflict, its common nature poses challenges to its being understood and wholly appreciated (Coleman et al., 2014) as many people assume they know what it is and how to effectively use it. This creates a gap between the dialogue being had and the dialogue that needs to be had (Nixon, 2012) in managing workplace conflicts. The functional or dysfunctional outcomes of the dialogue process are hinged on the communicative actions of the dialoguers (Kassing, 1997) yet this remains a relatively under explored area within the dynamic field of workplace conflict management. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to this area of study by analysing the communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues.

The conflict management strategies of accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing, and compromising (Miller, 2012) are rooted in a concern for the self, verses a concern for the other excluding collective concern for both the self and the other. Dialogue as a relational communication approach focusses on collective concern for “us” as opposed to the unilateral concern of the self or the other. In Kenya, available literature on workplace conflict has focused on the causes, the effects and testing the efficacy of conflict management strategies employed leaving out the significant role that dialogue plays during such conflicts(Gitau, 2016; Momanyi & Juma, 2016; C. Mwangi & Ragui, 2013; R. W. Mwangi & Waithaka, 2018; Omayo,

2018). In divergence, a 2018 study on dialogue as a management tool in Rongo University concluded that dialogue has not been fully embraced in conflict management by the university (Okuthe, 2018). Research on workplace conflict management in Kenya has focussed largely on corporate and governmental parastatals as well as institutions of learning leaving out Civil Society Organisations even though they too play an important role in the country. This study therefore analyses the communication dynamics in dialogues during workplace conflict management within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Main Objective

The purpose of this study was to analyse communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues within Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Nairobi County.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were:

- i. To investigate communication hurdles that necessitate the use of dialogue in workplace conflict management within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County.
- ii. To establish the different types of dialogues in workplace conflict management within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County.
- iii. To explore the factors that influence the main communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County.
- iv. To establish the conditions necessary for constructive dialogue in workplace conflict management within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What are the communication hurdles that result in the need for dialogue in workplace conflict management within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County?
- ii. What are the different types of dialogues used in workplace conflict management within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County?
- iii. How do workplace and personality factors influence the main communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County?
- iv. What conditions are necessary for constructive dialogue during workplace conflict management within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County?

1.5 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Whenever individuals, groups, organisations, or states are at variance, we often hear of calls to dialogue to end the stalemate or deal with the conflict. This constant recourse to dialogue implies its perceived preference in managing and de-escalating conflicts. But what is dialogue? How can dialogue make workplace life better? Because dialogue is ubiquitous, the intricacies of the communication dynamics in dialogues are rarely focused on. This research attempts to bridge this gap by analysing the communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues.

The findings of this research could be used to raise workplace consciousness in the concretization of dialogue as a communication strategy in the management of workplace conflicts. The goal is to contribute to contemporary school of workplace conflict management approaches used to hold together the social fabric of workplaces. The results of the study could give administrators and human resource managers an insight into dialogue as a vital approach to

managing workplace conflicts. Equally, engaging in dialogue develops dialogic skills that can be useful in other sectors of life such as managing conflicts at home and in the larger society.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study focused on employees working for Civil Society Organisations within Nairobi County. The employees needed to have experienced conflicts either personally or through observation. Equally, they should have been participants in dialogues during workplace conflict management. From this pool, the researcher derived key informants to provide data. However, this study was potentially limited by the depth of discussions because the researcher was a first-time qualitative researcher. In addition, reliance on the stories told from memory by the employees in lieu of active participation during these dialogues could have had a limiting factor as the story tellers could have omitted bits or exaggerated others.

1.7 Operational Definition of Terms

Communication dynamics: the changes in communicative actions that occur in workplace conflict management dialogues.

Communication hurdles: barriers or challenges to effective workplace communication.

Communicative action: verbal and non-verbal actions that interlocutors use to express their messages and respond to those of others.

Dialogue: an inter-subjective high level of communication in which the “self” interrogates and surfaces their own assumptions and prejudices and non-judgementally and empathically listens to those of the “other” resulting in creating mutual understanding and shared meaning. It is talking with each other as opposed to talking at each other.

Workplace: a physical place where people work.

Workplace conflict: the process through which actors or agents in a workplace perceive and communicate differences, oppositions, and disagreements or incompatibilities resulting to a state of disaccord within the workplace.

Workplace conflict management: the strategies workplaces employ in dealing with workplace conflicts to harness the positive aspects while reducing the negative outcomes.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Overview

This chapter presents a discussion on the communication hurdles that necessitate the use of dialogue in workplace conflict management. Dialogue: its definition, the different types of dialogue, how the dialogue process unfolds as well as the conditions necessary for constructive dialogues are also explored. The nexus between listening and silence during these dialogues is also delved into. Next, workplace conflicts are discussed followed by a review of communication dynamics in dialogues during workplace conflict management and their influencing factors. The theoretical framework incorporates the coordinated management of meaning theory and the spiral of silence theory. A conceptual framework is also included.

2.1 Communication Hurdles at the Workplace

Communication is the lubricant that ensures the uninterrupted running of organisations. When it is effective, it results in the creation of healthy workplaces full of trust and where employees are motivated to engage and freely share ideas and thoughts (Sharma, 2015). Adu-Oppong (2014) adds that effective workplace communication creates employee job satisfaction, lessens workplace conflicts, increases productivity, leads to the formation of better personal and professional relationships and results to better utilization of resources. However, communication is not always smooth as the dynamism and complexities of workplaces is a catalyst for communication challenges (Sharma, 2015). Communication hurdles are defined as the barriers or challenges to effective workplace communication (Sharma, 2015). These hurdles are as a consequence of the workplace itself as well as of the individual employee (Adu-Oppong, 2014).

Communication hurdles can be classified variably but for this research, they will be grouped into two main categories: those resulting from workplace communication culture and those resulting from individual personality attributes. The communication culture of a workplace could contain hurdles such as those identified by (Adu-Oppong, 2014; Sharma, 2015). These include physical barriers such as corner offices with closed doors especially for senior managers that limit their accessibility by junior employees. The workplace communication policy with regards to upward communication could result in procedural and structural disruptions when not fully embraced and encouraged. This is a consequence of too rigid job hierarchical structures that create discrepancies in power and status relationships. Where acrimony is prevalent, such relationships result in communication hurdles. The pressure of a specific task could also result in miscommunication at the workplace as the employee has inadequate time to code their message and decode the response effectively. In addition, in today's culturally plural workplaces, the amalgam of employees belonging to different nationalities, religious affiliations and status is a recipe for communication hurdles in the workplace. Equally, when there is a discordance in the language being used their results a lapse in communication with those who do not understand the language.

The personality attributes of employees could also be barriers to effective communication at the workplace (Adu-Oppong, 2014). Such personality variables include issues to do with communication apprehension such as shyness, non-assertive communication behaviours, anger and frustrations, lack of confidence or low self-esteem. Emotional barriers such as feelings of fear, anger mistrust, annoyance and jealousy could also augment personal bias that could result to personal liking and disliking of other employees and consequently how they communicate. As a factor of the cognitive schema and different socialization, employees perceive messages

differently and this creates a variance in their viewpoints and opinions and could interfere with workplace communication. Communication hurdles will always arise at the workplace. It is therefore paramount that employees recognize these communication hurdles early enough and devise strategies of navigating through them with least adverse effects. One such strategy is by using dialogue which results into mutual understanding and creation of shared meanings.

2.2 Dialogue

Considering that dialogue is a common happenstance, many people assume they know what it is and how to use it (Nixon, 2012) and therefore do not appreciate its “magic” as an essential aspect of the human spirit employed in the strengthening of personal relationships and solving problems (Yankelovich, 1999). Yankelovich (2001) contends that dialogue is not an inscrutable and incomprehensive form of communication that only highly intellectual people can utilize but rather, it is a skill that everyone can master if they deliberately set out to. In workplace conflict, Jeong (2010) sees dialogue as a prerequisite for management strategies that consider the vital needs of the adversaries.

2.2.1 Definition of Dialogue

Dialogue is derived from two Greek words *dia* meaning “through” and *logos* meaning “the word” (Bohm, 2013). This definition suggests that dialogue is the process of using words to create meaning of the self and the other. *Dia* is however not related to the number “two” as opposed to “one”-monologue. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines dialogue as “an exchange of views for the purpose of exploring a subject or deciding on an issue” or simply “talking or talk between two or more people” (Webster, n.d.). The first definition brings out the element of exchanging views for the purposes of looking into an issue in detail. However, dialogue is not just “mere talk” or conversation, it goes beyond that. As dialoguers talk or

converse, the creation of mutual understanding is paramount as it is the essence of dialogue (Yankelovich, 1999).

Nixon's definition of dialogue as "productively thinking together" suggests that dialogue is a collaboration that is fruitful for those involved (Nixon, 2012). This perspective of dialogue as "thinking together" is further reinforced by Feller & Ryan (2012) who define violent inter-state or inter-ethnic conflict dialogue as; "a movement aimed at generating coexistence and does so through encountering the "other" to share experiences, to think together in creative and flexible ways, and to explore assumptions together". Romney (n.d.) defines dialogue as "focused conversation, engaged in intentionally with the goal of increasing understanding, addressing problems and questioning thoughts and actions".

In trying to address problems, dialogue should not be mistaken for an instrument of decision making that pivots on power and interests as these derail dialogue (Yankelovich, 2001). The purpose of dialogue is not to make decisions but to build capacity on decision making processes (Nagda et al., 2012). This however does not negate the role of dialogue in decision making processes as it is vital in creating mutual understanding and awareness that informs the final output of the decision-making process. In dialogue, there is no competition, the most desirable outcome is a better understanding of ourselves, the others, and the circumstances around us and not to win. Dialogue intends to help us comprehend our agreements as well as our disagreements.

In this study, dialogue is defined as a high level intersubjective communication through which the "self" interrogates and surfaces their assumptions and prejudices and non-judgementally and empathically listens to those of the "other" resulting in creating mutual understanding and shared meaning. Dialogue is talking with each other as opposed to at each

other. Dialogue in this case is interrogated purely on its pragmatism as a tool for ameliorating human communicative interaction.

2.2.2 Types of Dialogue

Normatively, dialogue classification is hinged on the preliminary situation or the context, the individual goals of the dialoguers as well as the overall aim of the dialogic process (Walton & Macagno, 2007). This normative model focuses centrally on what dialogue should be and not what dialogue is. The types of dialogue identified herein are inquiry dialogue, negotiation dialogue, information-seeking dialogue, persuasion dialogue, deliberation dialogue, eristic dialogue, and discovery dialogue (Walton & Macagno, 2007). Inquiry dialogue is a truth directed investigation in which there is collaboration, cooperation, and the interlocutors have the burden of proving their claims are true. Where there is a lack of information, the person deficient in information and who needs it, seeks it from the expert in an information-seeking dialogue.

Discovery dialogues happen where the interlocutors want to choose the best possible solution. They do this by interrogating the facts advanced to defend a given hypothesis. In negotiation dialogues, interest is in achieving the most beneficial outcomes from the process whereas persuasion dialogues focus on convincing the other to drop their claims in support of those of the other in a win-lose outcome. In situations of dilemma, deliberation dialogues are used to interrogate the premises to choose the solution that is most agreeable to most people. Here, individual needs are subservient to group needs. Eristic dialogues are quarrels characterized with language that is demeaning and humiliating. The individual goal is to win a verbal argument, but this exchange could result in emotional venting.

Deviating from the normative model to focus on the type of interaction taking place between the interlocutors, Fishelov (2013) advanced three types of dialogue: echo dialogue,

dialogue of the deaf and dialectical dialogue. Echo dialogue also known as duo-monologue is a type of dialogue in which the respondent just voices the opinions of the proponent verbatim or by paraphrasing. Duo-monologues are asymmetric in nature occurring in interactions where social hierarchical levels are apparent such as between a senior employee and a junior employee or a teacher and a student. In real life conversations, social hierarchies are usually maintained in echo dialogue (Arnold, 2010). In dialogue of the deaf also referred to as two parallel monologues, the interlocutors neither listen to nor understand the opinions and views of each other. Dialectical dialogue occurs where the interlocutors listen to and understand the views and opinions of each other even though they have their own different views; there is give and take. This typology is extolled for being pragmatic in real life conversations as well as in literary discourse analysis. However, these groups are not clear cut but overlap or shift during a dialogic process.

2.2.3 Stages of the Dialogue Process

The process of development of a dialogue is not linear but recursive. Isaacs (1993) identified four stages of this process with each stage having marked communication interaction dynamics. At the onset of a dialogue process, the individuals engage in defensive communication. Defensive communicative behaviours result from the assumptions, beliefs, values, and prejudices that the individuals bring with them to the dialogue. Consequently, the first step in any dialogue process is to ensure that the individual members are able to fully surface these pre-held notions and not to hide them (W. N. Isaacs, 1993). This requires both a deliberate effort and a willingness to loosen their grip on the beliefs. This first stage is termed the initiation stage. The second stage is referred to as the discussion stage. It involves a realization of change; the individuals realize they are involved in something new. However, they are conflicted between discussing their deeply held assumptions or hiding them. And when they do discuss

them, the discussions are more fragmented and less cohesive as the individual tries to defend their own views. As the discussions progress however, they start to realize the falsity of their assumptions and this leads to a crisis; they want to suspend their assumptions but are not sure whether by suspending their beliefs they will be inadvertently adopting those of the other. Sometimes, the resolution of this crisis requires the support of a skilled facilitator.

Inquiry is the third stage. This stage is after a realization that individual beliefs and assumptions are not necessarily better or superior to those of the other. It creates a sensitivity to the way the issues under discussion affect not only the individual self but the other. This realization creates a crisis in that the individual is pained for having held onto the fragmented beliefs while disregarding collective cohesion. Navigating this crisis leads to the fourth stage which is creativity. At this stage, there is collective cohesion and meaning creation in what is termed as “metalogue”. Getting to this stage requires a deeper level of self-consciousness and an advertent effort. Creativity stage is the goal of any dialogic process.

2.2.4 Conditions Necessary for Constructive Dialogue

The acclaimed “magic” of dialogue in ameliorating workplace conflict can fail to be achieved if dialogue is not conducted in the right way. This can happen when affective and emotional elements of the dialoguers are more pronounced and stronger than the need to establish a common ground. Traditional hierarchical arrangements within workplaces such as the boss-employee relationship also create asymmetrical relationships in which dialogue is less likely to be effective. A dialogue does not just happen; it is made to happen. The dialogic process is infused with intentionality. Coleman et al. (2014) remark that agreeing to dialogue is the first step in defusing a conflict as it subjugates the common adversary of misunderstanding. Dialogue

demands a high level of awareness of the self and the other as this determines how this dialogic process pans out.

The first core requirement of dialogue is equality (Yankelovich, 2001). Effective dialogic communication takes place where conditions that allow for effective and collaborative communication are established (Coleman et al., 2014). For instance, letting participants sit in a circle discourages asymmetry and counters the effects of societal hierarchical levels. This creates a semblance of equality between the senior and junior members of the workplace and could extensively influence the ease with which they voice their opinions. This reduces the occurrence of echo or deaf dialogue.

Empathic listening is the second requirement (Yankelovich, 2001). Here, the dialoguers purposefully listen to each other in a way that focuses on their emotions and feelings. Each participant strives to understand the viewpoint of the other and not on advancing their own ideologies. The ability to surface assumptions without judging each other is the third core requirement (Yankelovich, 2001). We infer meanings from how we perceive the world. From these perceptions we derive a body of personal beliefs (assumptions) that shape our realities. Dialogic communication demands that we bring these assumptions into the open first before speculating on those of the other dialoguers. This process of surfacing our own assumptions before considering those held by the others should be devoid of judgement to ensure effective dialogue takes place.

In addition to the above core requirements, during the initial stages of the dialogic process, it is essential to focus on issues of common interest as opposed to the divisive contentious ones (Yankelovich, 2001). Also, it is best to clearly demarcate between dialogic communication for conflict management and decision-making communication (Nixon, 2012).

Failure to do this could create mistrust due to fear of perceived negative consequences and could be detrimental to the entire process. It is also advisable to engage a facilitator who should be passive, unbiased, neutral, and nonintrusive (Nixon, 2012; Yankelovich, 2001). During dialogue, there are pauses (silence) to let the other speak as the self-listens and vice versa. The next section discusses these two integral components of the dialogic process.

2.3 Silence and Listening in Dialogic Communication

During a dialogic process, listening is interspersed with moments of silence and silence is interjected with listening. This provides room for reflexive pauses during conversations. Just like dialogue, silence and listening are skills that can be learned and mastered. To amplify our understanding, the study first looks at what silence is before looking at listening.

2.3.1 *Silence*

Silence can be understood both philosophically and operationally, but this study will limit its discussion to its operational definition and the meanings of its uses in variable contexts. Operationally, the meaning of silence can be inferred in several ways. The failure of human beings to pay attention to silence and interpret it correctly is likely to lead to unethical behaviour and conflict (Billias & Vemuri, 2017). They suggested seven forms of silence, modelled after the meditation – Eloquent Silence (Melodia, 1991). The first operational form of silence is empty rhetoric in which “some speak...and say nothing.” An example of this type of silence is when senior managers engage in the same unending and unchanging conversations with no new conclusions –but remain silent to the concerns of the junior employees. This disconnect in dialogic communication leads to dialogue of the deaf (Fishelov, 2013) resulting in mistrust and eroding engagement (Billias & Vemuri, 2017).

