



**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**

**SCHOOL OF COMMERCE**

**THE PRACTICE OF CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES: THE CASE OF  
ARTS MEDIA PRODUCTION**

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PRODUCTION**

**PROJECT WORK SUBMITTED TO  
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
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## **Declaration**

I the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, has never been presented in this or any other university, and that all resources and materials used herein, have been duly acknowledged.

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This thesis has been submitted for examination with my approval as a university advisor.

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### ***Abstract***

*It is almost given that conflict is inevitable in the relation between individuals and groups. Workplaces are not exceptions in this regard. Yet, the occurrence of conflict by itself is no more considered a problem as far as it is managed effectively. In line with this, this study explored the practices of conflict management styles at Arts Media Production. In doing so, attempt has been made to examine the different sorts of interpersonal and interdepartmental conflicts that frequently happen in the operation process of the project and how they are managed. As a result, the findings of the study revealed that the major interpersonal and interdepartmental conflicts that occur in the project are the ones that are structural and socio-cognitive driven conflicts. It was further found out that the project managers tend to apply mainly accommodating and avoiding conflict management styles. However, avoiding have turned out to make employees dissatisfied which resulted in a high staff turnover. This in turn affected the overall performance of the project negatively. Therefore, in order to increase the commitment of the staff, the management should consider of applying a better conflict management style.*

*Key Words: conflict, conflict management styles*

## **1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

This chapter deals with the basic information and questions of the overall research. The main area to be discussed is addressed in the background part of the study whereas the main driving factors for the need to conduct this study together with the previous works approached the particular topic are discussed in the problem statement part. Generally, the chapter consists of other fundamental elements of a thesis such as object, significance, scope and limitation among others.

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Needless to argue, the availability and quality of diversified skills remain among the major factors determining the fate of a certain project in achieving or failing to achieve its goal. Yet, the availability of quality and diversified skills by itself does not guarantee the success of the project or business given the possibility of the 'diversity' to turn out to be a means of conflict, which definitely hinders the performance of the project.

The fact that those diversified skills are from individuals and groups with different personalities, beliefs, interests etc that may fail to coincide makes conflict an inevitable phenomenon (Salleh & Adulpakdee, 2012). The inevitability of conflict in turn makes the need for conflict management, a necessity for a business that aspires to exploit the diversified skills it owns and perform well in its project (Olu & Abosede, 2003).

Hence, the need for developing effective conflict resolution mechanisms remain crucial given that the practice of effective conflict management encourages the development of values, attitudes and knowledge within the diversity (Janet, 2015; Shahmohammadi, 2014).

Apart from the fact that conflict is something inevitable in a given project (among individuals, teams, contractual relationships etc), the nature of the project in which such diversified groups get involved may magnify the frequency of conflict happening. The Television and film production sector- one of the top lucrative businesses of the day- remains among those areas in which conflict can easily happen given the complexity and subjectivity of the sector together with the need for involvement of various and multi-functional teams. It is safe to assume that projects and businesses in the particular industry face conflicts at a greater extent at different levels given the complex nature of the industry particularly when it comes to its high

vulnerability to subjectivity. This in turn makes the sector an appropriate area to explore conflicts and how they are managed as well the impact of the practices on the performance of projects.

Thus, this study strives to examine different approaches toward conflict and explore those conflict management approaches practiced within the local TV production business and try to get a glimpse into the reflections of the dynamics of conflict management styles practiced within the emerging Ethiopian private television business by taking the case of ARTS's launching project as a frame of reference.

### **1.1.1. Study Area**

ARTS Media Production is the corporate broadcaster of ARTS (African Renaissance Television Services Share Company) founded in 2015 by a total of 25 renowned Ethiopians including athletes, scientists, economists, corporate owners, and media moguls among others (ARTS, 2017). It is located in Addis Ababa, Bole Sub-city, Woreda 2.

According to the official website of the company, the station aspires to uncovering African business, policy, and cultural issues and present high quality content to the international audience in general and the one in Africa in particular in line with the concept of Pan-Africanism.

### **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

Research works such as Wanyonyi (2015) go to the extent of making conclusions that the negative impact of lack of conflict management has on organizational commitment, leads to a total failure to achieve organizational goals.

Yet, there is a common sense of associating the existence of conflict to negative impacts on the overall performance of a project. On the other hand, researchers such as Reece & Rhonda (2005) as well as Sadowski (1998), argued that it has a great potential to turn out to be constructive if managed effectively as it becomes quite destructive if not managed otherwise.

In addition, projects in Television and Film industry [as briefly indicated in the background part of this proposal] have their unique characteristics when it comes to the possibilities of conflict happening at different levels. This follows with an assumption that those unique characteristics of the industry [like subjectivity and insufficient legal frameworks put into effect particularly in

the context of the local industry] will have additional and unique conflict potentials that need unique approaches of managing. In doing so, what matters is not only whether the business has a package of managing conflicts but also the particular conflict management styles it mainly goes for. That is why Bazezew & Neka (2017), consider the skill of managing conflict as one of the fundamentals of leadership effectiveness.

In this regard, ARTS has witnessed a visible delay from the several deadlines it announced that it had been supposed to accomplish in launching its project. In the meantime, it witnessed a high turnover (Tadesse, 2017). The high turnover by itself implies conflicts that needs effective management. This has initiated this study to explore the conflict management approaches the company has been applying. In doing so, this study does not only consider the inevitability of conflict and fully accept the crucial role of conflict management in the performance of a project but also adopts the assertion that the existence of conflict by itself does not imply negative effect on performance as it can also serve a positive outcome in the overall performance of a project/business depending on whether it is managed effectively. In fact, considering such assertions will benefit this study to examine factors influencing the conflict management practices as well as to thoroughly understand the impact of those practices in the overall performance of the project.

Despite this, however, the empirical works dealing with conflict management practices in this dynamic sector is hardly found to the best of the researcher's knowledge. Hence, this study aims at contributing its part to the attempt of filling the gap.

### **1.3. Basic Research Questions**

So as to achieve the aforementioned objectives, the study will aspire to address the following basic questions:

1. Which kinds of conflicts commonly arise among individuals and departments involved in the project?
2. What are the dominant conflict management styles that are frequently practiced by the company?
3. What impacts did the conflict management styles practiced had on the overall performance of the project?

#### **1.4. Objective of the Study**

This part of the study has been treated in two different sub-categories; general and specific objectives.

##### **General Objective**

The general objective of the study is meant to explore the conflict management styles practiced at the launching project of Arts Media Production S.C.

##### **Specific Objectives**

The study has the following three specific objectives:

1. To identify the major interpersonal and interdepartmental conflicts in the project
2. To explore the dominant conflict management styles practiced by project managers
3. To find out the impact of the conflict management style practiced in the overall performance/ realization of the project.

#### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

This study informed the dominant conflict management styles at ARTS Media Production. It helps in understanding conflict management styles and its impact on the overall performance of the project. It helps in the planning and implementation of future intervention programs to be based on empirical evidence thereby enhancing the likelihood of better results.

