
Influence of Conflict Management Strategies on Service Delivery at Public Universities: A Case of University of Eldoret, Kenya

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Abstract:

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of conflict management strategies on service delivery at the University of Eldoret. The study was guided by contingency theory.

Material/methods: An explanatory mixed methods design was employed. The target population consisted of 718 employees, including top management, middle cadre, and support staff. A sample size of 220 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula and selected through purposive, stratified, and random sampling techniques. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and interview schedules. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including multiple regression analysis, while qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically and presented accordingly.

Findings: The multiple regression analysis yielded an R^2 value of 0.644, indicating that avoidance, collaboration, and compromise conflict management strategies collectively explained 64.4% of the variance in service delivery. Collaboration ($\beta = 0.568$) and compromise ($\beta = 0.684$) strategies had a statistically significant positive effect on service delivery. In contrast, the avoidance strategy ($\beta = -0.160$) had a statistically significant negative effect on service delivery.

Conclusion: The study concludes that collaboration and compromise are effective conflict management strategies that enhance service delivery at the University of Eldoret, while avoidance has a detrimental effect. These strategies are critical for managing interpersonal and organizational conflicts that impact institutional productivity.

Value: The study offers practical insights for university administrators by demonstrating the impact of specific conflict management strategies on service delivery. It recommends the continued application of collaboration and compromise strategies to manage conflicts constructively and improve institutional performance.

Keywords: Conflict Management Strategies, Service Delivery, University, Avoidance Conflict Management, Collaboration Conflict Management, Compromise

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1. Introduction

Performance is crucial for any organization, as it determines its ability to maintain operations both currently and, in the future, (Nazir & Islam, 2017). Employees play a vital role in transforming organizational plans into finished products that generate income for the firm. Yunita and Saputra (2019) define employee performance as the collective efforts and actions involved in fulfilling operational tasks to convert organizational strategies into market-responsive products. Key indicators of employee performance include low turnover rates, high retention rates, minimal absenteeism, motivated staff, and efficient use of resources. According to Khoreva and Wechtler (2018), high-performing employees deliver quality work, provide efficient and timely services, and effectively recycle resources and materials. These individuals tend to be creative and innovative, demonstrating passion for their work while actively seeking opportunities to enhance their skills and contribute to the organization's growth. Yunita and Saputra (2019) view employee performance as a collaborative process that fosters a shared understanding among staff regarding the goals of the organization. It involves aligning the entity's objectives with agreed-upon performance measures by employees (Kaur & Kaur, 2017).

In today's corporate environment, the workforce is increasingly diverse, leading to a rise in workplace conflicts due to varying perspectives and personalities (Terason, 2018). Management is responsible for meeting set targets, and high employee performance is crucial for achieving these goals; however, conflicts can negatively impact this performance. Therefore, it is essential for management to implement effective strategies for managing workplace conflicts to prevent declines in productivity (Kathimba & Anyieni, 2018). Organizations must recognize and address potential conflicts, as unmanaged disputes can hinder the achievement of their objectives. Research by Ester, Augustine, and Osunsan (2020) suggests that conflict resolution strategies positively influence employee performance, recommending that these strategies be integrated into performance management practices. Commonly used conflict resolution methods include suppression, forcing, smoothing, compromise, avoidance, structural changes, collaboration, accommodating, third-party intervention, cooperation, democratic processes, job rotation, and confrontation.

In the context of higher education, universities serve as vital institutions for promoting educational goals worldwide. They play a critical role in supplementing service delivery, especially when public universities cannot accommodate the increasing number of students seeking higher education (Uden, 2013). In Kenya, private higher education institutions have emerged to help bridge the gap between student needs and the capacities of public universities. However, the quality of service provided by these universities remains a significant issue affecting student satisfaction and warrants thorough investigation in this study. Exploring the relationship between service quality and satisfaction in the educational sector is crucial for understanding how to enhance the overall learning experience for students and improve institutional effectiveness.

Service delivery is a crucial determinant of institutional performance in higher education, influencing satisfaction among students, staff, and stakeholders (Nejati, 2013). Globally, service quality in universities has become a key metric for ranking and competitiveness, with countries like the UK, USA, Australia, and Canada enhancing service delivery through policy and funding reforms (Daniel, 2012; Wanna, Butcher &

Freyens, 2010). In Africa, rapid enrollment growth—from under 200,000 in 1970 to nearly 10 million today—has not been matched by service improvements, with challenges such as understaffing, poor infrastructure, and higher service costs persisting (Paul, 2014). In Kenya, the Commission for University Education (CUE) was established to regulate quality and accredit programs, reflecting a shift toward accountability and continuous improvement in educational value (Caleb, Maureen & Ibrahim, 2011; CUE, 2015).