The second form is insolent silence in which “some are silent...because they are proud.” This silence sprouts from an unwillingness to explain oneself when one feels that there exists a gap in the level of understanding between oneself and the other. This creates dialogic asymmetry. The unwillingness is fuelled by a sense of pride and its implications include disregard (Billias & Vemuri, 2017) and hatred. The third form is silence of hopelessness in which “some are silent ... because they have nothing to say.” When a people have repeatedly voiced their concerns and been unheard all through, they are likely to believe that they will never be heard or attended to. A people as such resort to silence – a portrayal of disenfranchisement and loss of self-worth (Billias & Vemuri, 2017). This is passive silence, a resignation to the status quo.

The fourth form is silence of fear in which “some are silent ... because they are afraid.” This fear is instigated by the perception of adverse consequences of speaking up. The fifth form is the silence of the oppressed in which “some are silent ... so as not to tell the truth.” This kind of silence entails subjective speaking and listening usually because of the existence of complexities in decision-making processes and different value-systems in a context. The people hold back certain aspects of truths out of fear of being misunderstood, mistrusted, mistreated, excluded, or persecuted (Billias & Vemuri, 2017).

The sixth form is silence of attentive listening in which “some are silent ... to listen.” This kind of silence requires a sense of consciousness devoid of preconceived biases and mindfulness with a focus on what is and what is not being said. It seeks to create a common ground and understanding among the participants (Billias & Vemuri, 2017) and agreeable disagreements in case of any. The seventh form is the silence which makes space for dialogue in which “some are silent ... in their own eloquent way.” This is an accommodative silence in

which an active silent listener proactively rather than reactively plans to respond. It creates room for divergent views without fear of fallout. It gives the speaker a chance to debate out their positions without fear of being shut up. It creates room for the introduction of new ways of solving challenges. (Billias & Vemuri, 2017).

The silence to listen and the silence to make space for dialogue are the most desirable silences during dialogic communication. The other types of silence are implicitly imbued with meaning and should therefore be paid attention to as they could subtly affect the process of dialogue. For instance, when an individual is silent out of fear or feelings of oppression, they are more likely to engage in echo dialogue that does not result in creating collective understanding.

2.3.2 Contextual Dialogic Meaning of Silence

In dialogue, silence can be used for face saving. This is when an individual wants to project, portray, or maintain a certain self-image in public. This need changes with the environment, situation, and level of awareness. For instance, when one is aware of a certain self-inadequacy particular to a certain environment, they will tend to be silent so as not to expose the inadequacy to other seemingly superior participants (Ling, n.d.). Equally silence can be used for affecting when used to provoke action either positively or negatively (Jensen, 1973; Ling, n.d.). For instance, a more knowledgeable person in an audience may choose to be silent to encourage others thought to be less knowledgeable to contribute to a discussion.

Evaluating is another way of using silence in conversation. This relates to judging other participants in terms of behaviour, motives, positions, among others. (Jensen, 1973; Ling, n.d.). For instance, a speaker decides to be silent when one of the participants fails to follow the rules of engagement or when the discussion is pointless. Silence is also used as linkage to connect with people or isolate them (Jensen, 1973). For instance, one can use silence to isolate from other

participants when one is tired or to ignore a discussion when one is not interested in the topic of discussion (Ling, n.d.).

2.3.3 *Listening During a Dialogic Process*

In order to create shared meanings during dialogic communication, listening is an essential skill. As opposed to physiological hearing, listening is an interactive activity anchored in the desire to be socially sensitive to the needs of the other. Listening is an important interpersonal communication skill that is an expression of being positively interested in the other person (Socha & Pitts, 2012). Listening is defined as “effectively and efficiently interpreting human communicative behaviour so as to understand its meaning and respond appropriately” (Socha & Pitts, 2012). In a dialogue, listening is deliberate, active, and empathic (Coleman et al., 2014; Yankelovich, 2001). The dialoguers intentionally choose to actively listen to each other as opposed to passively listening. Passive listening is listening for the sake of listening; it is closer to physiological hearing. Active listening is listening to understand the other interlocutor whereas empathic listening is listening to make the other “feel heard”. Cowan (2003) asserts that in dialogues during workplace conflict management, the dialoguers should endeavour to “listen first for feelings then for facts” to diffuse negative emotions and dispel confrontations.

Knowledge of the self and the other augments this listening process by making us aware of our interests and core values (Coleman et al., 2014) while appreciating those of the other. This has the potential to lead to the development of both the self and the other (Cowan, 2003). Empathic listening considers the feelings and emotions in the opinions of the other. The overall shift is to bilateralism as opposed to unilateralism. The listener endeavours to seize the viewpoint of the other instead of fighting for their own convictions. The focus is on the other without negating the knowledge and awareness of the self. Empathic listening makes the other feel heard

leading to the creation of better relationships anchored on mutual respect and understanding (Coleman et al., 2014; Yankelovich, 2001). Listening is essential in managing conflict as well as in other interactive relational setups such as within families (Socha & Pitts, 2012) as it communicates that we are understood and accepted just the way we are (Cowan, 2003).

Silence being the antithesis of phonic language integrates itself into the listening process. Prior to voicing thoughts, a dialoguer listens actively to the internal self. To effectively do this, Isaacs (1999) advocates the use of silence to “let the picture develop” then speak afterwards. Silence during dialogic communication can be misconstrued to mean listening. However, the passive absence of sound does not denote listening, which is an active process of interpreting interpersonal communicative behaviour and responding to it. Silence and listening are positively interconnected in dialogic communication as they are laden with overt and covert meanings. The notion that “silence is listening” (Rowe & Malhotra, 2013) implies that to engage in silence and understand how it works, we need to listen actively and empathically (Simonis, 2016). Active listening holds a space in dialogic communication that helps us value the silences and voices of the dialoguers.

2.4 Workplace Conflict

Schmidt & Kochan (1972) define workplace conflict as: “overt behaviour arising out of a process in which one unit seeks the advancement of its own interests in its relationships with the others”. This definition is further reinforced by Putnam & Poole (1987) who see workplace conflict as: “the interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims and values and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals.” Furthermore, Jehn (1995) terms workplace conflict as: “interpersonal incompatibilities or disagreements about contents of the tasks being performed among group members” whereas

McShane & Von Glinow (2010) see workplace conflict as: “ a process in which one party perceives that his or her interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party”.

Tjosvold et al. (2014) observe that conflict refers to incompatible activities in which the actions of the “self” get in the way of or are interfered with by the actions of the “other” without necessarily being competitive.

The salient features of workplace conflict that the above definitions bring out are: conflict is a process, conflict occurs among people or units or parties, the people or units or parties have a relationship, interaction or interdependence and there is opposition in terms of interests, views, goals, aims that result in incompatibilities or disagreements. These definitions connote to without expressly singling out the pivotal positioning of communication in the definition of workplace conflict. Miller (2012) argues that the existence of opposing interests, views, goals or aims creates the potential for the occurrence of conflict. However, this potential for conflict is only actualized when the people involved perceive these incompatibilities and communicate them. In other words, there is no workplace conflict without communication; be it verbal, non-verbal, or mediated. In view of the centrality of communication in workplace conflict, I opine that the definition of workplace conflict should include the aspect of communication. I propose that workplace conflict be defined as the process through which actors or agents in a workplace perceive and communicate differences, oppositions, disagreements, or incompatibilities resulting to a state of disaccord within the workplace.

The concept of workplace conflict has evolved from being normative to descriptive and recently to being communicative (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019). The normative approach sees workplace conflict as negative and destructive (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014). In such instances, it is the imperative of workplaces to come up with measures to eliminate the conflict as its voiding

is seen as the formula for workplace success (Bercovitch, 1983). Not all conflict is negative though (Omisore & Abiodun, 2014). Descriptive approaches to workplace conflict accept that conflict is an integral and inevitable part of any workplace and therefore it is important for workplaces to find ways of managing it properly. Bercovitch (1983) argues that because the evolution of a conflict is not pre-determined, it is erroneous to term conflict as negative and dysfunctional for it can be the catalyst for workplace change. The communicative approach assumes that a workplace is a construct of its communication (Scott et al., 2017) as it is through communication that workplace conflict is expressed, managed and eventually resolved (Miller, 2012).

2.4.1 Typology of Workplace Conflict

Categorizing workplace conflicts into “neat theoretical distinctions” is challenging as it presumes that employees have shared perceptions yet this is rarely the case (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019). Notwithstanding this challenge though, several scholars have grouped workplace conflicts differently. These groupings do not have clear cut boundaries as the relational nature of workplace conflicts leads to overlapping. According to Zoogah & Beugré (2013), workplace conflicts can be classified as structural, interactional or process conflicts. Structural conflicts also known as task conflicts (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019; Nicotera & Mahon, 2013) or substantive conflicts by Cheong & Kim (2018) are a consequence of disagreements stemming from issues such as who has authority, power, resources, responsibility and accountability. These conflicts are attuned to the established workplace culture. Role and task conflicts are grouped here.

Interactional conflicts also known as affective conflicts (Nicotera & Mahon, 2013) or relationship conflicts (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019) result from human interaction within the workplace and are a consequence of differences in status that determine interactional patterns,

behaviours and attitudes of employees. Here, we have intrapersonal conflicts also referred to as inner conflicts by Proksch (2016), interpersonal conflicts, intra-group conflicts and inter-group conflicts. Process conflicts are a result of workplace processes such as management, operations, support, and governance. They focus on how work is generally done and how often it is done (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019; Nicotera & Mahon, 2013).

The type of workplace conflict provides knowledge on where to begin our focus on workplace conflict management and also determines the nature of the conflict management strategy to be used and consequently its efficacy (Scott et al., 2017). This knowledge ensures that the right conflict is dealt with (Proksch, 2016). For instance, affective conflicts are best managed using strategies that encourage open communication and foster inquiry and understanding such as dialogue.

2.4.2 Workplace Conflict Management

The process of workplace conflict management is informed by the fact that workplace conflicts are not entirely bad for the workplace (Bercovitch, 1983). Therefore, workplace conflict management is the process of dealing with workplace conflict in a way that minimises its dysfunctional outcomes while increasing the functional ones (Rahim, 2003a). Effective conflict management occurs when conflict is timely diagnosed and suitable intervention measures undertaken (Rahim, 2003a). Conflict management is differentiated from conflict prevention that presumes that conflict can be dealt with before it occurs and conflict resolution that presumes that conflict can be totally done away with. Workplace conflict is ubiquitous and consequently can only be managed. For this study, workplace conflict management is defined as the strategies employed in dealing with workplace conflicts so as to harness its positive aspects while reducing the negative outcomes.

2.5 Communication Dynamics During Dialogues

Carrocci (1985) asserts that the way conflict is perceived and communicated is a determining factor in its escalation or de-escalation. The dialogic process goes through phases each with diverse communication dynamics. The nature of communicative behaviour exhibited is a factor of the cognitive schema that the interlocutors bring with them to the dialogue. As the dialogue process unfolds, the individual is expected to bring out their assumptions, beliefs, values, and prejudices while also listening non-judgementally to those of the other. This process leads to crises in which the individual communicates in variable ways ranging from being passively aggressive to aggressive and even to violent outbursts. Understanding employee expressive behaviours in dialogues during conflict management could contribute to our understanding of the dialogue process and why some dialogues fail while others succeed.

2.5.1 Definition of Communication Dynamics in Dialogue

The meaning of the term communication dynamics can be inferred from the individual meanings of the two words that make it. Communication is defined as the “relational process of creating and interpreting messages that elicit a response” (Griffin et al., 2019) whereas the Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines dynamics as “a process or pattern of change, growth or activity” (*Definition of DYNAMICS*, n.d.). Simply put, communication dynamics refer to the changing patterns in communication. For this study, communication dynamics refer to the changing patterns in employee communicative actions during dialogues to manage workplace conflicts. These could range from the interlocutors being passively aggressive to aggressive in their communication.

From the point of view of social psychology, these communicative actions are largely unconscious and could be argumentative or assertive or verbally aggressive or passive aggressive

(Elgoibar et al., 2017; Gross & Guerrero, 2009; Meyer, 2004). Argumentativeness is a constructive assertive form of communication where defending one's own opinion is done by attacking the positions of the other whereas verbal aggressiveness is defending one's opinion by attacking the self-concept of the other (Gross & Guerrero, 2009; Kassing, 1997).

Argumentativeness is depicted by arguing to score points in defence of a position about an issue whereas verbal aggressiveness attacks the concept of the person by using demeaning communicative actions such as yelling, insults, resorting to job hierarchical status, spreading rumours, belittling among others. Verbal aggressive is active destructive communication behaviour (Gross & Guerrero, 2009) and its use in workplace conflict management dialogues has been associated with negative outcomes (Meyer, 2004). This study is interested in analysing and understanding these communicative actions in dialogues during workplace conflict management as well as the factors driving them. This is because as Kassing (1997) alludes, the communicative actions of the employee determine the constructiveness of the dialogue process and could indicate the level of employee satisfaction with and loyalty to the workplace.

2.5.2 Factors Influencing Communication Dynamics in Dialogues

How an interlocutor enacts their communicative behaviour in dialogues is an expression of the employee perceptions of the self, their relations with the other as well as the workplace culture (Kassing, 1997). Personality influences include individual value perceptions of what is right or wrong, their desire or lack of to be ingrained in a conflict, their communication apprehension or outspokenness as well as other personality attributes. Equally, the relations the individual keeps with other employees as well as their priori experience with the conflict could determine their communicative behaviour (Elgoibar et al., 2017). For instance, research shows

that workers in the same department are more likely to use defensive communication where a close colleague is involved.

In addition, the employee concern for the self versus the other could determine their communicative action (Rahim, 2003). Also, employee perception of the workplace communication climate could determine their communicative actions. Kassing (1997) argues that the communicative responses of an employee are influenced by situational and contextual factors such as how satisfied with the job the employee is, how much the individual employee has invested in the workplace, the chances of being promoted, how long the employee wants to stay with the workplace among others. Workplace leadership is also a determinant of employee communicative action in dialogues (Carrocci, 1985) as it determines the laid down procedures and structures of managing conflict.

The actual communicative action of the employee is determined by their analysis of retaliation risk (Kassing, 1997). This is whether their communicative actions will be deemed constructive or adversarial and the likely consequences of that perception. When the employees feel their communication will be construed as constructive, they are more likely to be assertive and argumentative but when they feel their communicative actions will be deemed adversarial, they are more likely to be passive (Gross & Guerrero, 2009) even resorting to total silence.

According to Meyer (2004), interlocutors who choose to be expressively verbally aggressive are driven by such factors as being frustrated when their goals are obstructed by others, from psychopathological reasons or a general deficiency in the skill of argumentativeness. Infante (1983) argued that the perceived consequence to communicative actions are evaluated in terms of their alignment or deviation from accepted individual value

systems, their importance to the individual and the likelihood of occurrence of the perceived negative outcomes.

Primary and secondary communicative goals of the interlocutors also influence the communicative actions. Such goals include concerns about face saving and relationship maintenance (Meyer, 2004). Tjosvold et al. (2019) assert that how employees view their goals in relation to those of their colleagues could determine their conflict communication interactions. They view the goals as being cooperative, competitive, or independent. This perception of goals as either competitive or cooperative has a significant effect on the ease with which employees are motivated to discuss conflict and the nature of the discussion. Employees who perceive their goals as being cooperative engage in more open discussions and are more likely to pursue collective understanding. These conflict management dialogues lead to more constructive outcomes of the conflict (Tjosvold et al., 2019). Employees who view their goals as being competitive perceive negativity in this win-lose set-up and do not easily engage in open discussions thus escalating the conflict. Equally, independent goals are perceived as being neutral thus negating the need for collective discussions.

Gender is also a determinant of communicative actions but its effects are regulated by other factors such as socialization, individual communicative ability and situational realities in which the dialogue is taking place (Infante, 1983).

2.6 Theoretical Framework

This section presents the theories used in this research. An overview of the coordinated management of meaning theory and how it augments the understanding of the dialogue process is explained. How and why silence is used during these dialogues is expounded on by the spiral of silence theory.

2.6.1 *Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM)*

Philosophically, CMM is anchored on four tenets; that man does not live in isolation and has emotions that play a key role in his communicative interactions; that his speech acts are inherently meaningless but gain meaning when in use; that there is a marked distinction between the person (*embodied human creative*) and their identity (*the individuality they create through social interactions*) and that each of their communicative speech acts can be viewed dyadically as a part of their context (culture and perceptions) as well as a reflection of their unique creativity (Cushman & Kovacic, 1995).

Communication is the primary way through which man exercises his sociable self and CMM provides a basis for research and understanding of this human phenomenon (Cushman & Kovacic, 1995). CMM contends that during a conversation or dialogue, the interlocutors *co-construct* their social realities and are in turn *shaped* by these created realities (Griffin, 2011). This reciprocal cause-effect relationship is an integral component of dialogic communication. Dialoguers create their world through an iterative process of give and take with the aim of creating mutual understanding. This to and fro process demands an assessment and appreciation of the social realities of the self and the other. Social reality is an expression of what the interlocutors create during a conversation as well as what they bring to the communication interactive process. What interlocutors bring to the communication process is enmeshed in their system of beliefs and perceptions that are mapped by culture or context. It is a key determinant of how interlocutors phrase their speech acts during a conversation.