Moreover, the study is supposed to play its part in assisting similar parties in the industry to come across conflict management styles that they may not have practiced before together with the pros and cons of each and every conflict management style to be examined in this study.

Also, the findings of the study will be helpful for the selected institution to go for the best conflict management styles whenever it works on other similar projects. Last but not least, it will give an insight for researchers who conduct an in-depth research on the subject.

#### **1.6. Scope of the Study**

The study aspired to look at the launching project of ARTS Media Production INC, which is still ongoing and has been through three different managements/ senior management including CEOs/ within two years. This station is selected not only because it is a newly established TV station but also it is a share company, which in turn implies availability of multifaceted conflicts

beyond the industry average. This study is, therefore, intended to explore conflict management styles practiced in the station particularly in the launching project. The overall study attempted to examine conflict management styles, factors that influence conflict management, as well as the impact of those conflict management styles in the overall performance of the project. In doing so, the conflicts that do arise among individual experts, between individual experts and management, management and board, as well as internal staff with external stakeholders such as talk-show owners has been covered.

### **1.7. Limitation of the Study**

Despite its aspiration to give a glimpse about how conflict management is approached within the local TV industry, the study is limited to a single project of a TV station. Similarly, the selected TV station is a share company. This limits the findings of the study not to necessarily show the practices at PLCs and state owned TV stations given the impact of the ownership nature of the business when it comes to conflicts and conflict management styles to some extent.

### **1.8. Organization of the Study**

The study consists of a total of five chapters. The first chapter attempted to give a brief glimpse about the 'what' and 'why' of the whole study whereas the second chapter strived to review the available literature including the evolution of the conceptual framework on conflict management styles. Dealing with methodology part, the third chapter aspired to answer the how of the study whereas chapter four presents and analyzes data. Finally, summary and conclusion together with the possible recommendations is dealt in chapter five of the study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter is all about giving a glimpse about the area in which this study is interested in-conflict management styles. It tries to touch upon conflicting conceptual frameworks and point of views on related topics and the standards different researchers considered to call a certain phenomenon a conflict, attitudes towards conflict during different periods and Prons and Cons of different styles of conflict management. In this chapter, attempt has been made not only to summarize related works but also to see the contradictions and soundness of those works in line with the purpose of this particular study. The information obtained from the literature was also used to serve as a guide in designing the questionnaire for the research project.

#### 2.2. Perspectives in Understanding Conflict

In its attempt to trace the first conflict that happened in the history of mankind, Ahamefula (2014), discussed two views; a claim that assumes the phenomenon of conflict among human beings traces back to the appearance of human-being itself (Keeley, 1996) and a creationist view that claims the first conflict registered in the history of mankind is the conflict between the sons of the first man lived on earth – Cain and Abel (Gen 4 vs 8). Similarly, Jaffee (2001) that discussed organizational conflict claimed that the history of conflict at workplaces started during the industrial revolution while workers rebelled against concerns of loss of autonomy and freedom from their employers.

However, the need to reach consensus on the issue of what phenomena is considered to be ‘conflict’ remains crucial even to discuss ‘when was conflict first witnessed first in history?’ Hence, the way a researcher defines and understands the concept of conflict matters most given that the way one understands conflict and the phenomena s/he considers as conflict influences not only the attempt to trace the history of conflict but also the impact of conflict in performance as well as the conflict management styles s/he believes is the best and the worst.

While reviewing the available literature on what phenomena is considered to be a conflict and the line defining conflict, we come across two extremes. The one extreme seems to judge a

phenomenon to be conflict should witness an antagonistic relation whereas the other extreme seems to consider a phenomenon in which there is a mere difference in opinions and feelings as a typical conflict.

### **2.2.1. Typical Antagonistic Relation Vs Mere Differences**

It is safe to conclude that the available literature on the concept of conflict varies from considering mere differences in ideas and psychological makeup to a typical antagonistic relations between two parties that ends up with serious damages on one or both parties.

In dealing with the first historical phenomenon of conflict witnessed in the human history, the case Ahamefula (2014), mentioned was a killing story in the relation between the sons of Adam; Cain and Abel. According to this story, the elder son became jealous against the blessings of his younger brother and that jealousy went to the extent of killing his brother (Gen 4 vs 8). This is used as a historical beginning of 'conflict'. However, we are not guaranteed whether the first man Adam and his wife Eve were free from conflict easier than the aforementioned one and conflicts that got managed effectively. Just to mention, we can figure out conflicts between Adam and His wife Eve over an issue of testing a leaf (drug) God told them not to eat if we consider the concept of conflict as a difference in ideas parties hold about a subject. Similarly, we can come across a conclusion that conflicts are quite natural and may not necessarily be managed if we consider conflict as a mere difference in ideas and sorts of things, which tend to limit the concept of conflict to behavioral manifestations.

As a way out from such a dilemma and as a sort of standard for a phenomenon to be considered as 'conflict', Bercovich (1997), takes three-dimensional conception of conflict; the situation in which parties (individuals, groups or organizations) come to possess incompatible goals, their structure of interaction and the nature of their goals. It suggests the need to consider emotional (e.g. distrust) and cognitive (e.g. stereotyping) orientations that accompany a conflict situation as well as the range of action undertaken by any party in a situation of conflict. Such approaches of standardizing do sound meaningful to deal with be it the history of conflict, its potential sources, as well as how it should be managed.

### **2.3. Attitude towards Conflicts and their impact on the success of a Project/Organization**

Like that of the way of defining conflict and setting a standard for a phenomenon to be called a conflict, there have been extremes in attitudes towards conflict in the overall working process. In fact, the attitudes towards/views on/ conflict have gone through evolution. It sounds logical to categorize it into three phases: the perspective before the 1960s, the contemporary perspective, and the recent/interactionist/.

#### **2.3.1. The Pre- early 20<sup>th</sup> Perspective on Conflict**

This particular perspective on the concept of conflict is considered to cover the period until the beginning of the early 1960s. Under this perspective, conflict is usually (if not always) used interchangeably with tension and violence related concepts (Hocker and Wilmot, 1985). Verma (1998), attributed this particular perspective, which necessarily associates conflict with violence and irrationality, to the influences of industrial institutions referring the aggressive confrontations of workers and management in industrial institutions that led for the establishment of labor unions in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this particular perspective, conflict is viewed as abnormal and pathological. Due to such a trend of associating conflict with destructive concepts like violence scholars particularly in the 1960s used to claim that conflict should be avoided at any cost if an organization needs to successes (Cunha, 2001).

#### **2.3.2. The Contemporary Perspective on Conflict**

This perspective, which was introduced, started viewing conflict as natural and inevitable, counter argues the need for attempts to eliminate conflict. This approach recognizes that conflicts have positive outcomes if managed effectively. Ramsay (2001), for instance assumed not only conflict is natural but also it can be good when it comes to performing well in projects. Yet, the level of conflict matters in this perspective in terms of the assumption about the positivity and negativity of the outcome.