Organizational conflict is common across sectors, often arising from resource competition, structural constraints, and interpersonal differences (Saranya, 2016; Mughal & Khan, 2013). Effective conflict management involves strategies like avoidance, compromise, and collaboration, which help minimize harm while promoting constructive outcomes (Onyejiaku, Ghasi, & Okwor, 2018; Currie et al., 2017). Cross-cultural studies reveal differing conflict resolution methods, such as formal systems in China (Min et al., 2018), trust-based mediation in India (Sahoo & Sahoo, 2019), and integrative approaches in Kosovo (Mustafa, Berani, & Berisha, 2019). In Kenya, outdated bureaucratic systems and poor working conditions have fueled industrial actions, disrupting services (Olang, 2017; Manyenga, 2016). Research affirms that strategies like negotiation, open communication, and third-party intervention can significantly enhance organizational harmony and performance (Kagwiria, 2019; Mwaniki & Muathe, 2021).

Employee performance is vital to university service delivery, yet it remains a persistent challenge in Kenya due to strikes, go-slows, and poor staff morale (Agusioma, 2018; Ibua, 2017). The diversity of university stakeholders' students, academic staff, non-academic staff, unions, and management often leads to friction that undermines operational efficiency and, at times, results in disruptions such as institutional closures. The absence of clearly defined conflict resolution mechanisms exacerbates these issues, especially when mismanagement, weak leadership, and institutional politics interfere with effective dispute resolution. For instance, a conflict at the University of Eldoret in 2015 escalated to the point of closure for several months, reflecting the impact of unresolved conflicts on academic continuity and service delivery. Despite the inevitability of conflict in complex institutions, there is limited empirical evidence on how conflict management strategies—such as avoidance, compromise, and collaboration affect service delivery in the Kenyan university context (Shanka & Thuo, 2017; Mwaniki & Muathe, 2021).

The purpose of this study is to assess the influence of conflict management strategies (avoidance conflict management strategy, collaborative conflict management strategy and compromise conflict management strategy) on service delivery at public universities, with the University of Eldoret serving as the focal institution. This study is justified by the need to identify practical, context-specific strategies for resolving organizational conflict in higher education, especially where service disruption has tangible consequences for students and staff alike. The significance of the study lies in its potential to guide university administrators and policymakers in adopting effective, evidence-based conflict management approaches that enhance institutional harmony, operational efficiency, and the quality-of-service delivery in Kenyan public universities.

2. Literature Review (Hypothesis Development)

A study by Abdullah (2015) in Pakistan investigated the impact of conflict management on the effectiveness of the Ministry of Higher Education, aiming to identify sources of interpersonal conflict and evaluate the strategies used to manage them. The study found that the avoidance strategy negatively affected organizational effectiveness by delaying responses to conflict, thereby worsening existing challenges. It concluded that alternative approaches should be adopted to improve institutional performance. While Abdullah's study focused on organizational effectiveness, the current study seeks to examine the relationship between conflict management and service delivery in public universities. Regionally, Alajekwu and Alajekwu (2017) conducted a descriptive study on Nigerian universities, surveying 1,200 respondents using a stratified random sampling technique and a reliable Likert-scale questionnaire (reliability coefficient = 0.78). Their findings revealed that conflict among various university stakeholders significantly reduced employee performance, and the use of avoidance as a resolution technique was negatively correlated with performance outcomes. In Kenya, Agusioma (2018) used a mixed methods approach to examine staff conflict resolution and employee performance at the Public Service Commission. With data collected from 141 managers through stratified proportionate random sampling, the study used SPSS for descriptive and inferential analysis, including regression modeling, and found that employee participation in conflict resolution significantly improved organizational performance. Unlike Agusioma's study, the current research uses a descriptive design to focus specifically on universities. Similarly, Kagucia and Poipoi (2014) assessed avoidance conflict strategies in Kenyan public universities and concluded that while avoidance may be effective for minor issues, more significant conflicts require collaborative or integrative strategies for optimal performance outcomes. Together, these studies highlight the critical role of conflict management in promoting employee effectiveness and organizational performance, justifying the hypothesis of the current study:

H₀₁: Avoidance conflict management strategy has no significant effect on service delivery.