What an individual brings to the conversation and how they enact it- social reality- is expressed in terms of rules. These rules can be either constitutive or regulative (Cushman & Kovacic, 1995; Pearce & Pearce, 2000). Constitutive rules are derived from the way an

individual describes an object whereas regulative rules are because of external societal forces. For instance, when a junior employee greets their senior in the morning, the constitutive rule guiding this interaction is driven by their being pleased to see their senior and the desire to know how they are doing. Regulatively, they could be doing it as a way of fulfilling societal pressure: it is expected of them to greet their senior in the morning whether they want to or not. These rules of action are guided by context and the context also influences their creation. This process of contextual reconstruction creates a “strange loop”: context is created by an individual’s perceptions and beliefs which determine their communicative actions but is it also susceptible to change through individual action. In dialogic communication, context influences the meanings assigned to speech acts, how they are interpreted and understood and consequently their overall utility in de-escalating workplace conflict. Alternatively put, how we create meaning affects our communicative actions in dialogues during conflict management.

CMM also distinguishes between *stories lived* and *stories told* and posits that in conversations, interlocutors pin their stories lived to those of others in the process of coordination. Coordination looks at the meanings that the interlocutors collectively create. This outlines the concept of collective action which is essential in dialogic communication in workplace conflict management. The focus of dialogic communication is not on what the self creates or understands but on what the self and the other, through a series of mutual interactions, create together to enhance their understanding of their social realities. Equally, CMM emphasizes the significance of reflexivity. Hedman, & Gesch-Karamanlidis (2015) are of the opinion that this reflexive aspect of CMM can influence the nature of the stories that employees tell, how they re-write them and consequently lead to behaviour change resulting in development.

Though initially conceptualized as an interpersonal communication theory, CMM has been successfully applied in group dialogue, in mediation, in education and in family therapy (Griffin, 2011). CMM is equally viewed as having a critical edge on the premise that it can highlight communicative discrepancies in situations of power inequities (Griffin, 2011). It has the potential to distinguish between good and bad communication and therefore help employees in emphasising on the good communication. Pearce & Pearce (2000) allude to communication being a powerful social tool and argues that people in conflict should desist from language games that are destined for failure but should instead harness the powerful propositions of CMM. Mediators in workplace conflicts can profit immensely from this. Fisher-Yoshida (2010) pointed out that mediators using CMM have a wider grasp of different perspectives present in conflict dialogic communication, they easily attune to the exhibited prevalent patterns of communication and can easily outline the process of conflict escalation and this helps them to develop empathy for the disputants.

The practical dimension paints CMM as a theory to use in everyday life in improving our understanding of human communication (Griffin, 2011). The goal is to identify the destructive cycle of communication patterns within workplaces to come up with regulative measures. For this to happen, the workplace must first ensure a sufficient setting that allows for open conversations. This pragmatic nature of dialogic communication can, therefore, utilize the key assumptions and propositions of CMM in enhancing understanding of the communicative process to solve conflicts. CCM is not devoid of criticisms, it is thought of as being a “difficult” theory to assimilate (Griffin, 2011). This difficulty stems from incongruities across writings in how the terms and claims of the theory are made. Over time, however, presenting CMM in the

form of applicable case studies has shifted its focus from *what it is* to *what it can do* and *how it does it*. This has allayed the difficulty in comprehending its ingrained abstractness.

The pragmatic dimension of this theory has been criticized for its overriding concern for “just talk” and “no action” (Pearce & Pearce, 2000). This criticism aligns with dialogic communication as it too focuses less on the action taken. The counterargument is that the goal of dialogic communication is not direct action but essentially on getting individuals at the opposite ends of a continuum to sit down and collectively and productively talk about contentious issues that affect them. This lack of direct focus on action should not however be misconstrued to imply that no productive action can be a consequence of dialogic communication. Actually, action could be the desired outcome if it is premised on productive mutual understanding as was the case in the Cupertino Public Dialogue Project (Griffin, 2011). Even though as Pearce argues, even in itself, “talk “is a form of “action” but -without the traditional trappings of action- not its alternative.

2.6.2 Spiral of Silence

Noelle-Neumann’s spiral of silence theory predicates that there is a direct relationship between outspokenness and congruence between personal views and public opinion (Malaspina, 2014; Willnat, 2002). Therefore, individuals seek out information to assess the opinion climate and determine whether they are likely to receive public support or not or whether their opinions agree or disagree with those of the majority (Lee et al., 2004). Consequently, people are more likely to publicly express their opinions when they judge them as being congruent with those of the majority or when they are likely to receive support from the public (Lee et al., 2004; J. Matthes, 2015; Jörg Matthes et al., 2018). The opinion of the majority is then propagated resulting in a spiral that reinforces its dominance (J. Matthes, 2015).

Public opinion as envisaged by Noelle-Neumann is twofold: public opinion as rationality and public opinion as social control (Scheufle & Moy, 2000). As rationality, public opinion is a deliberate tool used in the process of opinion formation and decision making in a democratic process. On the other hand, public opinion as social control is concerned with creating a socially cohesive society premised on consensus in decision making (Scheufle & Moy, 2000). Anchored on public opinion as social control, Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory sees public opinion as "opinions that can be or have to be expressed so as to avoid social sanctions or isolation". Within workplaces, the desire for social inclusion or the perceived fear of social isolation could be a factor in employee silence during workplace conflict management dialogues.

The spiral of silence theory is hinged on these five main assumptions: First, in a bid to ensure agreement with societal values and goals, society threatens with isolation, individuals who deviate from the consensus (Malaspina, 2014). Second, an individual fears being socially isolated (Lee et al., 2004) and this determines their opinion formation and action. The threat of isolation is a situational or contextual variable whereas the fear of isolation is a personality variable (Ryan, 2011). Third, as a quasi-statistical sense driven by the fear of becoming a social isolate, individuals constantly scan their environment to assess the opinion climate. This can be done through personal interactions, direct observation of the environment as well as through the mass media (Malaspina, 2014; Scheufle & Moy, 2000). Fourth, an individual's decision to speak up or be silent is determined by their assessment of the opinion climate. An individual is likely to speak up when they perceive their opinion as being dominant and keep quiet when it is likely to receive less public support (Lee et al., 2004). Fifth, the tendency to speak up or not to speak up sets off a spiral that reinforces the prevailing opinion and eclipses the less dominant one

(Scheufle & Moy, 2000). However, this excludes the “avant-gardes”- who express minority opinion and the “hard cores” who defy majority opinion conformity.

Highly appraised for its simplicity, the spiral of silence theory has been tested by a number of communication researchers with inconsistent findings (Lee et al., 2004; Malaspina, 2014; J. Matthes, 2015; Jörg Matthes et al., 2018; Scheufle & Moy, 2000). Scheufle & Moy (2000) attribute the variance in findings to a neglect of the degree to which culture specific variables influence the individual perception of opinion as a predictor of individual behaviours and attitudes such as outspokenness. In addition, there are inconsistencies in the conceptual definition of fear of isolation as opposed to other forms of isolation anxieties (Lee et al., 2004). This theory has been criticized for focussing on the larger public yet individual fear of isolation is most likely to stem from the immediate social environment of friends, family, and colleagues (Ryan, 2011).

Hypothetically, success in the workplace is dependent on the timely and effective realization of workplace goals (Perlow & Reppenning, 2009). Communication is central to any workplace as it is the grease that ensures the proper functioning of the different departments within organisations. Modern day workplaces rely on both face to face and technologically mediated mechanisms to communicate. These multiple sources of information diversify the nature of workplace opinion climate. The inherent workplace desire to achieve success heightens the significance of consensus on workplace goals and values. Contemporary workplaces are dynamic (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2019) and this makes the express achievement of consensus challenging resulting in the advertent or non-advertent suppression of employee opinion. Roessing (2014) suggests that conflict resolution is the most latent function of public opinion.

Research to test the applicability of the spiral of silence theory has been largely quantitative in nature (Malaspina, 2014). The survey based quantitative analysis is favoured for its ease of generalizability but it has the shortcoming of leaving out contextual details that would provide for a more in-depth understanding of the motives and nuanced meanings of silence (Ryan, 2011). The use of the qualitative approach in this study could provide more depth in understanding the factors that determine and influence employee silence. The interest goes beyond the perception of the opinion climate to include workplace culture-specific factors as well as other psychological factors that could significantly influence individual outspokenness (Lee et al., 2004).

2.7 Application of the Theories

CMM theory aims at ameliorating human communication through a reflexive process that amplifies collective collaboration and mutual understanding. CMM is interested in the nexus between context and the self and how this reciprocal relationship augments human communication and general life. The spiral of silence theory looks at the determinants of outspokenness in the expression of public opinion. Workplaces are public places in which the threat and or fear of isolation can result in the propagation of dominant ideas while silencing contrary voices.

The literature reviewed in this study points to the fact that CMM has had acclaimed success in improving the quality of communication within the public domain, in family mediation therapy, within education setups and in other real-life situations. This makes it a relevant tool in dialogic communication, particularly within workplace conflict management. The unchecked presence of dysfunctional patterns of communication in workplaces is a recipe for never ending conflict. This cycle can be broken by improving the quality of what is

communicated and how it is communicated. Silence during dialogue is communication too as the absence of voice does not negate communication. Silence is imbued with nuanced meanings and therefore understanding it is key in harnessing the positive elements of dialogues. A focus on the assumption of threat to isolation and fear of isolation as a deterrence to outspokenness during workplace conflict dialogues could shed more light on the contextual and psychological reasons influencing outspokenness.

2.8 Research Gap

Literature reviewed in this study reveals that dialogue is a necessary conflict management tool within workplaces. However, it being a common happenstance under-values its “magic” in dealing with workplace conflicts. The type of workplace conflict experienced determines how it will be managed and the type of dialogue that will be employed. The constructiveness of a dialogue process is partly dependent on the communicative behaviours of the interlocutors during the different stages of the dialogue process. However, there has been little research exploring this essential element of the dialogue process. Equally, available research on dialogue has relied majorly on quantitative methods. These methods leave out the significant role of feelings, perceptions, and nuanced meanings and yet they are a core concept of both workplace conflict and dialogue. This study, therefore, attempts to fill this gap by relying on the qualitative research approach to conduct an in-depth analysis of communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues.

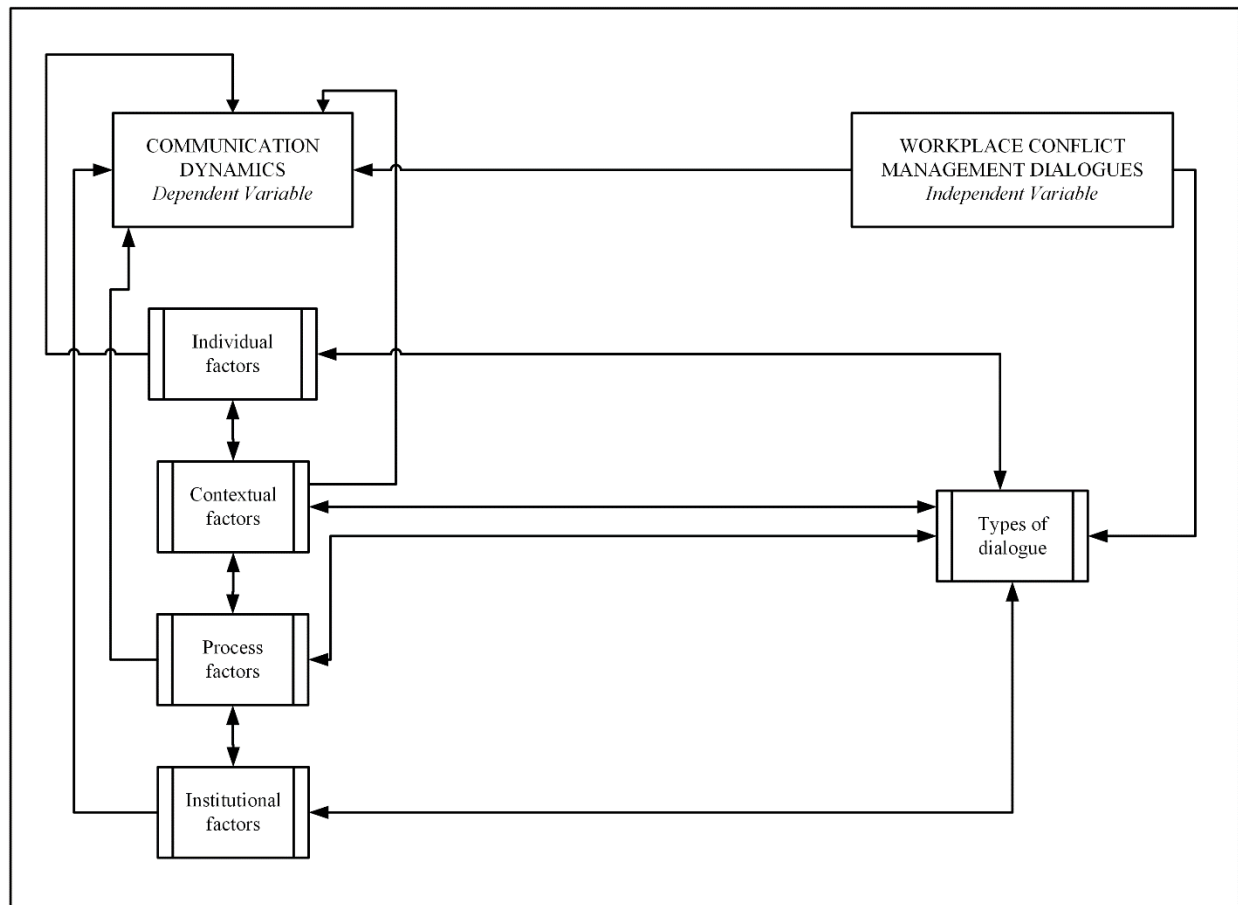


Figure 2. 1 Conceptual Framework

The schematic shown in Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between workplace conflict management dialogues and the communication dynamics in the dialogues. The arrows indicate that nature of workplace conflict determines the type of dialogue employed in managing the conflict. The communication dynamics in the dialogues are a function of various factors which include individual factors, contextual factors, process factors and institutional factors. These factors also influence the type of workplace conflict management dialogue likely to be had.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Overview

This chapter outlines the methodology of this study. It includes study design, research approach, population sampling procedure, data collection procedure, data analysis, data presentation and ethical considerations.

3.1 Study Design

The study used a descriptive study design. Nassaji (2015) contends that descriptive research is essentially concerned with the “what” of a phenomenon. Its main interest is not in determining causal relationships but in accurately and systematically describing a phenomenon and its characteristics. The main goal of this research was to describe methodically and explicitly the communication dynamics at play in workplace conflict management dialogues. Specifically, this study explored communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues within Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in Nairobi County.

3.2 Research Approach

The study utilized a qualitative research approach. Qualitative communication research is best suited for studying social problems that require thoughtfulness in their exploration (Atmowardoyo, 2018). In qualitative research, the researcher is usually interested in understanding human interactions. They (researchers) do this by logically discovering and paying attention to the amalgam of forms and details of social life (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The flexibility of qualitative research made it an amenable approach for this research whose focus was the social problem of workplace conflict. The study explored the communication dynamics evident in dialogues during workplace conflict management by profoundly appraising the personal stories of employees, their feelings, and the nuanced meanings during such

dialogues. The recourse to qualitative methods of inquiry in the study was also influenced by the dynamism of workplaces that makes the conducting of tightly controlled scientific research improbable as they overlook the concept of meanings and feelings of employees.

3.3 Target Population

The target population for this study were employees of Civil Society Organisations within Nairobi County. The choice of CSOs was informed by the fact that much of the available research on workplace conflict management had focused on corporate workplaces and government parastatals leaving out CSOs yet they play an equally important role in societal development. Secondly, the diversity in membership of CSOs makes them a fertile ground for conflict. In addition, the reliance on financial aid in these workplaces increases the likelihood of occurrence of resource conflicts and the temporality or short-term nature of their job contracts could also catalyse conflicts. Thirdly, premised on the assumption that most CSOs are directly engaged with communities, the choice to engage with them was influenced by the desire to have the positivity of the usefulness of dialogue trickle down to the grass root community. The researcher assumed that by participating in the study, the employees of the CSOs would raise their level of consciousness on the usefulness of dialogue in dealing with conflict and that the consciousness would cascade down to the general community. Nairobi County was chosen for being the headquarters of many CSOs employing many people, thus increasing the probability of finding the desired sample characteristics. Some of the CSOs are: Ujamaa Africa, Save the Children Kenya, Social Justice Centre Working Group, Action Aid Kenya, Food for the Hungry-Kenya, Plan International- Kenya, Population Services International (PSI) and Cheshire Disability Services Kenya (CDSK).

To select the specific subjects from the target population, the researcher used purposive sampling method. Lindlof & Taylor (2011) define purposive sampling as a non-probability sampling approach in which the researcher intentionally chooses a sample because of its desired characteristics. These desired characteristics could result in either a homogeneous or heterogeneous sample. The study used a heterogeneous sample also referred to as a maximum variation sample. A heterogeneous sample has exemplars with many different characteristics. For instance, in the study, the maximum variation sample included employees of different CSOs within Nairobi County with different ages, different genders, different job hierarchical levels, different years of work experience, different social and economic backgrounds, among others.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

The researcher used the inclusion and exclusion sampling technique to select the sampling units. The inclusion criteria specify a set of attributes that a case must possess to justify their being part of the study whereas the exclusion criteria sets forth the disqualifying attributes (Robinson, 2014).