#### **2.3.3. The Interactionist Perspective on Conflict**

This perspective, which is considered to be introduced since the early 1990s, sees conflict in an almost exact opposite dimension to that of the first perspective. It contends that conflict is a necessity for an organization to introduce change and innovation. Bercovich (1997) can be taken as a typical example for this category. Acknowledging the fact that conflict may be

uncomfortable, Bercovich (1997), further argues that conflict is a stimulant for a change and innovation an organization aspires to achieve.

Generally speaking, two major commonly shared points can be extracted from the above discussed perspectives; the fact that conflict can in no way be non-existent in doing business and there is a need to be able to manage conflicts effectively for a positive performance in businesses.

#### **2.4. Basic Theories of Conflict**

While reviewing the way conflict has been defined by different researchers, we usually come across the three theories of understanding conflict: functional, situational, and interactive.

The functionalist theory of conflict, which believes that conflict serves a social function, is interested in addressing the question ‘Why is there a conflict? What purpose does it serve? The situationalist theory, which views conflict as an expression under certain situations, on its part is interested in addressing the question of ‘when do we have conflicts? It is aimed at figuring out ‘under what circumstances does conflict occur?’ The third theory of conflict - interactions theory of conflict – on the other hand goes for addressing the question of ‘how does conflict occur?’ so as to be able to understand conflict well. This theory is actually interested in identifying the methods and mechanisms that express conflict well.

#### **2.5. Major Sources of Conflict at Workplaces**

Conflicts at workplaces have indeed variety of forms and can be caused by diversified causes. Among the theorists who tried to summarize the potential sources of conflicts at workplaces, discussing the following theorists and their summaries seem to give a common understanding on sources of conflict.

Jaffee (2008), DeDreu & Gelfand (2008), and Robin (2007), are worth mentioning when it comes to discussing sources of conflict at work places. Yet, this study prefers to summarize the sources into three; given that the above mentioned and others use different terminologies in discussing the topic. In doing so, the following three sources of conflict are believed to summarize the lists made by the above theorists.

### **2.5.1. Scarcity of Resources**

Scarce resources and the competition to exploit them are considered by many researchers to be one of the major sources of conflict in organizations. De Dreu and Gelfand (2008), categorize such conflicts in three different categories: conflicts at individual level, group level and organizational level. These sorts of conflicts are believed to put people to continually struggle with the choice of either acting selfishly or incorporating the interests of other parties to cooperate and be able to achieve their commonly shared organizational goals and objectives. In such cases, De Dreu & Gelfand (2008), strongly suggests the need for understanding resource conflicts and be able to practice interdependence theory, a theory that assumes that participants within any social system depend on each other to attain positive outcomes and avoid negative outcomes.

### **2.5.2. Structural Conflicts**

These sources of conflicts are mostly to do with division of labor, which in turn tends to undermine unity and stimulate conflict (Jaffee, 2008). These kinds of source of conflicts are mostly addressed as 'role conflicts' and they usually occur due to a gap in clearly defining the exact responsibilities of each and every unit and setting the clear boundaries of responsibilities within an organization and the individuals within the units, which sets a stage for interpersonal friction between the employees involved (Fisher, 2000). The problem with such sources of conflicts is that there is a high tendency to be personalized conflicts that turn out to be dangerous unless properly addressed by the staff-line personnel.

### **2.5.3. Socio Cognitive Conflicts**

These sources of conflicts are associated with people seeking social validation of their beliefs and the desires of individual employees to hold consensually shared and socially validated opinions and beliefs. Hodson (2001), revealed that workers across the globe struggle to achieve dignity and to gain some measure of meaning and self-fulfillment at work, which in turn leads them to strive for a positive self-view and try to convince both themselves and others that they are worthwhile individuals through self-enhancement strategies. Similarly, people either intentionally or inadvertently hurt the self-view of others in their efforts to maintain a positive self-view (DeDreu & Gelfand, 2008).

## **2.6. Common Styles of Conflict Management**

As repeatedly mentioned in the above discussions, conflicts are expected in different forms at any projects in which different individuals with different roles are involved. Hence, the need for being able to effectively manage the potential conflicts is necessarily be there as far as the project should perform well. Similarly, the particular approach applied to manage a given conflict may result in a creative or destructive outcome. From the perspective of the interests of the conflicting parties, Fisher (2000) classifies conflict management styles into three: win-lose, lose-lose, and win-win. However, others list more styles without missing the points dealt with this study. The frequently discussed and commonly shared styles of conflict management are competing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and integrating.

### **2.6.1. Integrating**

This conflict management style is mainly about enabling conflicting parties to get calm and work on the basics of their disagreements. It is also called ‘collaborating’ in some literature and ‘confronting’ in some others.

It is considered as less combative (Ntiyakunze, 2011) as it focuses on solving a problem mainly in a win-win approach. Even though the claims of one of the parties may be modified or totally dismissed after the discussion, the possibility of the conflict to turn out to be destructive remains low given that the motives of both parties is to reach at a more rational solution instead of dominating.

### **2.6.2. Compromising**

It is simply a give and take approach which tends to satisfy both parties at least to some extent. It is named ‘negotiating’ in some literature. According to Ntiyakunze (2011), compromising conflict management style usually implies that the conflicting parties negotiating feel that their claim might not necessarily be right.

### **2.6.3. Accommodating**

It is a conflict management style practiced mainly with an aim of slowing down aggressive emotions that occur in the conflict process. Even some researchers address it as ‘smoothing’. This particular conflict management style mainly tends to emphasize on commonly shared points and de-emphasize the differences. According to Kerzner (2003), accommodating style may not

necessarily resolve a given conflict. Yet, it attracts conflicting parties to remain at the bargaining table instead of keeping on increasing the conflict. It is widely agreed that under the accommodating style, one of the parties may need to sacrifice own goals and views so as to satisfy the counterpart. Accordingly, we can categorize it under a win-lose category when it comes to impact.

#### **2.6.4. Avoiding**

Zikmann in Fenn and Gameson (1992), address this particular conflict management style as a passive response towards conflict. In some literature, it is called ‘denial’ whereas it is called ‘withdrawing’ on some others. The commonly shared idea regarding this particular conflict management style is that it is only a temporary solution towards addressing a given conflict. As a result, the conflict do most probably reappear unless the one in charge of addressing them proceeds to apply another more sounding style the next time. Kerzner (2003), further notes that people usually view this style as ‘cowardice’.

#### **2.6.5. Competing/ Forcing**

It is also called ‘assertive’ in some literature and it is mostly about trying to maintain resistance to the actions of the other party and pursuing one’s concern despite the resistance of the other party. It is all about pushing one side at the expense of another.

### **2.7. Practicing the Conflict Management Style Suiting a Situation**

It sounds rationale to conclude that all conflict management styles can effectively serve their purpose as far as they are used in the right time and situation. Hence, there is no such a thing called the ‘best’ conflict management practice thing given that a given style can be the best in a certain situation whereas it can be worst in another situation. The issue that matters is that which style suits under which condition. In saying so, this study recognizes the contingency approach.