3.4.1 *Criteria for Selecting CSOs*

1. The CSO existed within Nairobi County.
2. The CSO had experienced workplace conflicts.
3. The CSO had used dialogue as one way of dealing with the workplace conflicts.

The researcher conducted key informant interviews to collect primary data. The normative number of informants is between three to sixteen (Robinson, 2014). The researcher interviewed fourteen informants: six females, eight males. However, for the purposes of analysis, the researcher relied on eight interviews. This was done to avoid similarity and duplicity as the goal was not on the maximum number of interviews but on attaining data saturation within the

time and logistical constraints. The key informants were selected with the help of research gatekeepers identified due to their knowledgeability and extensive interaction with employees of CSOs within Nairobi County. Gatekeepers in this context are the people or groups within workplaces who have the authority to negotiate and approve research access within the specific workplace (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

3.4.2 Criteria for Selecting Key Informants

1. The key informant was an employee of one of the selected CSOs.
2. The key informant had experienced workplace conflict. The experience could have been by being a disputant in a conflict or by having observed co-workers in a conflict or being involved in the conflict management process.
3. The key informant had used dialogue as one of the ways of managing workplace conflicts.
4. The key informant would be available during the pre – agreed upon interview duration.

To achieve gender balance, one gender was included or excluded in cases where the other gender had more exemplars of the desired characteristics. A total of six females and eight males were interviewed.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

To collect primary data, the researcher conducted in-depth key informant interviews. Qualitative interviews are purposeful conversations that profoundly interrogate social and subjective realities (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011) . By exploring the stories told by the employees and the nuanced implicit meanings, the researcher sought to widen and deepen their grasp, understanding and appreciation of the communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues.

3.5.1 Key Informant Interviews (KII)

The researcher conducted fourteen key informant interviews, eight key informants were male and six were female. The key informants were in entry, middle level, and senior management positions. The interviews were conducted at pre-agreed on locations of their preference. Note taking and audio recording were used to record data. However, audio recording was used only with prior informed consent of the interviewee. Where possible and with the prior consent of the interviewee, the interviews were conducted virtually.

3.6 Data Collection Tools

During primary data collection, the researcher used an interview schedule (see Appendix A). Lindlof & Taylor (2011) consider interview guides to be less formal than interview schedules. The questions in the interview schedule were non-directive. Prior to the actual data collection, the researcher conducted a reconnaissance study. This helped to assess the usefulness and relevance of the interview schedule. Besides, it was a proper way to assess the validity and reliability of the data collection tool.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

Qualitative data analysis is a recursive and repetitive process that aims at organizing raw data into a subset of themes, propositions, patterns and concepts that can lead to meaningful inference (Nassaji, 2015). The process of analysis was an adaptation of Lanigan's three-step qualitative analysis method. This phenomenological method was selected because of its suitability in illuminating human communicative conditions from the point of view of the participant (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011) as well as its relative simplicity and straightforwardness. The three steps were *data description or data management, data reduction and data interpretation*. The goal of data management is to gain control over the raw data (Lindlof &

Taylor, 2011). In data reduction, the researcher assessed the usability of the coded data by categorizing it into a subset of themes or “schemes of interpretation”. Data interpretation involved the development of concepts. The interpretation was done by observing linkages in the themed data to ground the interpretation in communication theory. After analysis, the data was presented as participant narratives and tables.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

In acknowledging that research participants are human subjects with dignity, status and rights that should not be compromised on, the researcher ensured the following ethical considerations; 1) Before going to the field to collect data, the researcher acquired a Certificate of Fieldwork (see Appendix D) from the University of Nairobi to identify to the informants the researcher’s status as a graduate student. This helped to build a good rapport and trust with the participants. 2) The researcher informed all potential interviewees on the aims of the study, what their participation would entail and how she intended to protect their anonymity by not using personal identifying information without their pre-confirmed informed consent. 3) Participation in this research was pegged on voluntary willingness and therefore the researcher ensured to get a verbal informed consent of the interviewees to participate prior to conducting the interviews. 4) The researcher took advice and made corrections given during defences (see Appendix E) and subjected her work to plagiarism checks (see Appendix F) sanctioned by the University of Nairobi.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents information collected from key informants and an interpretation and analysis of it organized according to the study objectives. The main research objective for this study was to analyse communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues within Civil Society Organisations in Nairobi County.

4.2 Data Presentation

For this study, the researcher interviewed fourteen key informants all employees of Civil Society Organisation in Nairobi County. See Appendix B for a list of the CSOs. Six of the informants were female and eight were male. All the interviews were conducted in English. The location of the interviews was places most convenient for the participants: two interviews were conducted at the researcher's home, six at the key informant's workplace, three at the key informants' home and three virtually via zoom. The interviews lasted between 15 and 60 minutes. Six interviews were tape recorded. Out of the fourteen interviews conducted, the researcher selected eight interviews for the purposes of analysis. This was done to avoid duplicity after achieving data saturation. Each of the selected key informant was given a numerical code starting from informant 01 to informant 08. The researcher transcribed the interviews (see Appendix C) before coding. Each recording was listened to thrice to ensure that all the relevant data had been captured.

For data analysis, the researcher adopted the phenomenological approach specifically a simplified version of Lanigan's three step qualitative data analysis method (Oduro-Frimpong, 2011). These steps are data management, data reduction and data interpretation. This method was chosen because of its simplicity and ability to elucidate more on the experiences of the

informants from their own lived circumstances. The process of analysis helped the researcher break down the data into categories that could be themed while interpretation enabled the researcher to form linkages between the grouped data so as to make it meaningful (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The emergent themes from this process are discussed in the subsequent sections and are broken down as answers to the research questions.

4.3 Communication Hurdles that Warrant the Use of Dialogue in Workplace Conflict Management

The dynamic composition of workplaces creates a fertile ground for communication challenges (Sharma, 2015). In classifying workplace communication hurdles, the researcher adopted Adu-Oppong, (2014) classification. Here, workplace communication challenges are grouped as those resulting from workplace communication culture and those resulting from individual personality attributes. The researcher identified the following hurdles: lack of information, vertical communication at the workplace, rigid job hierarchical levels, emotional barriers, cultural beliefs, and differences in socialisation. These are shown in the following table.

Table 4. 1 Communication Hurdles that Warrant the Use of Dialogue

Communication hurdle	Sample quote/narrative
Lack of information	“One thing... that brings about conflict... is lack of information.”
Vertical communication at the workplace	“Vertical communication where information gets diluted further down the chain it goes.”
Rigid job hierarchical levels	“Seniority levels: the higher up the chain the more difficult it is to have that conversation.”
Emotional barriers	“She felt I was favouring her colleague and overburdening her.” “Fear of victimization and negative consequences.”
Cultural beliefs	“For instance, I know of colleagues who did not want to solve a problem between them and a lady because culturally they would believe that is a form of inferiority complex.”

Differences in socialization

“This is why it is difficult to work with women, they don’t follow procedures and directions.”

4.3.1 Communication Hurdles Resulting from Workplace Communication Culture

The researcher identified the following communication hurdles resulting from the workplace communication culture, lack of information, vertical communication channels and job hierarchical levels. These challenges are attributed to a general notion of miscommunication within the organisation.

4.3.1.1 Lack of Information

At workplaces where information is scarce, communication challenges abound since this lack of information makes communication unclear and often results in misunderstandings. Informant 01 noted that: “... one thing ... that brings about conflict ... is lack of information”. When employees lack information on how to perform a given task, this creates a challenge as it impedes the effective accomplishment of that task. Equally, when employees do not have adequate information as to why some decisions were made, it creates feelings that could elicit negative emotional responses such as feelings of favouritism and this creates conflict. Informant 01 said: “... if you let them(employees) understand before you share out the tasks, I think we can avoid conflict”. This implies that a lack of information on a given issue could result to misunderstandings that would be best resolved using dialogue.

4.3.1.2 Vertical Communication at the Workplace

Vertical communication or upward communication at the workplace could result in both structural and procedural hindrances if not fully embraced and adjusted to (Adu-Oppong, 2014). These disruptions could result into workplace conflict. Informant number 05 said:

I think some of the communication challenges are vertical communication where information gets more diluted the further down the chain it goes. So, one boss says this thing but by the time it reaches the fifth level of worker, the information is almost totally different from what the boss intended.

This top-down communication results in conflict because in most cases, the junior employees do not seek clarification on issues that are ambiguous for reasons such as fear of perceived negative repercussions.

4.3.1.3 Rigid Job Hierarchical Levels

Workplaces with rigid job hierarchies pose communication challenges as they are often characterized by top down communication. In such instances, communication is impeded by emotional attributes such as “fear of the boss”. Informant 06 noted that; “seniority levels...the higher up the chain, the harder it is to have that conversation”. Consequently, no clarity is sought for ambiguous information or directives given potentially resulting to workplace conflict. Informant 02 agreed with this assertion giving an example of a boss who fears that the junior employees might become aware of their shortcomings and so they stick to the hierarchy as a way of creating distance between themselves and the junior employees.

4.3.2 *Communication Challenges Resulting from Individual Personality Attributes*

The personality of an employee which is derived from their cognitive schema could result in workplace conflicts (Sharma, 2015). The most salient challenges associated with personality attributes that the researcher identified are emotional barriers, cultural beliefs, and different socialisation. The following is a discussion of each of the challenges.

4.3.2.1 Emotional Barriers

Emotional barriers stem from negative emotional perceptions that determine the regard employees have of each other hence how they communicate (Sharma, 2015). Such emotions include feelings of fear, favouritism, anger, jealousy, mistrust, among others. Often, these negative emotions lead to workplace conflicts that necessitate the use of dialogue in managing them. Informant 01 said that one of the employees was aggrieved because "...she felt I was favouring her colleague...." Another prevalent emotional barrier is fear: fear of victimization and fear of perceived negative consequences. Informant 06 observed that "...where the boss is feared there is likely to be workplace conflicts as having conversations is difficult". In addition, an employee who is driven by such fear is less likely to question commands or seek for clarification and this could result into miscommunication and workplace conflicts.

4.3.2.2 Cultural Beliefs

An individual is a sum of their cultural beliefs and values collected over years of their existence. At workplaces, employees come from different cultural backgrounds and this directly influences their perceptions and reactions to different stimulants. Informant 08 said: "For instance, I know of colleagues who did not want to solve a problem between them and a lady because culturally they would believe that is a form of inferiority complex". Informant 02 said; "employees do not leave their culture at home when they come to work". These variations in cultural beliefs create tensions and misunderstandings that warrant the use of open communication to solve as they call for the creation of mutual understanding.

4.3.2.3 Differences in Socialisation

Employees from different cultural backgrounds are socialized differently and this socialization influences the way they interpret their world. Informant 02 narrated a conflict situation that arose because of varied socialization among the employees. A male employee tagged the job inadequacies of a female employee to her being “*a woman*”. He said, “that is why it is difficult to work with women”. And the female employee did not take that lightly seeing it as a manifestation of the “brutish male syndrome”. The male employee’s socialization had programmed him to view women as not being exceptionally good workers and difficult to deal with whereas the woman was socialised to stand up for herself at the place of work. This resulted into a conflict that threatened to paralyze a whole program.

4.4 Types of Dialogues in Workplace Conflict Management

Dialogue can be classified on two fronts: from the viewpoint of what it ought to be or what it actually is. Walton & Macagno, (2007) classified dialogues normatively relying on why the dialogue was initiated and what the expected goals were for the individual as well as for the whole group. This classification resulted into seven types of dialogues: inquiry dialogue, negotiation dialogue, information-seeking dialogue, persuasion dialogue, deliberation dialogue, eristic dialogue and discovery dialogue (Walton & Macagno, 2007). However, they admitted to the implausibility of this straight-jacketed classification as dialogues are more pragmatic than ideal. This admission led to a more mixed and contextual classification among them debate dialogues, committee meetings and Socratic dialogues. In focussing on what dialogue actually is with a focus on the interaction taking place between the dialoguers.

Fishelov (2013) identified three types of dialogues: echo dialogue, dialogue of the deaf and dialectical dialogue. This classification is more pragmatic as compared to the normative one.

However, in any dialogue process, there is marked overlap in the types of dialogues being had. This was very evident in this study as most dialogue processes had more than one type of dialogue identified. For this study, the researcher adopted an amalgam of the normative and pragmatic categorization and identified the following dialogues employed in workplace conflict management within CSOs in Nairobi County: Persuasion dialogue, negotiation dialogue, eristic dialogue, committee meeting dialogue, asymmetrical dialogue, dialogue of the deaf and dialectical dialogue. Table 2 shows sample narratives for each type of dialogue.

Table 4. 2 Types of Dialogue in Workplace Conflict Management

Type of dialogue	Sample quote / narrative
Persuasion dialogue	“I just needed the other parties to understand the unique challenges I was going through.”
Negotiation dialogue	“Both of them were able to have a sincere position acknowledging each other’s mistakes”
Eristic dialogue	“At the beginning, the conversation was heated and full of anger, it was like a shouting match.” “At first, things were tense and a bit hostile.”
Committee meeting dialogue	“That means every time they were setting deadlines or setting budgets, they would set them from a point of understanding of the other party.”
Asymmetrical dialogue	“So, say someone senior has offended you and you cannot talk about it because you will be victimized for saying it. I’d also say if there is conflict between yourself and your boss, the seniority levels, the higher up the chain, the harder it is to have that conversation.”
Dialogue of the deaf	“In the beginning, the disputants were not listening to each other.”
Dialectical dialogue	“We were able to talk about it and I think that is what really helped in solving that.” “Once the atmosphere was calm... we were able to achieve mutual understanding.”

The following is a discussion of each of the types of dialogue.

4.4.1 Persuasion Dialogue

Persuasion dialogues happen when employees have conflicting points of view about an issue. So, the main goal of the dialogue participants is to convince the other party to see things from the participant's point of view so as to eventually resolve such conflicts. The outcome is usually a win-lose one as the party that drops their convictions is considered to have lost whereas the other party wins. In response to what they aimed to achieve during the dialogue process, informant 06 said; "...I felt I needed them to understand how I work...". This meant, the other party had to be cajoled into seeing things from the informant's point of view.

4.4.2 Negotiation Dialogue

In negotiation, each interlocutor is interested in achieving the most benefits for themselves by making a deal that is agreeable to both (Walton & Macagno, 2007). There is a lot of compromise and give and take in this case. Informant 08 describes a scenario where two conflicting employees had to sit down and discuss about a job appraisal conflict they had. The informant said: "and we were able to broker up a given stand that was able to appreciate the effort that was done by the staff and the weaknesses that were noted by the supervisor of this particular staff". The eventual resolution of this impasse was because of creating a deal that suited both parties but there was a lot of compromise too. The employees had to be convinced to cede ground and objectively appraise the performance each other resulting in a negotiated deal that was agreeable to all.

4.4.3 Eristic Dialogue

Eristic dialogues happen in situations of antagonism and conflict. These dialogues are prevalent where employee emotions run high and their main goal is to vent out repressed emotions that if otherwise ignored could have resulted into physical fights or heightened

frustrations (Walton & Macagno, 2007). The researcher identified eristic dialogues to be quite common in workplace conflict management dialogues. Several informants indicated that most dialogues begin with tension and emotional outbursts before the conflicting parties calm down and get to a point where they can converse amicably. These dialogues help in venting off the negative emotions commonly associated with conflict situations (Walton & Macagno, 2007). Informant 01 said; "... the two had an argument which almost became physical". Informant 02 said: "it was a heated verbal exchange, and for some time, for about a minute, we let them... throw words at each other". Informant 04 said: "at the beginning, the conversation was heated and full of anger, it was like a shouting match." These emotional outbursts are a key component of the dialogue process as their resolution leads to listening and that is when the dialogue process progresses. Failure to engage in eristic dialogue in situations with repressed emotions could end up in scuttled dialogue as people walk out.

4.4.4 *Committee Meeting Dialogue*

This is a contextual dialogue stemming from a conflict situation that requires for the parties to reach an agreement over a practical matter (Walton & Macagno, 2007). The main goal of committee dialogue is to derive a binding action plan on how to conduct a certain activity.

Informant 05 described such a dialogue:

And the resolution process involved a meeting that was held between all the three parties.... So, it just required that a few details were streamlined So, once all the three parties sat down in the meeting and came out on the same page everything was able to go back on track.

The participants deliberate and try to persuade each other to influence the outcome. The outcome usually is binding to all the conflicting parties.

4.4.5 *Asymmetrical Dialogue*

This dialogue is referred to as echo or duo-monologue dialogue (Fishelov, 2013). Such dialogues are characterized by instances where one of the interlocutors simply repeats what the other interlocutor is saying either word for word or by paraphrasing. These dialogues are considered deficient. They are most common in conflict situations where power dynamics are apparent. For instance, between a junior employee and their senior. They are imbued with emotional tensions among them the fear of victimization or perceived negative consequences. Informant 02 in describing a conflict situation said: "... after that I came in and ordered them to keep quiet and of course they did because well they wouldn't defy me; I am their human resource manager." Such asymmetry in power relations results in asymmetrical dialogues where the junior employee is more likely just to echo the words of the senior employee. Informant 06 was also of the same opinion saying, "the higher up the seniority... the more difficult it is to have that discussion". Power imbalances create discrepancies that derail the dialogue process and result in monologues.