For instance, the integrating style usually tends to be preferable approach to conflict management, but it is the most appropriate approach only under certain conditions. It is usually considered to appear when the parties do not have perfectly opposing interests and when they have enough trust and openness to share information. Similarly, avoiding can be considered the best when the issue is trivial or as a temporary tactic to cool down heated disputes. However, conflict avoidance should not be a long-term solution because it increases the other party’s

frustration. The competing style to conflict is usually in appropriate because organizational relationships rarely involve compete opposition. However, competing may be necessary when a party is sure that he/she is correct and the dispute requires a quick solution. It may also be necessary when the other party would take advantage of more cooperative strategies.

The accommodating style is appropriate when the other party has substantially more power or the issue is not as important to you as to the other party. On the other hand, accommodating behaviors may give the other side unrealistically high expectations, there by motivating them to seek more from you in the future. In the long run, accommodating may produce more conflict rather than resolve it. The compromising style on the other hand may be best when there is little hope for mutual gain through problem solving, both parties have equal, and both are under time pressure to settle their difference. However, compromise rarely produces the best solution because the parties overlook options for mutual gain (Sekaran, 1989). All these are meant to underline the fact that a certain style is considered best, depending on a situation under which the conflict is witnessed.

### **3. CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter looked into the methods and procedures employed in the overall attempt to address the basic research questions listed in chapter one of the study. This chapter consists of research design and strategy, population size, sampling techniques, methods of data collection and analysis, validity and reliability as well as ethical consideration.

#### **3.2. Research Design and Strategy**

Basically, the study has applied a descriptive research design considering the fact that descriptive research design allows the study to explain different phenomena. A survey research is used in the process of exploring conflicts and their managing practices in the selected project- ARTS's launching project.

#### **3.3. Research Approach**

So as to serve the purpose of the study and address the basic research questions, the study has managed to use mixed approach. A mixed method approach is one in which the researcher collects, analyzes, and “mix” or “integrates” both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study to understand a research problem. Mixed approach is used because both quantitative and qualitative data, together, provide a better understanding of the study problem than either type by itself.

#### **3.4. Population Size and Sampling Technique**

The target population of the study consisted of individual experts, department heads and management members, as well as shareholders/board members at the TV station. Since its establishment, a total of 78 employees have joined (given the high turnover, those already quitted were considered) the station.

In the attempt to enable the sample size to be able to draw an implication toward the total population, the study used a stratified sampling design.

Population (N) =78 Sample size (n) =39 among which 3 did not respond.

Sample frame= Total no of employees in each dept x n

Total no of population (N)

### **3.4. Methods of Data Collection**

The study used both primary and secondary data. These data were gathered using interview, questionnaire, and document analysis tools. The primary data were gathered through semi-structured questionnaire; open-ended and in-depth interview data collection tools from the subjects whereas secondary data and document analysis were gathered from company profile, editorial guideline, and human resource guideline.

### **3.5. Methods of Data Analysis**

The study applied descriptive analysis to interpret and analyze the data gathered. Percentage, tabulation, charts, other relevant methods are used in the attempt to see how frequently a response occurred.

### **3.6. Validity and Reliability**

In order to make sure whether the instruments used to measure the accuracy and meaningfulness of inferences, this researcher had consulted both an education experts and a media professional. As per the comments given from those professionals, the researcher made some amendments towards the instruments and procedures of data gathering process. In addition, the information gathered through the questionnaire and the interview was crosschecked with document analysis so as to ensure authenticity and accuracy.

In the attempt to assure consistency and determine whether test items are answered and if individual scores remain similar. On the other hand, the researcher went for a test and retest methods. In doing so, a sample questionnaire forms were administered twice within two weeks interval. The scores were found to be identical to the one used in the actual study.

### **3.7. Ethical Consideration**

In light of respecting ethical considerations, this researcher has gone through all the widely accepted principles of conducting an honest research in an honest process. In doing so, all the literatures consulted in this study are well acknowledged and appropriately cited. In the case of the original data gathered, the researcher has made sure that all the information sources both in the case of the questionnaire and the interview were well informed about the purpose of the information gathered. Hence, they have given the information with full consent and the right belief about the significance of the study. The participants were informed that their participation in the study was completely voluntary with the ability to discontinue their participation at any

time with no questions asked, and without consequences to their current or future life. Respondents were also informed that in the event of any discomfort caused due to their participation; they could contact the researcher (data collector) for further assistance.

Respondents were also informed that confidentiality would be maintained to the extent that this research can provide. No individual identifying data was collected or will be included in any papers or publications that result from this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. DATA PRESENTATION, INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the presentation, interpretation and analysis of data gathered through questionnaire, interview and document analysis tools.

#### 4.2. Data Presentation

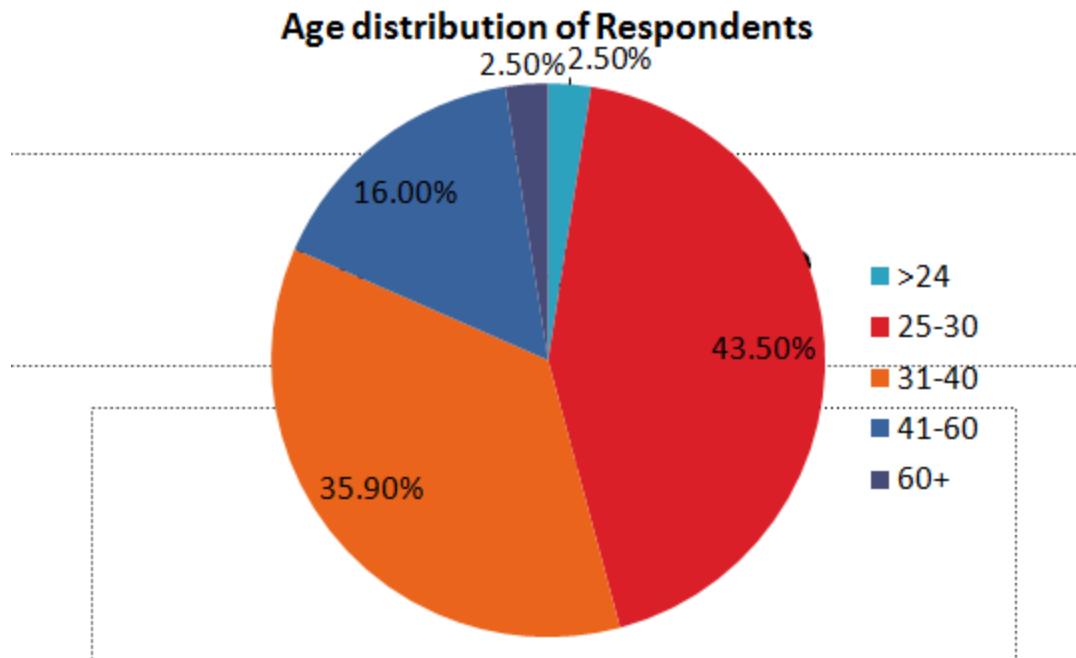
The study targeted a total population of 78 individuals involved in the project at different capacities. Among this population, the study considered a total sample size of 50% of the total population (39 people involved in the project). Given the project was started two years ago and still going on with a high turnover of employees, the study was convinced to consider people who were part of the project but resigned from the company after a time. In doing so, 11 (28.2% of the total sample size) people who had participated in the project and resigned then were parts of the total of 39 samples. In terms of roles in the project, the sample size consisted of 26 experts, 7 department heads, and 6 high level managers. Among the total number of 39 samples, three did not respond. Hence, the responses discussed were that of the 36 respondents.