4.4.6 *Dialogue of the Deaf*

In these dialogues there is no convergence in terms of listening. The interlocutors engage in two parallel monologues. The researcher identified these types of dialogues to be common at the initial stages of the dialogue process. In the first stage of the dialogue process, the interlocutors are still clinging onto their perspective and beliefs and so they only voice those without considering or listening to those of the others. This also happens frequently in conflict situations where there are emotional tensions. Informant 01 said: "...in the beginning, the disputants were not listening to each other...". The absence of listening is likely to result in a duo monologue. In the same breadth, informant 08 said: "Because, at the beginning, no one even

wanted the other to finish talking, it was accusation and counter accusation”. This means the dialogue was merely one sided as the other party could not react to what they had not listened to.

4.4.7 Dialectical Dialogue

This type of dialogue is considered the ideal dialogue. Here, the interlocutors are calm and can listen to and understand one another. There are no emotional tensions. And even though the interlocutors have divergent points of view there is give and take in a bid to create mutual understanding. These dialogues are constructive in nature. In this study, the researcher identified these dialogues to be common at the tail end of the dialogue process. They are as a result of deliberate effort and come after the dialoguers have been able to vent out the repressed emotions, acknowledged and voiced their own errors in judgement and perception of the conflict situation and are willing to empathize with the others. The end goal is an amicably resolved conflict and the creation of mutual understanding.

While describing the conflict situation, informant 03 intimated that “...the employee on realizing that the ranting and shouting matches were not getting her anywhere, calmed down and was able to discuss the conflict amicably”. Informant 07 also noted that; “once the atmosphere was calm... we were able to achieve mutual understanding”. Dialectical dialogues do not however just happen as they are hinged on the willingness to listen and consider the viewpoints of the other dialoguers. Generally, these dialogues overlap during a dialogue process which could take place over several sessions. Until the interlocutors get to the point where they are able to listen empathically to each other and respond with understanding, the dialogue process cannot be deemed constructive.

4.5 Factors Influencing Communication Dynamics in Workplace Conflict Management Dialogues

Workplace conflict management dialogues go through stages each characterized by different communication dynamics. The researcher identified such dynamics to include behaviours such as silence, empathic listening, lack of listening, shouting matches, tension depicted in the sitting behaviours of the employees, feelings of fear, anger, hostility, and defensive communication. The success or failure of workplace conflict management dialogues is linked to these communication dynamics and how the different stages are circumvented. This is in agreement with one of the tenets of the Coordinated Management of Meaning theory which states that individual communication speech acts can be viewed dyadically as being influenced by the individual's context that is their culture and perceptions and their own creativity (Cushman & Kovacic, 1995). Therefore, it is paramount to understand the factors behind these communication dynamics; why people behave as they do during conflict management dialogues.

These factors could be grouped as those due to personality attributes; that is how the employee perceive themselves and their relations with the others or those due to workplace culture (Kassing, 1997). For this study, the researcher adopted a classification similar to that of Kassing (1997) but modified it slightly to include priori experience with the conflict. The categories are self-perception factors, relationship maintenance factors, prior experience factors and workplace culture factors. Table 3 shows some of the narratives that explain the factors.

Table 4. 3 Factors Influencing Communication Dynamics

Factor influencing communication dynamics	Sample quote/narrative
Self-perception factors Feelings of fear	“I was apprehensive to meet the other members.” “Maybe fear of, the outcome, that the outcome of the whole process might lead to disciplinary action.”

Feelings of favouritism	“You feel like the other party is already favoured compared to you, So, they listen to them more compared to you.”
Assumptions	“Somebody can keep quiet assuming that you don’t want to listen to their views.”
Assessment of the other interlocutor’s personality	“I ‘d be very careful to not argue or not engage an aggressive or argumentative person in a dialogue.”
Relationship maintenance factors	“For me, it was important that we get along.” “They want to identify with their fellow employees.”
Prior experience	“This employee I think decided to keep quiet because she related to an earlier experience.”
Workplace culture factors	
Workplace communication structure	“Due to a vertical communication culture, junior employees prefer to keep quiet in the presence of their seniors.”
A rigid workplace communication culture that neglects the personal life struggles of the employees	“The pent-up negative emotions could be because at my place of work, employees stick to work issues alone and personal issues are rarely discussed.”
Workplace communication culture	
Pressure to meet organisational goals	“I could not understand why the colleague had failed to complete his report on time and that delayed the report that was to be sent to the donors. The organisation was already struggling financially and would probably lose more funds because of the delayed report.”
Leadership structure	“Leaders who are afraid that by dialoguing that they might expose their shortcomings.” “Leaders who want to handle all the conflict issues without allowing the juniors an opportunity to dialogue at their level.”

4.5.1 Self-Perception Factors

The CMM theory posits that during a dialogue process, the interlocutors construct their social realities and are in turn shaped by the reality they create. This social reality is a factor of the cognitive schema they come with to the dialogue process as well as what they create during the conversation. Griffin et al. (2019) described what the interlocutors bring with them to the dialogue process as being that which is enmeshed in their perceptions and system of beliefs,

value systems and culture. These factors determine how the individual perceive themselves and consequently determine how they construct their communicative speech acts during a dialogue. The factors due to self-perception that the researcher identified include feelings, assumptions, and assessment of the other interlocutor's personality.

4.5.1.1 Feelings

Feelings play a key role in how communicative acts are enacted during a dialogue process as they are an expression of our inherent inner perceptions. The researcher identified the feeling of fear to be one of the main feelings that determine how the dialogue process pans out. The most outstanding fear is that of perceived negative consequences. Informant 01 believed that

Dialoguers choose to be quiet during a dialogue process when they feel that speaking up could result in negative consequences such as disciplinary action". Informant 03 was also of the same opinion suggesting that the choice to be silent or calm during a dialogue process could be "an avoidance tactic that is triggered by the fear of unforeseen consequences or a desire not to aggravate the conflict situation further.

The feeling of fear is also a consequence of "apprehension to meet the other dialoguers" especially in situations where the interlocutor feels they are on the wrong. This was explained by informant 05. These examples point to the fact that an interlocutor will assess the communicative environment to assess whether their communicative actions will be deemed adversarial or constructive. This is one of the key assumptions of the spiral of silence theory and was also a conclusion arrived at by Tjosvold et al. (2019). Where the assessment returns an adversarial outcome, passive communicative actions such as silence are preferred resulting in asymmetrical dialogues.

Another dominant feeling is that of favouritism. Some employees felt other employees are favoured by their seniors. Informant 01 described a dialogue situation where one of the

dialoguer's communication behaviour was very combative because of feeling the other employee was being favoured by their senior and this made them feel belittled. The feeling of being belittled was also highlighted by informant 04 who said, "The colleague probably felt belittled by their immediate senior employee when they harshly demanded for the report" and that is why they communicated angrily. These feelings of fear and favouritism determine the communicative actions these employees engage in when they come to the dialogue process.

4.5.1.2 Assumptions

Our socialization predisposes us to making assumptions during a dialogue process and this could determine how we create our communicative speech acts. Speaking on silence, informant 01 opined that, an interlocutor is likely to keep quiet when "they assume that the other dialoguers do not want to listen to their views" or that their thoughts and opinion are deemed irrelevant and inconsequential.

These assumptions arise from their assessment of the workplace conflict management dialogue process and also from their previous experience with the conflict situation. Informant 02 narrated such a situation:

I remember a time when one of the employees had an issue with his line manager, we handled it through dialogue. But this employee kept silent all through, but later on we would hear from her colleagues that there was no need of speaking during that meeting because they thought there was nothing we were going to do; we were not going to act on the situation. So again, that is it was a show of I'd say hopelessness.

Equally, when employees assume that they know the outcome of the dialogue process they are likely to choose passive or passive aggressive communicative behaviour when they judge the outcome to be unfavourable to them.

4.5.1.3 Assessment of the Personality of the Other Interlocutors

In the creation of social reality and in turn being shaped by it, interlocutors assess the personality of each other to determine how they will enact their communicative acts. For instance, informant 06 said: "... I 'd be very careful to not argue or not engage an aggressive or argumentative person in a dialogue....". This is more so if the assessment suggests that such interaction is likely to trigger a violent reaction. Informant 06 added that, "Or if I feel like saying something would trigger a violent reaction then I just keep quiet". Talking on the same, informant 08 talks of "... people who are just quiet by nature and so they would naturally use passive communicative behaviours during dialogues". This determines the type of communication interaction likely to happen during the dialogue process.

4.5.2 *Relationship Maintenance Factors*

According to Meyer (2004), communicative actions are determined by the communicative goals of the interlocutors. These goals are either for self-preservation in terms of face saving or for relationship maintenance. The nature of the goal be it cooperative, competitive, or independent will determine how the interlocutors interact during the dialogue process. For instance, informant 02 believed that some employees would choose to be quiet during workplace conflict management dialogues because "they want to identify with their fellow employees". However, this is also likely to be prevalent in workplaces that suppress employee voice. So, because the workplace culture is that of passive voice, an employee who would have otherwise spoken up would choose passivity as a way of wanting to be like the rest so as not to rock the boat. This assertion aligns with one of the assumptions of the spiral of silence theory that says that that people scout their environment to assess the public opinion climate resulting in the propagation of the dominant opinion while the subservient opinion is

suppressed. All this is done in a bid to create conformity and to identify with the majority opinion that is likely to be supported.

Responding to the question as to why they behaved the way did during the dialogue process, informant 06 said:

To be honest, I really wanted us to work as a team. For me, it was important that we get along because these were people that I was going to work with to the very end... for as long as I was at that job. So, it was important for me that we just got along.

This is in agreement with Kassing (1997) who asserts that how long an employee plans to stay at a given workplace could determine their communicative actions during dialogues.

Because informant 06 knew she was going to have to work with her colleagues for a while, they chose dialogue to deal with their workplace conflict. While describing the actual dialogue process, she said: "... it was also quite peaceful. I don't remember verbal exchanges but there was a bit of tension before we actually started talking about the issue." The peaceful nature of the dialogue process could also have been because of the employee's desire to have team cohesion. Informant 06 said: "... because I felt I needed them to understand how I work because most of them were people I had not worked with.... I did not want a repeat of that. I didn't want to look like the bad person in the team..."

In the same breadth, informant 07 said that she agreed to dialogue out of the desire to "show respect to my boss". Even though she thought the whole process was unnecessary, she went along with it out of respect and by extension the desire to maintain good relations with her boss and the other employees.

4.5.3 Workplace Culture

Communicative actions of employees during workplace conflict management dialogues could be influenced by the workplace communication culture as well as the organisational

leadership culture (Carrocci, 1985). Vertical communication structures at places of work are characterized by passive or passive aggressive behaviours because open communication is not usually embraced. For instance, informant 02 describes a scenario where an aggrieved junior employee chose to be silent (passive communicative behaviour) during a dialogue to handle an issue with their senior.

A rigid workplace communication culture that neglects the personal life struggles of the employees could also have an influence on communication behaviour during these dialogues. While responding to the question as to why the interlocutors behaved as they did during the dialogue process, informant 03 said that; “employees stick to work issues alone and personal issues are rarely discussed” and so this could have contributed to the employee’s pent up negative emotions that resulted in the angry verbal outbursts during the workplace conflict management dialogue process.

Another reason is work pressure and the desire to meet organisational goals within the stipulated time frames. This is illustrated by informant 04 who said that:

I could not understand why the colleague had failed to complete his report on time and that delayed the report that was to be sent to the donors. The organisation was already struggling financially and would probably lose more funds because of the delayed report.

Because of this work pressure, the senior harshly asked for the report from the employee who in turn felt belittled by the harsh tone that was used on him resulting into a heated verbal exchange.

The workplace job hierarchy is also a determinant of employee communicative behaviour. Conversations between bosses and their employees are rarely open. Informant 06 said: “I’d also say if there is conflict between yourself and your boss, the seniority levels, the higher up the chain, the harder it is to have that conversation”. On the flipside, dialogue is easier

to navigate when the dialoguers are at the same job hierarchy level. Speaking on this, informant 06 noted that:

Also, because these were my peers, I didn't feel like there would be any victimizing. So, it made a lot of sense to actually dialogue because these are people I knew I was going to work with for a long time, they are people in my age group so we can relate and even at the level of seniority in the organogram we are at the same level, so it was easier to dialogue.

And true to the above assertion, their communicative behaviours during the workplace conflict management dialogue had little tension and were described as generally peaceful.

In cases where junior employees are dissatisfied with their jobs, it is difficult to engage in dialogic communication just like informant 02 asserts; "... because when they go into those conversations they already have some mind-set, they already have an attitude towards their seniors". This influences how they behave during these dialogue process.

The workplace leadership structure also determines the communicative actions of the dialoguers during workplace conflict management dialogues. This is because it determines the laid down procedures of dealing with workplace conflicts. Some leaders, out of fear, do not interact closely with their juniors and so this is perpetuated to workplace conflict management dialogues. In such cases, passive and passive aggressive communicative behaviours dominate. Informant 02 said that:

Some leaders are afraid for their team to know that they are not smart... that they actually depend on their team for success. Unless such kind of a leader rises above that fear, they are likely to not engage in dialogue with their peers or with their juniors to solve conflicts.

Equally, a workplace leadership structure that encourages open communication would have more argumentative and assertive communicative behaviours during workplace conflict management dialogues. Informant 02 believed that "If dialogue is not embraced by the top

leadership within the organisation then it is less likely to cascade down to the junior employees”. Dialogue is a skill that is honed with practise. Therefore, in organisations where the senior management handles all the conflict issues within the organisation, the junior employees do not get an opportunity to practise dialogue and so this implicates their communicative actions during these dialogues.

Leaders can also elicit feelings of fear from their employees and this could influence the entire workplace conflict management process. Informant 02 describes a scenario where a senior employee (a supervisor) would allocate duties to a junior employee (an intern). The allocated duties were out of the scope of the intern. The concerns of the intern were dismissed by this supervisor. This intern then chose to raise the issue with the human resource manager who then had a dialogue with the supervisor.

Afterwards, the ratings of the intern became poor implying that the supervisor was deliberately ranking him lowly because he had reported him to the human resources manager. This was a form of intimidation on the part of the supervisor that could result into feelings of fear of negative consequences by the intern. Informant 02 said: “where junior employees are using silence a lot during a dialogue it is a sign that they are afraid, or they feel that whatever they are going to say would not be taken into consideration.” Such silences should therefore not be assumed to be listening but be interrogated for deeper meaning so as to ensure conflict is constructively managed.

4.5.4 Prior Experience with the Conflict

The other factor that determines employee communicative behaviour is their prior experience with the conflict situation (Elgoibar et al., 2017). This experience could be personal or from the experiences of the other employee as told by them. For instance, informant 02

describes a situation where a junior employee who was involved in a conflict management dialogue chose to keep quiet throughout the whole session because as he said; "...this employee I think decided to keep quiet because she related to an earlier experience where a complaint was raised against the same senior employee and it was not acted upon". Where the experience is negative, the employees are likely to choose passive communicative behaviours whereas argumentative and assertive behaviours would be prevalent in situations where the experience is positive.

4.6 Conditions Necessary for Constructive Dialogues in Workplace Conflict Management

Workplace conflict management dialogues are intentional process whose success or failure depends on a number of conditions (Coleman et al., 2014). These conditions include equality, empathic listening and non-judgementally raising our assumptions (Yankelovich, 2001). For this study, the researcher identified a number of conditions that result in constructive dialogues.

These conditions comprise those that need personality adjustments and those that can be assured by the organisation. For this study, the researcher categorized these conditions as those necessary before the actual dialogue begins and those necessary during the actual dialogue process. Table 4 shows some of the narratives that explain the conditions.

Table 4. 4 Conditions for Constructive Dialogue

Condition for constructive dialogue	Sample quote/narrative
Prerequisite conditions	
Willingness to dialogue	"That willingness to just sit down and have a conversation was a big part of the conflict resolution process."
Intentionally make dialogue one of the workplace conflict management tools	"First thing to make the dialogue better is to intentionally make it a tool, the main tool of conflict management."
Ensure equity	"I remember, we had to go outside the office, so I feel like

Agree on the rules guiding the dialogue process before the dialogue begins	being in a different space sort of helped a lot of us to be very open.” “That you say it before the dialogue begins that number one, we are going to be in the same room and number two we are not leaving the room until a solution is reached. I think that is a pretty effective tool.”
Designate an arbiter	“Like having one person in the team that was calmer than the rest of us really helped. So, this person was able to be objective in comparison to the rest of us.”

Conditions during the dialogue process	
Empathic listening	“I think dialogues can be successful if all parties involved are willing to listen to one another.”
Taking note of the meanings of silences	“Some people use silence as a tool of defiance.”

4.6.1 Prerequisite Conditions Necessary for Constructive Dialogues

These include the conditions that should be met prior to the dialogue process.

4.6.1.1 Willingness to Dialogue

According to Coleman et al. (2014), agreeing to dialogue is the first step in managing conflict. Workplace conflict management dialogues do not just happen; they are made to happen. This intentionality is however preceded by the willingness of the employees to sit down and have that crucial conversation. Informant 05 said: “That willingness to just sit down and have a conversation was a big part of the conflict resolution process”. Informant 07 while responding to the question as to why they chose to use dialogue said that “I accepted to dialogue as a show of respect for my boss”. The willingness to dialogue portrays not only good behaviour but it is also a show of respect for the other dialoguers.