#### 4.3. Demographic Information

In the attempt to have a general glimpse about the background of the respondents, the study had sought respondents to feed information about their age group, gender, previous experience in a related project, and their capacity at the project and how long they stayed at the project. Here is the overall demographic information witnessed in the replies.

##### 4.3.1 Age and Gender

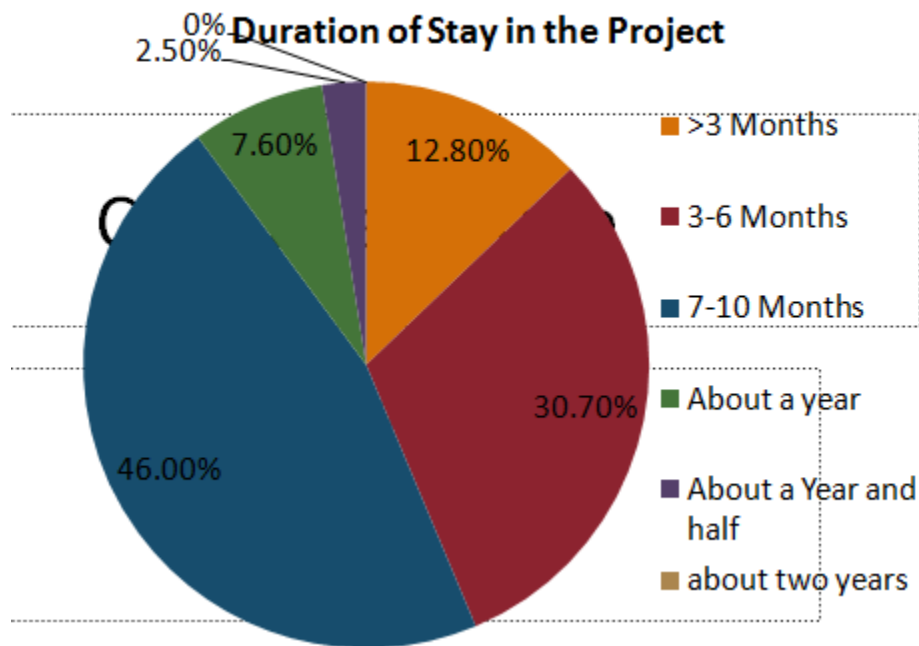
Regarding gender distribution, 41.6% of those 36 staff who filled the questionnaire form were female respondents whereas the rest 58.4% of them were male respondents. As for the age group, it is presented below in a pie chart.



**Figure 1: Age distribution**

The dominant age group among the respondents remains the one ranging from 25-30 followed by the age group of 31-40. The age group from 25-40 makes up 79.4% of the staff. This in turn implies two things; an opportunity and a threat in terms of conflict management practices. As an opportunity, the staff is comprised of a younger generation that is assumed to be flexible enough in terms of fitting to the conflict management styles the project managers apply (no matter what kinds of conflict management styles managers go for). On the other hand, the age group implies being less fortunate in the maturity and wisdom an elderly age usually offers. This can make conflicts more frequent to happen so that more burden goes to managers in charge of managing conflicts effectively. Fortunately, the one slice of the age group ranging from 41-60 (16% of the total population sample) is almost entirely dominated by those members of high level management according to the background information gathered through the questionnaire and interview. The fact that the management members are seniors yet not too far from the lower level experts and department heads, the potential misunderstanding that emanates from generation gap is minimized in the case of this particular project. This remains among the fertile grounds to make conflict management more effective.

### 4.3.2. Duration of time respondents stayed in the project



**Figure2: Duration of stay**

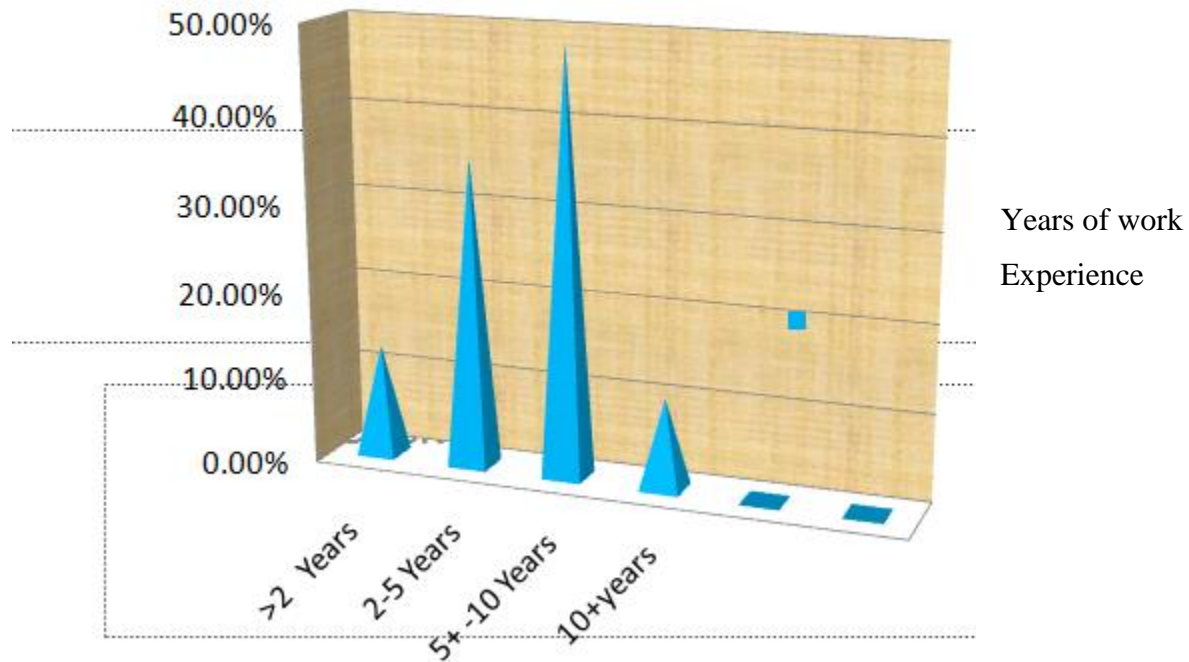
One can easily understand from the chart drawn above that the project has remained a victim of high staff turnover. The duration that the majority of the respondents stayed with the project is between 7-10 months followed by 3-6 months, which makes up the duration of stay for the total of 70.7% of the respondents less than a year. Bearing in mind that the project had been hiring human capital since the last two years, none of the staff among the sample claimed 'two years'. This clearly shows the high turnover of staff which in turn implies a poor conflict management practice among some other reasons.

### 4.3.3. Department Affiliations and Roles

The total 36 respondents who successfully filled and submitted the questionnaire form were comprised of 13 producers (it includes script writers, directors, and line producers), 4 hosts, 11 news persons (both reporters and news editors), 3 camerapersons, 2 admin staff and 2 video editors and a graphic designer.

#### 4.3.4. Work experience within the Industry

##### Work experience within the industry



**Figure 3: Work Experience**

As can be seen from the chart above, the majority of the respondents (more than 70%) have been in the industry for more than 3 years among which the work experience of about 48% of exceed 5 years ranging up to ten years. This can be considered as an advantage when compared to the available labor market in the local media industry. In the attempt to understand the quality of the labor market in the industry, this study found out that the market is short of skilled and experienced labor. In this regard, the practical experience witnessed in the case of ARTS as revealed in the chart above remains a great opportunity for the success of the project.

#### 4.4. Trends in Understanding Conflict

In order to grasp how people in the selected project understand ‘conflict’ in line with the different perspectives discussed under the related literature review part of this study, the study considered the responses respondents gave to two questions in particular; the first question of

Part B of the questionnaire and the first question of the interview. The questions are similar except the wording and expressions used. The question in the questionnaire is the one that reads *‘What sorts of conflicts do frequently occur during the operation of your launching project? Please mention at least three major sources of conflicts.’* Whereas the question in the interview reads *‘What conflicts frequently happen at your organization during your launching ongoing project?’* These questions were crafted in the aim of both exploring the major conflicts occurring among the people involved in the project at different levels and examining how the respondents understand the concept of conflict. Going through the responses given to the aforementioned question, this study draws a conclusion that the dominant part of those people working at the project do hold a perspective of understanding the concept of conflict that is more or less closer to the widely accepted and contemporary thought (conflict is natural and can serve a positive purpose if managed effectively) followed by the interactionist perspective (conflict is necessary for change and innovation to happen within an organization).

#### **4.5. Major Conflicts Experienced**

An indirect way of gathering information was applied by this study while gathering the data about socio-cognitive and structural sources of conflicts in the cases of all the information gathered through the questionnaire, interview and document analysis. In the case of the questionnaire and interview for instance, the researcher allowed the respondents to simply list out different sources and the lists were distributed and categorized under the two by the researcher. This was done for the sake of not using technical terminologies while gathering data. In fact, the resource driven conflicts are more of self-defining so that there was no need to gather the needed data in an explained way unlike the way data gathered about socio-cognitive and structural conflicts.

Accordingly, the information gathered both through the questionnaire and the interview as well as from the document analysis revealed that structural conflicts included issues of lack of a clear guide defining a role of an individual and that of a department and lack of well-defined criteria to fix salary as well as lack of criteria for appraisal. Similarly, socio-cognitive conflicts included but not limited to issues related to standard of ideas (the aim of the project is to produce and sell ideas given it is a media production company). Hence, the lack of a well-defined standard to measure the quality of a product an individual and department is supposed to deliver was the

center of discussion under socio-cognitive conflicts. The issue of ego was also treated under this category.

Source of Conflict	Frequency/no of time an item was mentioned throughout the sample	Percentage (%)	Rank					
			1 <sup>st</sup>	%	2 <sup>nd</sup>	%	3 <sup>rd</sup>	%
Scarcity of Resource	21	58.3%	.....	.....	..	.....	36	100%
Socio-cognitive problems	36	100%	9	25%	26	72.2%	...	.....
Structural sources	36	100%	27	75%	10	27.8%	....	.....

**Table 1: Major sources of interpersonal, intra personal, interdepartmental, and stakeholders’ conflicts**

As shown in the table above, structural conflict source followed by socio-cognitive conflict sources were considered by respondents to be the dominant source responsible for the majority of interpersonal and interdepartmental conflicts happening among the human resource taking part in the project. Both of the aforementioned sources of conflicts were marked by all of the respondents to be sources of conflict at the selected project with a rank of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> respectively (75% and 25%).

#### **4.6. Dominant Conflict Management Styles under Practice**

In order to grasp the dominant kinds of conflict management styles practiced by managers at the project a direct question was forwarded to the managers in the interview session whereas an indirect question aimed at tracing the conflict management styles practiced at the project was left for respondents in the questionnaire form. In doing so, respondents were given the leverage to choose more than one as far as they believe it shows their scenario. Below are the summary of the responses.

<b>Choice</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>I have the leverage to have a sit down with my counterpart and reach an amicable solution</b>	6	16.7%
<b>I usually fill misunderstood by others</b>	29	80.5%
<b>Others take advantage of my attempt to remain rationale</b>	34	94.4%
<b>Individuals in charge of addressing my requests are usually non-responsive</b>	15	41.7%
<b>I have no say at all. I am forced to simply accept a view/decision by others</b>	5	13.9%
<b>I do not see the point of insisting my supervisors to address my questions</b>	27	75%

**Table 2: Evaluation of their conflict resolution practices**

The data gathered shows that three choices were frequently marked by the majority of respondents; I usually fill misunderstood by others, others take advantage of my attempt to remain rationale, and I do not see the point of insisting my supervisors to address my questions. On the other hand, the choice that have to do with being able to reach an amicable solution with a counterpart and having no say at all were reported to be the less frequent ones.

Similarly, the information gathered through the questionnaire that asked respondents to share their observation and experience toward how their supervisors and other higher officials approach a conflict happening in the working process at the project are summarized and presented in the following table.