4.6.1.2 Intentionally Make Dialogue one of the Workplace Conflict Management Tools

The inter-subjective nature of dialogue makes it one of the best ways to deal with workplace conflicts. This is because these conflicts though sometimes triggered by substantive workplace conditions, end up being affective as they result in emotional tensions among employees. Proksch (2016) opines that affective conflicts are best dealt with using dialogue as it fosters inquiry, allows for understanding and the creation of mutual understanding. Therefore, dialogue if made one of the official ways of dealing with workplace conflicts would be an effective method. The researcher found out that the use of dialogue in workplace conflict management borders on the informal. Informant 08 said:

Dialogue is not very structured in our organisation.... In our normal operations, all staff are encouraged to live amicably and consult in case of any challenge. So, it is in the spirit of consultation that probably dialogue can be used in conflict management. In addition, I think the first thing to make the dialogue better is to intentionally make it a tool, the main tool of conflict management. Then that way as an organisation you are able to allocate resources to develop that skill amongst the employees and amongst the leadership team.

When employees know and acknowledge dialogue as one of the official conflict management strategies, they are more likely to embrace it and thus put in more effort in ensuring the dialogue process is constructive.

4.6.1.3 Ensure Equity

Asymmetrical relations at the workplace create imbalances that could derail the dialogue process (Yankelovich, 2001). Therefore, specific mechanisms must be instituted to ensure the success of the dialogue process. The researcher identified methods such as the use of neutral venues for the dialogue. Instead of conducting the dialogue in the office, going out to a different place could help the dialoguers relax and therefore be more willing to open up thus ensuring the dialogue process is successful. Informant 06 experienced this, she said: “I remember, we had to

go outside the office, so I feel like being in a different space sort of helped a lot of us to be very open”. Being in a neutral place would also dismantle the rigidity of workplace job hierarchy. Informant 03 suggested that avoiding job hierarchies is important for effective workplace conflict management dialogues. For instance, in the neutral location there would be no seat reserved specifically for the boss and this would help neutralize tensions. Equity can also be achieved by what informant 03 suggested:

Management should be sensitized on how to dialogue effectively with their subordinates without bringing out the superiority complex. This will ensure staff open up on a level playing field.

When dialogue is enshrined in the workplace conflict management policy, both senior and junior employees engage in efforts to ensure it is successfully conducted. Equally resources are allocated so as to sensitize the employees on how to achieve constructive dialogues.

Agree on the rules guiding the dialogue process before the dialogue begins. The first stages of the dialogue process are infused with tensions and repressed emotions and the dialoguers engage in defensive communication. Consequently, it is important to have pre-agreed upon rules that guide the entire dialogue process. The absence of these rules could result in the process aborting or being aggravated further. Informant 05 suggested that “... one of the rules is to agree to be in the same room all throughout the process”. This implies that no one can leave the dialogue room until the process is effectively completed. These pre-agreed on rules ensure there is a semblance of control and the dialogue process does not degenerate or abort.

4.6.1.4 Designate an Arbiter or Mediator

The recursive stages of the dialogue process as identified by Isaacs (1999) can stagnate in the absence of an arbiter. The researcher found out that the presence of a neutral and impartial arbiter helps in navigating through these stages so that the dialogue process ends constructively.

Informant 06 said, “There was one of our team members who was very calm and was the one who was able to sort of listen objectively to all of us...I felt like that really helped”. However, the selection of the arbiter should be carefully done as it has a significant bearing on the success of the dialogue process. Informant 08 felt that: “...And it may fail in my opinion if maybe the arbitrator takes sides or the arbitrator is considered not a good listener because this dialogue will work well when you can give chance to each and every one to express himself or herself within that conflict set up.” An arbiter should be a neutral person with good listening skills. It also helps if the arbiter is mutually agreed upon by the disputants and is mutually respected. This will minimize feelings of favouritism that could otherwise derail the dialogue process.

4.6.2 Conditions During the Dialogue Process

In an ideal active dialogue process, there is talking then keeping quiet to listen to the other interlocutors before responding. How these communicative two speech acts are interpreted and organized determines whether the dialogue process will stagnate, abort or progress to its intended completion. Dialectical dialogues start at the point where empathic listening begins. Silence is core during empathic listening, but its hidden meanings should be taken note of as they could adversely affect the effective conclusion of the dialogue process.

4.6.2.1 Empathic listening

Empathic listen is a pro-active conscious decision to intentionally listen to the other interlocutors so as to understand the issues from their own viewpoints without necessarily disregarding your own beliefs. Cowan (2003) termed it as the best way to deal with conflict among people who share a relationship as it communicates that they are understood and accepted just as they are. It makes the other “feel heard” and this helps in opening up and sharing.

Speaking on listen during workplace conflict management dialogues, informant 07 said, “ I think everyone was willing to listen and also the ability of everyone, to be able to put yourself in the other person’s shoes to know where she is coming from, how she feels. That allowed us to have some understanding going forward”. When there is no listening, true dialogic communication is absent and hence the conflict remains unresolved. Informant 06 said:

I think listening is important in a dialogue because it helps you to clarify if something is not clear. You have to first listen and maybe speak it out and ask is this what you mean or So, it is important to listen. It also helps you to see the other person’s point of view.

In describing the conflict situations, the respondents affirmed that in the initial stages where emotions were heightened, there was no listening. Afterwards, when the disputants had calmed down and were now listening to each other, it was possible to move forward and successfully conclude the dialogue.

4.6.2.2 Taking Note of the Meanings of Silence

The process of empathic listening requires a contemplative silence. Even though in most cases silence during dialogue implies listening this meaning is not universal and could be contextually variant in workplace conflict management dialogues. Simonis (2016) opined that it is only through empathic listening that we can appreciate and value the silences and voices of the dialoguers. For instance, informant 02 felt that silence especially from the junior employees should not be taken at face value for it could be an expression of fear or a feeling that whatever they say will probably be disregarded. Informant 03 said.

I would rather face the situation head on and communicate my grievances than keep them inside thus affecting my mood and that of those around me. Also, I would say silence could also mean contempt, like I don’t really care what you are saying so let’s just get over and done with it.

This therefore means that for the dialogue process to be constructive, the dialoguers need to take note of the meanings of the silences used and interpret them accordingly.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

This chapter provides a summary of findings in relation to the study objectives, recommendations, and conclusions

5.2 Summary of the Findings

The findings of this study have been summarized according to the objectives of the study.

5.2.1 Communication Hurdles that necessitate the use of Dialogue in Workplace Conflict Management

Communication challenges that warrant the use of dialogue that were identified in this study include: lack of information, vertical communication at the workplace, rigid job hierarchical levels, emotional barriers, cultural beliefs, and differences in socialisation. The communication challenges are a factor of employee personality as well as the workplace communication culture. These challenges affect the emotions of the employees and are therefore best managed using a method that encourages open communication. The study identified lack of adequate information as one of the factors that result in workplace conflict as it leaves room for misunderstanding. Adequate information on how to carry out tasks and on reasons why certain decisions are taken at the workplace works to minimize workplace conflicts.

The lack of information could be attributed to vertical communication at workplaces that results in information being diluted the further down the chain it goes resulting in miscommunication. Rigid job hierarchical levels discourage the use of open communication and that creates workplace tensions and fears. At a personal level emotional barrier stemming from the employee's negative perception of the self and others create communication hurdles. Such

barriers make it difficult to understand each other. They include feelings of anger, favouritism, jealousy, mistrust. The cultural beliefs of the employees also result in communication challenges as it determines how the employees interact and relate with each other. Here gender relations were the most affected as some informants felt some male employees do not culturally have open communication with their female employees. Informant 02 talks of a male employee who thought that “women are just difficult to work with”. Culture also determines how people are socialised and hence how they interact with others at the workplace. Socialization also determines the gender prejudices that employees adopt.

5.2.2 Types of Dialogue in Workplace Conflict Management

As discussed in chapter two of this study, dialogues can be classified both normatively and pragmatically. This study employed a melange of the normative classification by Walton & Macagno (2007) and a pragmatic classification by Fishelov (2013) to derive these types of dialogues: Persuasion dialogue, negotiation dialogue, eristic dialogue, committee meeting dialogue, asymmetrical dialogue, dialogue of the deaf and dialectical dialogue. The goal of persuasion is to convince the other party to drop their viewpoint in support of yours resulting in a lose-win outcome. This is prevalent in workplace conflict management dialogues as often the aggrieved party wants to convince the other party to see things from their point of view. In negotiation dialogues, there is give and take such that the outcome of the dialogue process achieves maximum positive benefits for the disputing parties.

Workplace conflicts trigger emotional reactions and consequently, the initial stages of the workplace conflict management dialogues are often eristic dialogues. Most of the informants described there being tension, anger, shouting matches at the start of the dialogue process. These are the characteristics of eristic dialogues. These emotional outbursts are deemed useful in

allowing the dialogue process to progress as they result in venting out repressed emotions. Practical concerns at the workplace are best dealt with in committee meeting dialogues as they result in the creation of binding work action plans. The dynamic composition of the workplace also results in asymmetry leading often to the occurrence of asymmetrical dialogues. These dialogues happen more at workplaces with rigid job hierarchical structure where seniors and juniors do not freely converse.

This study also identified dialogue of the deaf where there is a disconnect between the disputants. Due to emotional distance, the disputants just keep on talking and talking without listening to each other resulting in the occurrence of what Fishelov (2013) calls two parallel monologues. The last type of dialogue identified is the dialectical dialogue. This is the ideal dialogue that results in the creation of mutual understanding and shared meaning because here there is empathic listening. The informants identified this type of dialogue to occur mostly in the later stages of the workplace conflict management dialogue process. It is at the beginning of listening that dialectical dialogues occur.

5.2.3 Factors Influencing Communication Dynamics in Workplace Conflict Management Dialogues

The researcher identified such communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues as silence, empathic listening, lack of listening, shouting matches, tension depicted in the sitting behaviours of the employees, feelings of fear, anger, hostility, and defensive communication. These communicative actions are a key determinant to the progression of the dialogue process. It is therefore important to understand the factors driving these dynamics. The researcher categorized these factors according to those resulting from employee self-perception, those focussing on relationship maintenance, those due to workplace culture and

those due to prior experience with the conflict. Self-perception factors included feelings of fear because of natural apprehension or the threat of perceived negative consequences. Several informants also mentioned feelings of favouritism.

Also, assumptions made by the employees such as assuming they already know the outcome of the dialogue process influenced their communicative actions during the dialogue process. In addition, how the disputants assess the personality of the other was also identified as a self-perception factor that could determine the communicative behaviour of the disputants. For instance, informant 06 expressed that they would be cautious in dealing with an argumentative person, they would rather act passively, be quiet than have a conversation with such a person.

At workplaces, relationships play a key role in the overall well-being of the employees. The researcher discovered that the communicative actions of disputants during workplace conflict management dialogues is also guided by the type of relationship they share with their colleagues. Consequently, the employees would choose communicative behaviours that ensure the sustainability of the relationship. This finding conforms to that of Elgoibar et al. (2017) who found out that employees in the same department are more likely to use defensive communication. Also as informant 06 explained, her communicative behaviour during the dialogue was informed by the desire to get along with the rest as this was a new job and she knew she was going to work together with the others for some time. Informant 02 also gives an example of an employee who would have otherwise spoken up but who instead chose to be quiet in a bid to identify with the rest of the employees who do not speak up.

The workplace culture is also a key determinant to the communicative actions that employees choose during workplace conflict management dialogues. This study identified the workplace communication culture to be an important factor. Workplaces that encourage open

communication have their employees choosing more assertive communicative behaviours whereas where communication is top-down, the employees engage more in passive communicative behaviours such as using silence during dialogues. The desire to achieve organisational goals could result in work pressure that can be expressed as verbal outbursts during workplace conflict management dialogues as was the case for informant 04.

In addition, rigidity in job hierarchical levels also influences communicative actions of the employees during workplace conflict management dialogues as it determines the nature of relationships at workplaces. Where senior and junior employees do not relate freely, the communicative behaviour is mostly passive or passive aggressive as opposed to assertive and argumentative. Workplace leadership is also a key determinant of communicative actions during workplace conflict management dialogues. It determines the workplace policy on conflict management. Workplaces with leaders who encourage open communication and interact closely with junior employees experience more argumentative and assertive communicative behaviours. Some leaders, as a projection of their own fears, intimidate their juniors into passivity during these dialogues. Also, when junior employees are intimidated by their seniors, they become afraid of speaking up because they fear undesirable consequences.

How a previous conflict situation was handled also determines the communicative actions of the disputants. A previous negative experience could result into feelings of hopelessness and hence the choice to engage in passive communicative behaviours. The employee chooses silence because from their previous experience they can predict the outcome of the dialogue process.

5.2.4 Conditions Necessary for Constructive Dialogue in Workplace Conflict Management

The conditions necessary for constructive dialogues which the researcher identified include the willingness to dialogue, intentionally make dialogue a tool for workplace conflict management, ensure equity, agree on rules guiding the dialogue process before-hand, designate an arbiter, empathic listening and taking note of the meanings of silence. These conditions are modelled from those suggested by Yankelovich (2001). These conditions will ensure order before the dialogue and during the dialogue process.

The first condition is the willingness to dialogue. The employees have to get to a point where they are ready and willing to sit down and have that conversation. The dialogue process is not a haphazard occurrence, it is intentional, and it has a projected outcome and therefore the disputants must be willing to sit down and talk. This willingness to dialogue can be catapulted by making dialogue one of the workplace conflict management tools. The knowledge that dialogue is one of the acknowledged workplace conflict management mechanisms could result in willingness to dialogue. Workplaces are not homogenous and so instances of imbalance occur. These imbalances such as those in terms of power create asymmetrical relationships which hinder true dialogue. Therefore, there must be deliberate efforts to counteract the effects of these imbalances. Such efforts could include sitting on a round table or in a circle, going out of the office to a neutral place as well as agreeing to use personal names instead of job titles. The dialoguers also need to agree on the rules to guide the dialogue process to ensure that the process is smooth, and it does not stagnate. Having neutral people to moderate the dialogue is also a condition that can raise the legitimacy of the dialogue process and give a semblance that the process will be free from bias.

During the active dialogue process, listening must be ensured. The listening must be active and empathic so that the disputants feel heard and understood. Being able to put oneself in the positions of the others without losing focus of one's position is what empathic listening does. This creates a conducive atmosphere where trust flows and the interlocutors are free to non-judgementally share their concerns without fear or prejudice. Active dialogic listening is often interspersed with instances of silence. It is important to consciously take note of the length and frequency of the dialogues to discern the nuanced meanings as not all silences are silences to listen or make space for dialogue. Other silences are silences of fear or of hopelessness and if not noted and addressed could derail the entire dialogue process.

5.3 Conclusion

Dialogue is preferred in managing workplace conflict management dialogues because it is considered to be most effective as it results in the creation of mutual understanding and shared meanings. It is also deemed a fast method of conflict management and is less tedious and cheaper as compared to litigation. Equally, it is the best method to use to ensure workplace relationships are maintained and positively reinforced as it encourages open discussions. However, its mundane nature makes employees assume that they can engage in it as the assumption usually is that dialogue is just a conversation. Dialogues are intentional conversations and so their success or failure should not be left to chance. During the process of dialogue, interlocutors traverse different stages each characterized with crises that have to be surmounted before progressing to the next stage. Each stage is also characterised with different communication dynamics. Understanding the factors influencing the expressive choices of employees during workplace conflict management is paramount in successfully navigating through the dialogue process.

This study discovered that the success or failure of the dialogue process is determined by the communicative actions of the disputants. Passive and aggressive communicative actions derailed the dialogue process whereas calmness and listening helped the process to progress. Carrocci (1985) suggested that how a workplace conflict is perceived and communicated greatly influences its escalation or de-escalation. The communicative behaviour chosen by an employee during workplace conflict management is dyadically a factor of their own personality and workplace culture (Kassing, 1997). An understanding of these factors raises consciousness on how they impact the dialogue process and therefore its eventual success or failure.

Dialogues are not always successful. To ensure success, a number of conditions have to be put in place to ensure equity, encourage the disputants to open up freely in a mutually trustworthy environment without fear of victimization or perceived negative consequences. This study discovered that in an active dialogue process, listening takes centre stage and should be encouraged to ensure it is active and empathic. Silences during the process also need not be assumed as being pauses to listen or allow others to speak but should be interrogated to find the nuanced meanings they have. Silence too is communication and adequate attention should be paid to it.

Gender too is a factor in workplace conflict management dialogues as it determines the communicative behaviours of male and female employees.

As discovered in this study, the use of dialogue in workplace conflict management borders on the informal. However, it was acknowledged that dialogue can be the most effective way of managing workplace conflicts. It just needs to be officially incorporated in the conflict management policy and be encouraged. Being a skill, its frequent use would ensure that the workplace conflict management dialogues being had are more constructive.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher came up with the following recommendations to help ensure that workplace conflict management dialogues are always successful. The recommendations are to organisations, individual employee and for further research.

5.4.1 Recommendations to the Organisation

1. Organisations should endeavour to make dialogue one of their preferred workplace conflict management tools.
2. Organisational leadership should be cognizant of the workplace environmental factors that derail the dialogue process so as to minimize them.
3. The organisation should identify and improve on workplace factors that encourage the use of dialogue.

5.4.2 Recommendation to the Individual Employee

1. Employees should acknowledge that dialoguing is a skill that can be used in conflict management not only at places of work but also in other relationships at home and in the larger society.
2. Employees should be open minded when entering a workplace conflict management dialogue process.
3. Employees should endeavour to improve their listening skills so that they learn to listen actively and empathically.