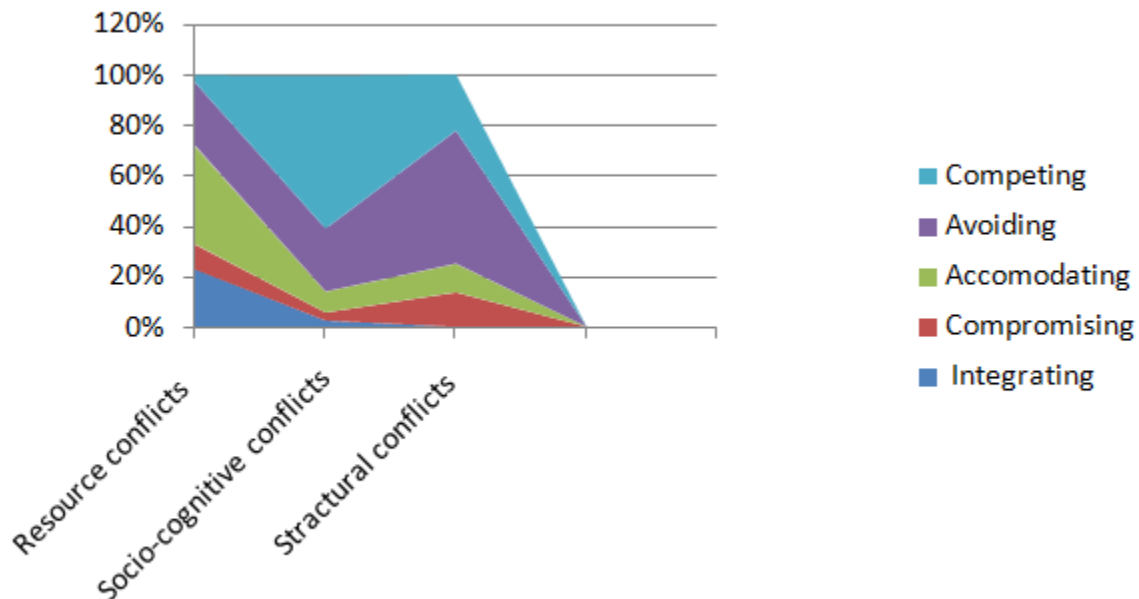
<b>Choice</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>They listen to both parties and aspire to come up with an amicable solution in favor of both conflicting parties</b>	5	13.9%
<b>They simply pretend to be fair but they make judgments in favor of just a party</b>	32	88.9%
<b>They try to show concern just because they want conflicts to smooth but do not genuinely handle the case</b>	28	77.7%
<b>They simply impose a decision on the one part without enough consideration to the other</b>	8	22.2%
<b>They usually remain deafened towards conflicts by acting as if they are not informed or by overlooking conflicts</b>	11	35.5%
<b>Other/s</b>	.....	

**Table 3: Observation and experience of practices of conflict management styles by managers**

The overall implication of the last two tables is that the conflict management scenario at the particular project is more of accommodating/smoothing and avoiding which in turn results in dissatisfaction to the staff. The findings of the interview, which dealt with responses of managers and department heads on the other hand, revealed that officials at different level in charge of handling interpersonal and interdepartmental conflicts usually go for accommodating/smoothing conflicts. They claimed that they need more time to put strategies of managing different conflicts permanently in a win-win approach.

#### 4.7 Conflict Management Styles under Different Scenarios

The finding regarding the sources of conflicts and the styles of conflict management applied under the cases of different sources is presented in the chart below.



**Figure 4: The practice of conflict management styles under different situations**

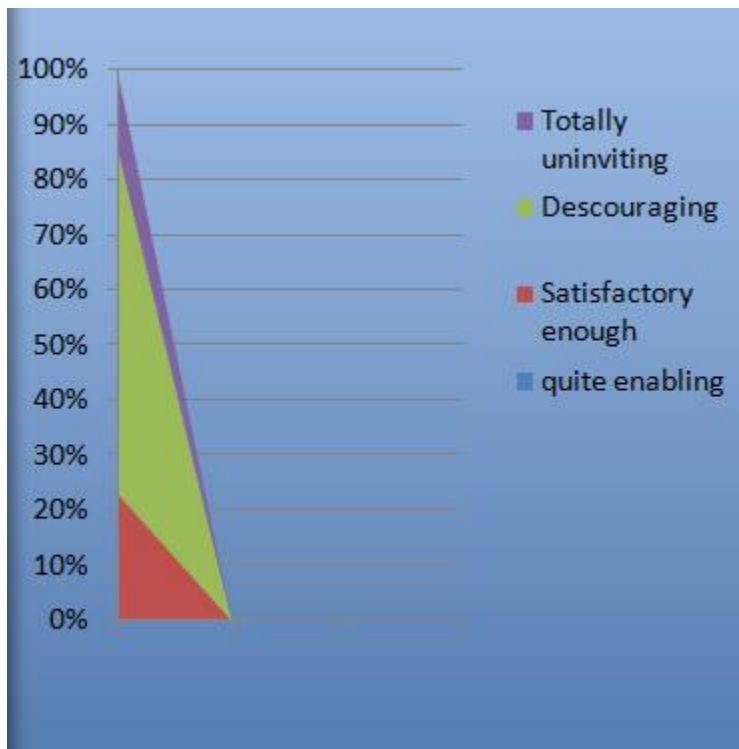
The chart above clearly shows that the dominant conflict management styles practiced within the selected project varies from one conflict source to the other. In the case of resource driven conflicts, the dominant style was found to be accommodating followed by integrating. On the other hand, when it comes to socio-cognitive driven conflicts and role /structural/ conflicts, competing and avoiding have remained the dominant conflict management styles practiced. This shows that resource related conflicts are resolved well when compared to those socio-cognitive and structural conflicts.

The information gathered through the interview on the other hand revealed that the major conflict management styles under practice by the project managers in various situations was found to be accommodating followed by avoiding. Out of this information, conclusion can be

driven that there is a lot to be done by the management of the project conflicts in terms of addressing conflicts driven from socio-cognitive and structural sources.

#### **4.8. The Impact of Conflict Management Practices on the Overall Performance of the Project**

In the attempt to see what impact the conflict management styles under practice have been having on the performance of the project, this study considered the responses of the question in the questionnaire that asked for their evaluation of the impact on performance. In addition it considered the direct question forwarded to managers and department heads in the interview session. In addition to that it considered a Human Resource file dealing with turnover report. The following chart presents the information gathered from the questionnaire and interview together.



**Figure 5: The impact of the practice of conflict management styles on performance of the project**

It can be understood from the above chart showing the summary of the respondents' evaluation of the effectiveness of the conflict management styles under practice when it comes to the

performance of the overall project, the styles being practiced by the project managers affected the project negatively. The responses showed that none of the respondents believed that it is very enabling whereas 13.9% of them believed the conflict management practice remains the worst. Even the ones who thought it is more or less okay (satisfactory enough) account only 23% of the total whereas the majority held a belief that there needs a lot to be done in terms of improving practices of conflict management. These respondents that account for about 62% of the whole sample evaluated the practice as discouraging. In fact, this finding is supported by the finding from the document analysis part. The analysis of the Human resource file that has to do with the contract signing and resignation form revealed a huge turnover rate.

## **5. CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. Summary of Major Findings**

After analyzing and interpreting the data gathered through the selected tools (questionnaire, interview and document analysis), this study has come across the following findings:

- In terms of demographic summary, the project was found to be favored as it was comprised of professionals with a relatively experienced people whereas the age distribution revealed that the majority of the experts involved in the project ranged from 25-40. The gender composition was more or less fairly distributed. The duration of time respondents stayed at the project on the other hand was found to be less than 10 months.
- Structural conflict sources and socio-cognitive conflict sources were identified to be the main responsible causes for the major interpersonal and interdepartmental conflicts occurring during the operation of the project.
- The majority of the respondents reported that their supervisors and managers at higher level usually tend to apply accommodating and avoiding followed by competing conflict management styles when it comes to socio-cognitive and structural conflicts. When it comes to resource driven conflicts on the other hand, integrating and compromising conflict management styles were reported to be dominant during the operation of the project. Generally speaking, accommodating and avoiding conflict management styles remain the dominant styles being practiced at the selected project.
- More than 60% of the respondent in the questionnaire noted that the conflict management styles under practice at the given project negatively affected the performance of the project.

### **5.2. Conclusion**

Based on the findings revealed above, the following conclusions are drawn:

Even though the project was found to be advantageous in terms of having relatively well experienced professionals, the short average duration respondents reported clearly show that there is a high turnover of staff, which in turn implies poor conflict management practice at the project. When it comes to major challenges of conflicts, Structural and socio-cognitive driven conflicts have remained to be headaches of the conflict management practice within the project.

Though the management practices worked relatively well in the case of managing resource driven conflicts, it hardly managed those conflicts driven by structural and socio-cognitive conflicts. This in turn ended up in witnessing dissatisfaction among staff, which further resulted in a high staff turnover and a lagging project. This makes it clear that the conflict management practice at the project hardly succeeded in exploiting the available skill and performing well.

When it comes to the impact of the conflict management practices, a conclusion can be drawn from the findings that the conflict management practices at the project have turned out to affect the overall performance of the project negatively.

Apart from that, the aforementioned findings imply that conflict management styles such as accommodating and avoiding hardly serve a positive outcome except under certain circumstances like to buy a little bit time to stop and think a better solution. There remains a lot to be done by the management of the project in terms of identifying and introducing conflict management styles that better manage conflicts and create a conducive environment for the staff. In this regard, the study attributes the high turnover witnessed to a poor conflict management practice.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

Based on the above conclusions, the researcher gives the following recommendations:

The management should work aggressively on creating a conducive environment for staff so that it can exploit the best of the available skill. The concerned managers of the project should introduce a standard to quality, criteria for appraisal, and a scale for salary and benefits, so as to minimize the high turnover.

Similarly, they should clearly define the role of individuals and departments so as to minimize conflicts arising from overlapping of role and responsibilities as well as potential conflicts over power.

In addition, the project management should acknowledge the greater role of socio-cognitive and structural conflicts and try to address it using a more sound conflict management styles. It should reconsider the idea of practicing integrating and compromising conflict management styles.

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## **Appendix 1**

Questionnaire to be filled by experts and supervisors at different levels

### **Dear Respondent:**

This questionnaire form takes only about 15 minutes to complete. The sole purpose of this questionnaire is to gather data about conflict management practices at your launching project, which is to be used as an input in my thesis titled ‘ *The Practices of conflict management styles: the case of the launching project of Arts Media Production*’. I, the researcher, hereby would like to assure you that the information collected will be fully confidential. It will in no way be /partially or fully/ disclosed to any third party. In addition, please be informed that you are not supposed to mention your name or any information that implies your identity. Attempt has been made to make the questions clear enough. Yet, please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Lensa Tesfaye

Mob: 0913 00 28 55

Email: [lensates@gmail.com](mailto:lensates@gmail.com)

**General Guide:**

**Please provide information as accurately as possible for it is to be used as a valuable input in this study. Use a tick (✓) or circle the choice to indicate your response where appropriate.**

**Part A: Respondent's Background Information**

**I. Age:**

- 24-30
- 30-35
- 35- 40
- 40-60
- 60+

**II. Sex:**

- Male
- Female

**III. Department you belong to**

.....

**IV. Please mention your actual and major responsibilities**

.....

**V. For how long have you worked at/with Arts Media Production ?**

- less than 3 months
- 3-6 months
- 7 – 10 months
- About a year
- About a year and half
- 1.5 year- 2 years

**VI. Are you still at Arts Media Production or left the company?**

- Yes, I am still working at the come
- No, I left the company

**VII. Work Experience within this Particular Industry:**

- less than 2 years
- 2-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- 10+ years

**VIII. Have you ever worked in a startup business before?**

- Yes
- No

**IX. If yes, what major differences have you observed in terms of the nature of conflicts and the way they are/ should be managed?**

.....  
.....

**X. Work experience in managing a project /a business/ only for department heads, supervisors, and other high-level manager only/**

.....

**XI. Do you have experience in managing in any media and production or entertainment industry/ only for department heads, supervisors, and other high-level manager /**

- Yes
- No

**XII. Have you been trained in project management? /only for department heads, supervisors, and other high-level manager /**

- Yes
- No

**Part B: Question related to interpersonal and intergroup conflict management**

**I. What sorts of conflicts do frequently occur during the operation of your launching project? Please mention at least three major conflicts. ?**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**II. What do you think are the dominant sources of those major conflicts?**

- a. Resource scarcity
- b. Identity conflicts
- c. Ego
- d. Structural conflicts / role conflicts
- e. Other. Please mention.....

**III. How do you evaluate your interactions with your coworkers? It is possible to mark on more than one answer**

- a. I have the leverage to have a sit down with my counterpart and reach an amicable solution
- b. I usually fill misunderstood by others
- c. others take advantage of my attempt to remain rationale
- d. individuals in charge of addressing my requests are usually non-responsive
- e. I have no say at all
- f. I do not see the point of insisting my supervisors to address my questions

**IV. Would please share your observation and experience about how your supervisor and other high officials approach a conflict that happens in the project? Please choose the first three that you think are dominant and give them rank. (for experts and department heads only)**

- a. They listen to both parties and aspire to come up with an amicable solution in favor of both conflicting parties
- b. They simply pretend to be fair but they make judgments in favor of one party
- c. They try to show concern just because they want conflicts to smooth but do not genuinely handle the case

- d. They simply impose a decision on the one part without enough consideration to the other
- e. They usually remain deaf towards conflict by acting as if they are not informed or by overlooking conflict
- f. Other. Please explain

.....  
.....

**V. How do you evaluate the impact of the conflict management styles practiced on the overall performance of the project?**

- a. Enable to exploit the best of the available skills and perform well in the project
- b. It is satisfactory enough
- c. Discourage the staff to use full potential
- d. Totally uninviting to work and lagging the performance of the project

**VI. How do you evaluate the impacts of major conflicts arising within your group on the overall performance of the project?**

- a. They affect it positively
- b. They affect it negatively
- c. It depends

**VII. If your answer for the above question is c, please explain.**

.....  
.....  
.....

Thank You for your time!

## **Appendix 2**

### **Interview Questions raised to Managers of Arts at different levels**

**This interview questions are meant to gather data about conflict management styles being practiced at your organization particularly in line with your launching project, which has been there for the last two years.**

- I. What conflicts frequently happen at your organization during your launching ongoing project? Please mention at least three major source of conflicts.
  
- II. What conflict management styles are practiced at your organization under what situations? Which types do you personally prefer and why?
  
- III. What factors influence your conflict management styles?
  
- IV. How do you evaluate your conflict management styles in terms of its impact on the overall performance of your project?

Thank you for your time!