5.4.3 Recommendation for Further Studies on Workplace Conflict Management Dialogues

The research recommends further study be conducted on:

1. An ethnographic study on communication dynamics in workplace conflict management dialogues.
2. A replication of this study within government institutions.
3. An exploratory study on why dialogue is not incorporated in official workplace policy on conflict management.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Schedule

1. How would you define or explain the meaning of the phrase “Workplace conflict management dialogues”?
2. What are some communication challenges that are experienced at places of work that warrant the use of dialogue?
3. Briefly describe a workplace conflict situation that you were involved in.
4. What influenced your choice to use dialogue in the conflict situation(s)? What did you aim to achieve by engaging in the dialogue (i) as an individual and (ii) as a group?
5. How would you describe the communicative behaviour/actions of the disputants during the dialogue in terms of the language they were using and other non-verbal cues? Kindly cite specific examples.
6. In your own judgement of the conflict situation, what do you think influenced the specific behaviours of each of the disputants?
7. How did the behaviours of the disputants during the dialogue affect the results of the conflict situation?
8. During the dialogue, which communicative behaviours resulted in positive outcomes and which ones derailed the dialogue process?
9. From your personal experience and understanding of the conflict situation, what do you think was the role of listening during the dialogue?
10. It is commonplace to have episodes of silence during dialogue. Let us revisit the situation at hand, what do you think was the meaning of silence during the dialogue?
11. Let us consider the disputants and the workplace environment: What are the workplace and personality factors that predispose employees to use silence during these dialogues?
12. In your workplace, how is dialogue during conflict management structured or organized? Is there a structure to be followed?
13. How would you assess the efficacy of dialogue in workplace conflict management?
14. How can we make the dialogue process/ experience better to ensure the outcomes are agreeable to the individual and everyone else?

Appendix II: List of CSOs

1. Ujamaa Africa
2. Save the Children Kenya
3. Social Justice Centre Working Group
4. Action Aid Kenya
5. Food for the Hungry- Kenya
6. Plan International- Kenya
7. Population Services International (PSI)
8. Cheshire Disability Services Kenya (CDSK)

Appendix III: Sample Interview Transcription

INTERVIEW 2

Interview transcription

So, we are on, I am recording as agreed, we begin with... what do you understand by the phrase workplace conflict management dialogues?

Ahh in workplaces, just like ah any representation of our community, there, people are bound to differ in different ways, could be in terms of opinion, about how things need to be done, it could be in terms of culture, and how people look at things, could be in terms of use of language. And yes, when such differences ah occur, people are likely to disagree. Some disagreements are not that I'd say extensive or likely to hinder the way they work but at some point when these differences do hinder the way people relate or work that amounts to what we'd call a workplace conflict. So in an attempt to control the situation so that it doesn't escalate or even if it repeats in future, it doesn't interfere with the process of work, management sometimes decides to engage in intentional conversations so that the people involved in the conflict, in this case I will maybe call them disputants, put down their differences and look at the situation in a way to accommodate each other. Such kind of conversations are what you would call workplace conflict management dialogues because there are so many other dialogues that could happen, ...and they are different for these types of dialogues because these ones are intentional and their aim is to contain the conflict.

So these intentional dialogues that you are referring to, what are some of what are some communication challenges at the workplace that could necessitate the use of these dialogues?

Ahhh, considering that we all do not come from the same cultures in the same societies.... Even if you have structured mechanisms of let's say codes of practise on how to do work and relate with each other...our differences especially personal and cultural differences...make it difficult to apply these codes of practise universally because someone would look at a certain element in a code of practise something that is not acceptable to them according to have they have experienced it somewhere else...or how they have grown up. So these differences that are personal and cultural make it difficult for human resource managers like myself to actually put or handle people in conflicting situations ...using the same way or same method. In that case dialogue becomes a better instrument why because...then you get to understand where everyone is coming from and it gives you a chance to come to a common ground without necessarily letting any of the conflicting employees think that you have taken a partisan position.

At your place of work, what is the nature of the organisational conflict you have had to use dialogue in dealing with? Like what exactly had happened, please give me the scenarios the details of what had happened, and you decided to use dialogue.

Well ah, there are quite a number we've used but I'll pick this one that was quite unique and is bound to happen in quite a number of other organisations. Maybe let me give them arbitrary names, let me talk of John and Mary. Culturally, I think in African societies, well I don't know how other people will look at it but ...I will look at it in the sense that most men ah are brought up in a male dominated society and in this case, they have some kind of perceptions about women. So even if, even when people have gone to school, if they do not

make the deliberate effort to go beyond these perceptions, it still manifests in the way they interact.

So we had this situation where we, we hired a new project officer to join our water team. Ahh it is this lady we are calling Mary. But on the team, there was another project officer that is male, and we are calling him John. What happened was that Mary was being oriented. Normally we would take...one month for orientation and then five months together with one month makes it six months that would be a probationary period. So during this time, we'd expect that the new entrant or new employee learns about the company culture, I mean the organisational culture and how we work. Because this was a field-based position, it was expected that employees start to work at 6am. That means they wake up in the morning and they have a management meeting at 6. By 8 they are out to go and meet communities which is very key because these communities would have time at 8, beyond ten they'd be doing other things going to the market and all that. So that morning, Mary was still actually transitioning from I mean her previous work. Waking up at 6am to attend a management meeting was a bit of a challenge. Looking at it she had actually gone to. Worked up to around 9pm. But when she got to the meeting a little bit late, about five minutes late, John was not happy that she had come in late and he made a statement that Mary was not ok with. He said, 'This is why it is difficult to work with women, they don't follow procedures and directions' Maybe to John that was just a by the way statement, but to Mary it wasn't. To cut the long story short the management meeting did not happen because Mary was offended, and she could not control her anger and they engaged in a verbal exchange. their team leader had to cancel the meeting and refer the matter to me to handle it. Yeah so that is one of the situations

Ok, so I want to believe that to deal with this situation you used dialogue, what motivated your decision to use dialogue?

Ahh the reason I chose to use dialogue was one, I was not in the meeting, this is a matter that was referred to me, and, for me to understand the situation, as it was, it was important that I hear from the two. The second thing was that looking at the kind of conflict they had it is not something that you had, you know, it is not everything that you put in your code of practise you don't say this you don't say that. you expect that if you talk of a certain value, for example if you talk of respect, you expect that an employee is able to think on their feet in every situation and see is what I am going to say violating any of the values of the organisation. In a situation where that is not everything is not written in stone, everything that that employee is supposed to abide by or adhere to is not written down, then it becomes difficult for you to tell someone that ok you violated this kind of value or this kind of code of practise unless you are talking to them and explain to them that this is how it is done. The other thing is that Mary was new, Mary had been in another organisation that obviously had a different work culture or work ethic and she was of a different gender, she was female in a team that was I mean male dominated, she was the only female on that team. John here had worked with us for quite some time, he understood our work ethic, but judging from the situation, he only understood the work ethic on paper, he was not actually putting it into practise. So in that situation there is not any other way I would have used, there is not any other method I would have used to solve that conflict if not dialogue.

Ok, so you called, am assuming you called the two of them and talked to them. How would you assess, what is your assessment of the language they were using during the dialogue? Ok, maybe you can also refer to other instances when you have used dialogue., generally how would you assess the language of the disputants during the dialogue, at the

beginning, maybe in the middle and, at the end, the whole process of dialogue, whether it happens at an instance or over a duration maybe several sittings.

Ahh, I remember, when I send the team leader to let them know that I needed to talk to them, John came in first. After about three minutes Mary came in. But I had taken my colleagues in the human resource department to come with me. So, we were four and so to add Mary, John, and their team leader, that was a total of seven people. But when Mary got in, she saw John and said, “what is this monster doing here?” And immediately we noticed now this is a hot situation. But John did not keep calm. He said, “I cannot let a woman speak to me like this”. We could see that from his perspective he was defending his himself as a man, he was defending his attitude, his ego that as a man I expect a woman to talk to me like this. From Mary’s side she was also defending herself and saying you see this person talked to me like this and is not worth being a human being, he is a monster...it was a heated verbal exchange, and for some time, for about a minute, we let them you know throw words at each other and it was deliberate because we wanted them to let out the emotions they had.

And after that I came in and ordered them to keep quiet and of course they did because well they wouldn’t defy me; I am their human resource manager. So, after that I asked their team leader to explain what had happened and he stated what had happened. So after that I asked Mary to give her side of the story and as she started speaking, she broke down. I think she felt like, she felt out of place, she felt like she really wasn’t part of the team. And I understood her position. Looking at it that she was the only woman on that team, and she was new...she expected that the other team members would be supportive to help her acclimatize with the new work environment. So when John started speaking, he said, he stuck to the rules and said that this is how we work here, and we expect that every team member would do this this and this. So again not with a lot of anger but he was still being defensive, trying to find a reason to justify why he had talked to Mary the way he did. So, I asked one of the one of my team from the human resource depart to try and, to read to John the values we had I mean we have as an organisation and after he read, we asked John to look at the words that he had used to address Mary and try and identify which of the values he had violated. Eventually, he said, he identified the value that he had violated. We also asked Mary to go through the same and see if there is something that she thinks she had violated and she did so we put it to both of them and asked them I they thought any one any of them had a right to justify what they had done and they said no. They agreed that they were both wrong.

So, after that we asked them to remember that people are different, they would react to situations differently. But the reason why we have a certain code of ethics is to make sure that no matter where we come from, the experiences we’ve had, this is supposed to bring us together. So at the end of the day, the two walked out of the room talking to each other. But I knew it was not going to be easy because getting to talk to their team leader because their team leader was supposed to observe them for some time. It took time for them to actually you know show the kind of warmth they had from the beginning when Mary joined the team but it helped us to make sure that they would go to the field the following day and do their work. So we were actually using the dialogue to manage that conflict. We were not going to change John overnight and say this is how you look at women; we were not going to tell Mary that this is your new work environment so you have to change like a switch she needed time to acclimatize. And John needed time to also learn that this is how you do things.

Ok, and from your wealth of experience, normally, what are some of the personal factors, the personality, personal or personality dispositions of the employees, that predispose them to using a certain language during these dialogues?

I'd look at a number of things. And, like I said from the beginning that some of these things are influenced by how people have been raised up. That is one thing because as an employee you don't leave your culture at home, you don't leave yourself at home when you come to work. So one of the things that determine how people interact or what kind of language they use in dialogues is their culture. And when I talk about culture, here is how you use language, how you look at the attitude; what attitudes do you have towards a certain thing, how have you been taught ... the way to behave. Like in this example we are looking at two people of different gender and so, gender also comes in as one of the things that would how affect how people use language in dialogues, how people behave.

The other thing is the level of the employee in the organisation. Why? Because we expect, there is a certain code of ethic that you would expect from a senior or a member of the executive team, the way they communicate, the way they interact with the other employees. There is a certain way of behaviour that we expect from junior employees but with time, you realize that as a leader it doesn't really mean that you know everything. And it happens that from my experience, is that some leaders are afraid for their team to know that they are not smart. When I talk of not smart is that they don't know everything, so they need to learn from them. They are afraid to know that their team actually that they depend on their team for success. Unless such kind of a leader rises above that fear, they are likely to not engage in dialogue with their peers or with their juniors to solve conflicts. So that is one thing. The other thing is about junior employees, for example, if a junior employee is kind of dissatisfied or they feel they hold that position yet they deserve to have a better position maybe they deserve to hold the position of their team leader or their senior, it also becomes a little difficult for them to engage in dialogue. Why? Because when they go into those conversations, they already have some mind-set, they already have an attitude towards their seniors so in that case I'd be talking about the level of the employee within the organisation.

The other thing is about leadership of the organisation as a whole. People tend to learn from their leaders, they tend to look at how their leaders behave. So, if at the top management we are not, we do not show that by doing, we do not own up our mistakes, then this culture is cascaded down to the lower groups of employees who would not want to engage in dialogue. The other thing is about ahh the team leaders and even the human resource management department. You realize, if every time an employee has an issue with the other employee they don't handle it at the team level they decide to bring it up with you and you entertain such kind of reporting, it does not give them the opportunity to engage in dialogue amongst themselves to solve those conflicts. So, you realize that every time everything is brought to you, you want to handle it. So it is always I'd say prudent to let teams handle have these dialogues amongst themselves but in a situation where the team maybe the team leaders bring it to you then you are able to handle it because that would be taken that they are not able to handle it at the team level. So I'd say that those are some of the things that would affect dialogues.

Ok, and listening is very important during dialogues. What is your assessment of listening during the many dialogues you've had to solve conflicts?

Ahh, now you'd look at listening, there is a very thin line between listening and, when someone is listening, they are usually silent, that is what I would expect. But that is not the

reality because listening has something to do with yes you are silent, but do you get the message? The role of listening is very important, why is important? Because if you don't, as a disputant if you don't, make an effort to understand the other person from their point of view you cannot solve that conflict. So if you say by listening, I mean, my definition of listening is making a deliberate effort to understand to look at the situation from the other person's perspective, then I'd say it is a very important element of a dialogue because then you are able to reconcile that perspective with your own perspective. Human beings have the natural ability to do then but they fail during dialogues because they decide to let their attitudes their own perspectives and ego to override that need to put down I'd say your defence mechanisms. So yes, I think listening is an important aspect of dialogue and a dialogue would not be successful if it doesn't happen.

You mentioned silence, which is actually the other thing I am interested in; silences during dialogues...How would you, ok, I want to believe you've had situations where you call employees who have conflict amongst themselves or they come to you and when you begin the dialogue one employee decides to keep quiet and say nothing.

Yes.... (Laughing)

So, I'd like to understand that, has it been, has it happened, who used it and why do you think they chose to keep quiet?

(Laughing)I am laughing because (laughter), yeah, in almost every dialogue you would have those situations where one of the participants keeps silent. But there are different situations when this happens. Silence has a lot of meanings and one of them is a manifestation of fear. Because we have had situations where you are having dialogue with an employee and they just keep quiet and not respond. You would say something and expect them to respond or you would ask their opinion and they would just keep quiet they would not say anything. But later on you would hear talks about that session you had. I remember a time when one of the employees had an issue with his line manager, we handled it through dialogue. But this employee kept silent all through, but later on we would hear from her colleagues that there was no need of speaking during that meeting because they thought there was nothing we were going to do; we were not going to act on the situation. So again that is it was a show of I'd say hopelessness or yes, something like that. So when they are afraid to speak to you and tell you, you know, I think this is just a formality or when they don't speak because they think nothing will happen, and that becomes a little bit demoralizing. But then you would expect that during a dialogue, that different, ahhh, how do you call these people, when people are talking, the particular word you use for that is what?

Interlocutors

Interlocutors, yes, you guys from communication know these things. Now interlocutors, you expect that when one person is speaking the rest are quiet to help one, the other person articulate what they want to say and these others to consider what he is saying or what she is saying so that they are able to react. But even when they are reacting it has to be systematic that way you get to understand one another. But if everyone is speaking then you get nowhere. So, I think silence again is useful in navigating the dialogue itself but it is also used to show agreement; that we agree that this person is going to speak then after that when one person is speaking then the rest are quiet we agree that we are letting this person speak. So sometimes most of these dialogues, conflict management dialogues, will start with everyone speaking why because everyone thinks I have to air my views first. But as it progresses, you realize that the rest keep quiet when one person is speaking so it is a sign that we are progressing towards a common

ground. So as a person mediating, it is also important to pay attention to those silences. One, silence from the junior employees and silence from all the interlocutors. If the junior employees remain silent longer during the conversation, it is important that maybe you handle this situation differently; have to talk to them alone and talk to the senior management alone or the senior employees alone before you bring them together. Where junior employees are using silence a lot during a dialogue it is a sign that they are afraid, or they feel that whatever they are going to say would not be taken into consideration.

And let's revisit the specific case you gave about the employee who chose to keep silent but later on talked about the dialogue. What in your opinion are some of the factors that could have influenced their decision either factors to do with the individual person or from the organisation that would have made them decide to keep quiet?

Ah this employee I think decided to keep quiet because she related to an earlier experience where a complaint was raised against the same senior employee and it was not acted upon. Because having gone later through the history of the senior employee, I went through the senior employee's file I realized that that issue was raised with the human resource office, but it was not acted upon. So I think when this employee decided to keep quiet and they were getting from that experience someone had the same issue with the same employee and it never worked so why, why be special if it works? So I think that is one of the things.

And the other thing is that there are other employees who have come to dialogues with who have had issues with their seniors and they have usually spoken and in this case, comparing with this employee who did not, who chose to keep quiet I think it is a personality kind of thing. Because the choice to speak or not to speak in a situation where you feel hopeless or you feel afraid is something to do with your personality. But again, I also look at it as organisational because if employees bring up issues, go through these dialogues and you don't act on them, then with time they will keep quiet. Why because if the rest of the employees are keeping quiet, they would want to identify with them, they would not be the only, they would not be the ones to, I mean they would not want to be different from the rest

We call them whistle blowers,

Hmm

They are called whistle-blowers

They don't want to be whistle-blowers because they want to identify with their fellow employees. Again we also need to look at how do the senior management or the senior employees relate with these junior employees when or after they have gone through the dialogues. That is one thing I am usually keen about as the human resource manager. Why, because again when you don't have issues being brought to the office then you need to ask yourself why these issues don't come because you expect there would be conflicts. but if you don't hear of conflict for an extended period of time then you should be asking yourself why: Why are they quiet? Could it be that someone is intimidating them? Could it be that after the dialogues they feel frustrated? And I took up a case some time about an intern who had complained that the manager was asking them to do work that they even were not supposed to.

For example, when we sent our employees to the field, we don't expect interns to be in charge of health and safety. So when you get a manager asking an intern to be in charge of health and safety and the intern says you know this is not within my scope or TOR and they keep doing it. There is a point an intern came and reported the same. Then we talked to the manager and it happened that the intern was frustrated we would see a change in the way he was evaluated, and

I took it up to investigate what was going on. And I realized it was because of that reporting. So when senior management intimidate junior employees not to report or to engage in these kinds of dialogues to seek solutions to conflicts, then it becomes another issue, employees would keep quiet.

Then let us look at the whole dialogue process. I think, I have been able to pick like reasons why dialogue is important, but we can still go through that. How is dialogue structured in your organisation?

Now that is really a problem because, maybe, I should ask you this question, does dialogue need to be structured? I mean, don't people know how to engage in dialogue? They are conversations we have and I mean in every society we have dialogue but come to think of why you are asking, it is we do not have that structure really but I think it is an important thing to do because you need to have a certain guideline maybe on how to make the dialogue effective or successful but that doesn't really exist for us. You, I expect that as a manager, you possess the skills to be able to help people go through a dialogue. So, we will call you try to get to understand the situation and then yes, ahh remind you what is needed to be done and what is not supposed to be done. That is how we do it, is there a particular way a dialogue is supposed to be?

I was asking in terms of like; do you have specific days when you hold these dialogues ahh

No,

Or it is when it happens then you sit down and talk, when there is no conflict worth discussing then there are no dialogues.

For dialogues on conflict management, happen when the conflicts occur, so when we get a report there is a certain conflict, we try as much as possible so that there is no time lost between when the conflict occurs and when we hold the dialogue. But sometimes, you know it comes midway it also depends on what you have on your program.

I also believe that you have other methods of dealing with conflict, not necessarily just dialogue. In your assessment how would you rate dialogue, in comparison to the other methods of organisational /workplace conflict management?

Ahh from a professional and personal point of view, actually one of the things, I will give you an example. One of the methods we use is, we call it an issue log. An issue log is a tool we use for different employees to log conflicts or something they feel is a conflict. This is how it happens you log into the information system, there is a complaint, an employee complaints page where the employee describes what they think is wrong and then that goes when they say submit it goes to the person they are complaining about, it goes to the human resource manager it goes to a person who is senior to the person that this employee is complaining about...so I would say it kind of broadcasts within the organisation that there is an issue.

The other method we used is what is called a safe call. A safe call is where we have an appointed employee who is unknown to the other people apart from the executive team and the human resource who will receive a call. This call is made anonymously. If an employee feels like they don't want to talk to anyone else, they will make a safe call to a particular number and say what they want to say. The problem with this is that we've had it before, is that sometimes what is, I'd liken it to this kind of confession in the catholic church, where you expect that when you confess to a father, about something it remains with the father. That is the same idea about a safe call that you are not supposed to reveal the identity of the person but how do you solve that issue if you can't reveal the identity of the people. So, even if you went to the person this employee is

complaining about and said this this this happened, this they would want to know who said it or they would deny it. So I think comparing these two methods, I have seen dialogue have more success in terms of managing these conflicts why because we decide who gets to know about this conflict and we bring these two people together so that we get to understand their perspective and to understand one another so at the end of the day the complainant would have known that they have been heard, the accused would have had a chance to explain their side of the story. It doesn't have to if its something very sensitive, it doesn't get to be heard by the other members of the team or organisation. I think dialogue plays an important role and is more successful, and it is better as compared to these other techniques, However, what we have lacked is to I'd say is to mainstream it in our processes, I think it also needs a deliberate effort it needs us to go beyond looking at it as something we can just do and maybe take it in a way that is more professional because then it would give even our junior employees who are supposed to grow into managers to get to learn on how this is done so it becomes some kind of a code of practise.

Ok, I would agree with you on that, that the fact that dialogue is to most people just like a conversation, most people think it is just a conversation for it to be constructive, to be effective in managing conflict, it is best when it is

Handled structurally

Yes, it has to be intentional, it has to be structured and it is a skill that is acquired. The more you use it the better at it you become. And then, to the last question, how can we make dialogue better even though from our discussion I can pick snippets of how that can be done but we can still look at that. How can we generally from your experience...?

We said in the beginning that conflict management dialogues are intentional conversation. So the first thing to make the dialogue better is to intentionally make it a tool, the main tool of conflict management. Then that way as an organisation you are able to allocate resources to develop that skill amongst the employees and amongst the leadership team. Because it will not happen if we do not allocate resources to it, it will not happen if we don't entrench it in our systems. I think that the first thing is to accept it as a better tool of conflict management and allocate resources to it. When I talk of resources here I mean time to develop the skill, to develop the tool, I mean human resources to take it up and make sure that it grows and money to take care of the expenses related to making the skill work because even when doing team building, you would have dialogue as one of the skills that you teach. I mean we interact with communities and when you get there and these community groups have conflicts within themselves, we expect that our employees have the ability to help these communities solve these dialogues I mean these conflicts. But if they cannot use dialogue to propagate through that conflict, then how will they help these communities do that? So, in terms of making governance work in these community groups and within our organisation I think dialogue will need to play an important role. It should be key it should be central but how does it become central? You have to make it a deliberate tool to use.

Ok, I had said that was our last question, but let me make this one the very last one. Are dialogues always successful?

No, a single, sometimes a single session of dialogue might not be successful. And I would say the goal of dialogue is not to make it successful. Why, because dialogue gives you an opportunity to dissect a conflict, understand it and explore ways out of it. Let's take an example, what if you have two disputants and one of the disputants cannot or does not yield to putting down their point of view so that they also get to understand the other person? For example, if

you brought them to a dialogue and they walked out of the dialogue it would not be successful. So, there are times we are forced, or we have had to fire people why because the dialogue did not work. Maybe we did it the wrong way, that could be one of the reasons it doesn't work. Unless we have a way to structure it so that it is always successful, I believe that a dialogue would have two outcomes: a positive or a negative. And it is important that the people involved in managing the conflict when they enter into the dialogue, they have this, I mean they that need to remember this when starting the dialogue, that this dialogue could go two ways either a positive outcome, a win –win or a lose-lose. Why, because there are times when you realize that one of the disputants is quite difficult and impossible and you are not able to go ahead with that session of dialogue. If they are not willing to come back to another episode of that dialogue, then you might need to employ another way of managing the conflict. And one of these ways as an organisation sometimes sadly is to lay off or to let go one of these employees.

Ok, I am very grateful for your time. I will say God bless you. I would like to share the results, the findings of my research with you so that maybe it can inform your organisation more on how best to manage workplace conflicts.

I'd be glad to get to see how you make conclusions from this because again as I've said from this discussion it kind of challenges me to look at dialogue as not something that we just have, something that is commonplace but a tool that has the potential to help us solve I mean manage conflicts. However, the challenge, one thing I am getting from this is that the yes we need as an organisation to make it a deliberate effort that dialogue is used as a tool and we need to allocate resources to it.

Ok, thank you very much. God bless you.

God bless you too.

INTERVIEW 6

What do you understand by workplace conflict management dialogues?

I would say they are ways of solving conflict at the workplace through talking. Discussions that you have when there is conflict to try and solve that.

Ok, and at your place of work, what are some communication challenges that warrant the use of dialogue as one way of solving the conflict.

I'd say fear of victimization for the aggrieved party. So, say someone senior has offended you and you cannot talk about it because you will be victimized for saying it. I'd also say if there is conflict between yourself and your boss, the seniority levels, the higher up the chain, the harder it is to have that conversation.

What is that one conflict or two conflicts that you remember, give me a little bit more details like what exactly happened and during the dialogue process, how was the interaction, the words people were using, a little bit more detail.

I've had many conflicts (laughing). Anyway...

Ok, you can give us two

No, I will just stick to one. Because anyway... So, I think the one I remember that I was actively involved in was when I started my new role, a lot of what I was doing was a hand over from someone else. So, at the time when I was starting my job, it felt like the team that I was

replacing had pending tasks that they required I finish while I wanted them to finish their tasks, I didn't want to finish their work for them. So now, so that was a big problem because I felt like they wanted me to do their work, but they were not willing to do theirs. So, they were very ok with me finishing what they should have finished but when I say why don't you do it, they won't do it.

So, I also think another reason why that was a big source of conflict for us was because, I overheard them telling someone else.... like when we were recruited for my role there were two of us. So I heard them telling this other person to finish that work. So I (ingizad) involved myself in the fight and said if you let him do all that then I will also require that you finish what you started. Then I left and went home so the next day we were solving that fight. So, I think for me it was important that I acknowledge that that wasn't my fight because they were not telling me, they were telling someone else to do it. But at the same time it also, it helped us to learn about each other's personality so the words about.... Some of the words we were talking about was how would you want to manage conflict in this situation? So I told them that if I feel that I am being harassed even if it is not my fight, they should be sure I will bring it up again. Yes, so, we were able to talk about it and I think what really helped with that in solving that was very clear hand over instructions. We agreed on what should be carried forward and what should not because that was mainly why we were fighting.

Why did you decide to use dialogue?

I'd say, I think dialogue at the time was the best way to work because like I said we were just starting a new job and there was a lot of handing over to be done. And also because these were my peers, I didn't feel like there would be any victimizing. So, it made a lot of sense to actually dialogue because these are people I knew I was going to work with for a long time, they are people in my age group so we can relate and even at the level of seniority in the organogram we are at the same level, so it was easier to dialogue.

The next question is about what you wanted to achieve by engaging in the dialogue as an individual and as a group, the other people who were involved in the dialogue. What was your personal aim and also as a group, what was the goal? Even though I think from some of your responses, I can be able to pick that but maybe just to highlight again.

For me it is purely peace of mind...because I felt I needed them to understand how I work because most of them were people I had not worked with it and if I am being very honest, I didn't want a repeat of that. I didn't want to look like the bad person in the team. It was important to be very clear on why I did what I did or my contribution in all that.

Let us go back to the dialogue, the one on one discussions and interactions you were having, how would you describe like, give more details on the communicative behaviours of the people like was there shouting, did some people keep quiet, was there aggressiveness...throwing words around, was it just peaceful, people talking, how was it?

For me it was also quite peaceful. I don't remember verbal exchanges but there was a bit of tension before we actually started talking about the issue. You could feel like people were not very free to start talking, we were ok talking about everything else but that...It took us a bit of time to actually say this is what we are here to do. But it was mostly peaceful.

What made you behave the way you behaved during the dialogue?

To be honest, I really wanted us to work as a team. For me, it was important that we get along because these were people that I was going to work with to the very end... for as long as I was at that job. So, it was important for me that we just got along. Also, I think I felt like a lot of

it was, the source of the conflict was mostly a miscommunication; we just, we probably were saying the same thing we just were not saying it how it should be or at least in consideration of how other people were feeling. For me I would say especially the getting along part was most important for me. I needed us to be clear, clarify anything that didn't come out as right and why.

So, in your own assessment of that conflict situation and the dialogue, which behaviours do you think aided the dialogue process? I am glad you have said eventually there was creation

I remember, we had to go outside the office, so I feel like being in a different space sort of helped a lot of us to be very open. And also in the team there was one person who seemed to understand what was going on, like having one person in the team that was calmer than the rest of us really helped. So, this person was able to be objective in comparison to the rest of us who the previous day were shouting at each other. There was one of our team members who was very calm and was the one who was able to sort of listen objectively to all of us...I felt like that really helped.

What is your assessment of listening in dialogues either from this specific one or from any other dialogue you've had? What is your assessment of or what is the place of listening in dialogues to manage workplace conflict?

I think listening is important in a dialogue because it helps you to clarify if something is not clear. You have to first listen and maybe speak it out and ask is this what you mean or So, it is important to listen. It also helps you to see the other person's point of view.

And for you to be able to listen, there has to be silence, during the dialogue process not all what is your opinion on silence during the dialogue, generally not specifically ok generally from your experience. Like there are situations where there are conflicts at the place of work, people sit down to talk about it but there are people who choose to keep quiet and say nothing. What is your opinion on that, have you experienced it?

I would say silence could also mean contempt, like I don't really care what you are saying so let's just get over and done with it. But it could also mean that I agree with what you are saying say if we are in a class or in a debate... and I have no further questions so. It could also mean that I have settled, I have clarified everything I needed to clarify. So, I'd say it goes both ways, but in my experience most times silence can be very awkward because you usually don't know whether the person has understood you or they don't care or so on and so forth.

What are some factors at the place of work and also from our personality that predispose us to using silence?

For me I'd still go back to the fear of victimisation. So, probably you are aggrieved but you would rather just keep quiet because if you say it then you will probably be the one at fault. As a personality trait, maybe I'd be very careful to not argue or not engage an aggressive or argumentative person in a dialogue. There are people you talk to and you feel like it has to be their way so your opinion would not matter. So in my case I just keep quiet. Or if I feel like saying something would trigger a violent reaction then I just keep quiet.

In your places of work, how are dialogues structured?

At my place of work, I'd say it really depends on who has wronged you or who is aggrieved by whatever you've done. So, mostly, if it is someone, maybe your friend or you interact closely that happens mostly informally where you talk about it. If it is with your boss, from my experience, it mostly depends on how you relate.

If you are very free with your boss, then you probably have frequent meetings to say. Like myself I usually have Monday morning meetings with my boss. So if I feel like something was not well handled, I have an opportunity to air it at that time. but if it ever gets to a point where I can't confront my boss about it then there are Human Resource channels. You can involve the HR to help you solve it.

In your assessment, like make a comparison, ok, assess the efficacy of dialogue in comparison to other mechanisms of conflict management at the workplace.

I think it is quite effective because I would say especially if you have people that are open minded and are objective and keen on actually solving the conflict then it becomes a very effective way. Because then you are able to communicate from a point of respect or from a point of actually solving it and not that just for the sake of talking. I think it is quite effective in comparison to maybe fighting and other conflict management mechanisms

Are dialogues always successful?

I think it works best if there is mutual respect and the intention to actually solve it because for some people that would be an opportunity to escalate the conflict and make it even worse. So, I would say it doesn't always work but it is important to consider the timing, the people you are targeting and the intentions.

How can we make the dialogue process successful? How can we ensure that it is successful?

I think, just encouraging dialogue as an option for people to know that we have the option of talking about whatever it is would be very effective. Because when we look at the challenges we mentioned of dialogue, you will see, I remember saying there is a lot of fear of victimization. So, for people to actually know that it is ok for you to actually speak about anything... I would think that would probably be one of the ways to make it very effective.

Just for a clarification, how would you, what would you do for example if you are the one in charge of dealing with conflicts at your workplace, what would you do to encourage the use of dialogue as one of the workplace conflict management mechanism?

I would constantly talk about people embracing it because I feel like just giving people that option ...just knowing that if you need to talk to someone then you have someone to talk to. And in an organisation, you are probably. Have people who are more approachable than others so maybe for a start, you could have, you could have ambassadors or the sort of people who if you have a conflict they could be the mediators in the process of a conflict. So, I would insist that people knowing that we actually have this as an option of solving conflict

Would you like consider having it as one of the main ways of dealing with conflict at your place of work, like in the organisational... as a policy?

Yes, I would think so because, I would really consider that because... and it could take different forms maybe writing an email or maybe involving the HR in cases where you feel like you need some sort of neutral party. I would definitely think it is one of the ways, one of the ways to be prioritized as conflict management. Some of the other processes could take longer to solve, some of the issues could take really long and waste time and resources of the organisation. But having people encouraged, the encouragement to actually know that if I am having this issue and I don't feel comfortable talking to this person I can talk to someone else. Maybe I can tell you at work, we have... for a specific group of trainees, new employees we have buddies. So, your buddy is not necessarily someone you report to. but someone who has been in the organisation longer, someone who understands the organisation better. We could use that buddy system to air any

grievances especially if you fear going to your boss. So the buddy is like the neutral party. So, if you do not have the courage to go to HR you can talk to your buddy then your buddy will find a way of talking to whoever it is. And then they are specific people who are trusted to respect that process so that it is not a source of gossip also.

Thank you very much.

Appendix IV: Certificate of Fieldwork



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
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REF: CERTIFICATE OF FIELDWORK

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on 22/7/2020 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for fieldwork.

Reg. No: K50/87316/2016
 Name: Leunorah Abuko Ambuku
 Title: An Analysis of Communication Dynamics at Workplace conflicts Management Dialogue

Dr. Elias Muthira
 SUPERVISOR

[Signature]
 SIGNATURE

3/8/2020
 DATE

 ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

 SIGNATURE

 DATE

 DIRECTOR

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Appendix V: Certificate of Corrections



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
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REF: CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTIONS

This is to certify that all corrections proposed at the Board of Examiners meeting held on 30/10/2020 in respect of M.A/PhD. Project/Thesis Proposal defence have been effected to my/our satisfaction and the project can be allowed to proceed for binding.

Reg. No: KJS/87316/2016

Name: Leonorah Abuko Ambahfa

Title: An Analysis of Communication Dynamics at
 Workplace Conflict Management Disputes

Dr Elias Makena
 SUPERVISOR

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16/11/2020
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