Several studies underscore the critical role of collaborative strategies in enhancing organizational and employee performance through effective conflict resolution. Lee and Bonk (2014) identified five major challenges affecting collaborative learning in the workplace, highlighting that conflicts are natural within complex organizations and, if managed collaboratively, can lead to improved resource utilization and organizational performance. Similarly, Hidayanto and Setyady (2014) found that the perceived ease of use and usefulness of collaborative tools positively influenced student engagement and group performance, emphasizing that conflict, if properly managed, can be a driver of positive change. Kumar, Subramanian, and Arputham (2018) demonstrated that sustainability-focused collaboration strategies in supply chains influence the triple bottom line through dynamic capabilities, recommending strengthened collaborative efforts to prevent misalignment and performance decline. Jirgba, Eriba, and Achor (2018) also confirmed that peer collaboration enhances academic achievement in science education, advocating for cooperative strategies as effective conflict resolution tools. Assbeihat (2016) supported these findings, noting that team collaboration leads to significantly better performance outcomes than individual efforts and reduces workplace hostility. In the Nigerian oil sector, Adim and Ihunda (2018) found a positive

correlation between collaboration strategies and employee performance, recommending their use in dispute resolution and team cohesion. Likewise, Kalei (2018), studying insurance companies in Homa Bay County, Kenya, concluded that collaborative conflict management—characterized by integration, shared decision-making, and open dialogue—boosts employee ownership and productivity. These findings consistently support the importance of collaborative strategies in resolving conflicts and improving performance across various sectors. Based on this evidence, the current study proposes the hypothesis:

H₀₂: Collaborative conflict management strategy has no significant effect on service delivery

Compromise as a conflict management strategy involves seeking a balanced solution acceptable to all parties, often leading to quicker resolutions that sustain productivity and maintain harmony in organizational settings. Jaden (2015) emphasized that while compromise fosters fairness and mutual accountability, it may produce only temporary solutions that do not fully resolve underlying issues. Similarly, Anono (2018) found that compromise facilitates inclusive decision-making and equitable power distribution, allowing organizations to maintain performance while resolving disputes. Aoun, Mubarak, and Hasnan (2020), in a study of industrial firms in Lebanon, revealed that conflict management, including compromise, has a constructive but modest correlation with employee performance, highlighting the strategy's moderate effectiveness. Alhamali (2019) investigated conflict styles in twenty universities and concluded that integrating, obliging, and compromising positively influenced team performance, while avoidance and dominance had adverse effects—thereby recommending a shift toward cooperative strategies. In Uganda, Tumwebaze, Wandiba, and Osunsan (2020) studied the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and found that compromise significantly impacted employee performance, suggesting it was more effective than negotiation in that context. Furthermore, Ndulue (2016) observed that compromise is often used where power is balanced and quick consensus is essential, though it may lack long-term sustainability. Saiti (2015) reinforced this by noting that compromise not only encourages cooperation but also empowers employees to take ownership of conflict resolution. Together, these studies affirm that compromise remains a widely used and contextually valuable strategy, particularly when immediate service continuity is vital. Based on this body of evidence, the current study hypothesizes:

H₀₃: Compromise conflict management strategy has no significant effect on service delivery

3. Theoretical And Conceptual Framework

The current study is grounded in Contingency Theory, originally popularized by Fred Fiedler in 1964, which emphasizes that there is no universally optimal management or conflict resolution style; instead, effectiveness depends on aligning strategies with specific situational variables. The theory, rooted in human relations and behaviorism, suggests that understanding human behavior, including motivation and group dynamics, can improve workplace outcomes (Anrep, 1936). Rahim (2002) further applied this theory to conflict management, proposing that the appropriateness of conflict strategies—such as dominating, integrating, avoiding, or compromising depends on the decision quality and level of acceptance in a given context. The theory

underscores the importance of tailoring leadership and conflict resolution techniques to the nature of the conflict, organizational environment, and stakeholder dynamics (Islam & Hu, 2012; Pugh et al., 1971; Cole & Kelly, 2011). While critics like Zhenzhong Ma (2007) argue that the theory overlooks variability in individual knowledge, proponents maintain that effective conflict management must consider both internal and external contingencies, including organizational structure, power dynamics, and time constraints (Toku, 2014; Lazarus, 2014). Therefore, this theory is particularly relevant to the present study, as it provides a flexible framework for examining how conflict management strategies—such as avoidance, collaboration, and compromise—can be effectively selected and applied to improve service delivery in public universities based on contextual conditions. Thus, the conceptual framework shows the relationship between conflict management as the independent variable and service delivery which is the dependent variable. In this conceptual framework the independent variable comprised of the avoidance, collaboration and compromise strategies of conflict management while the dependent variables consisted of effectiveness, efficiency, quality and reliability as shown in figure 1.

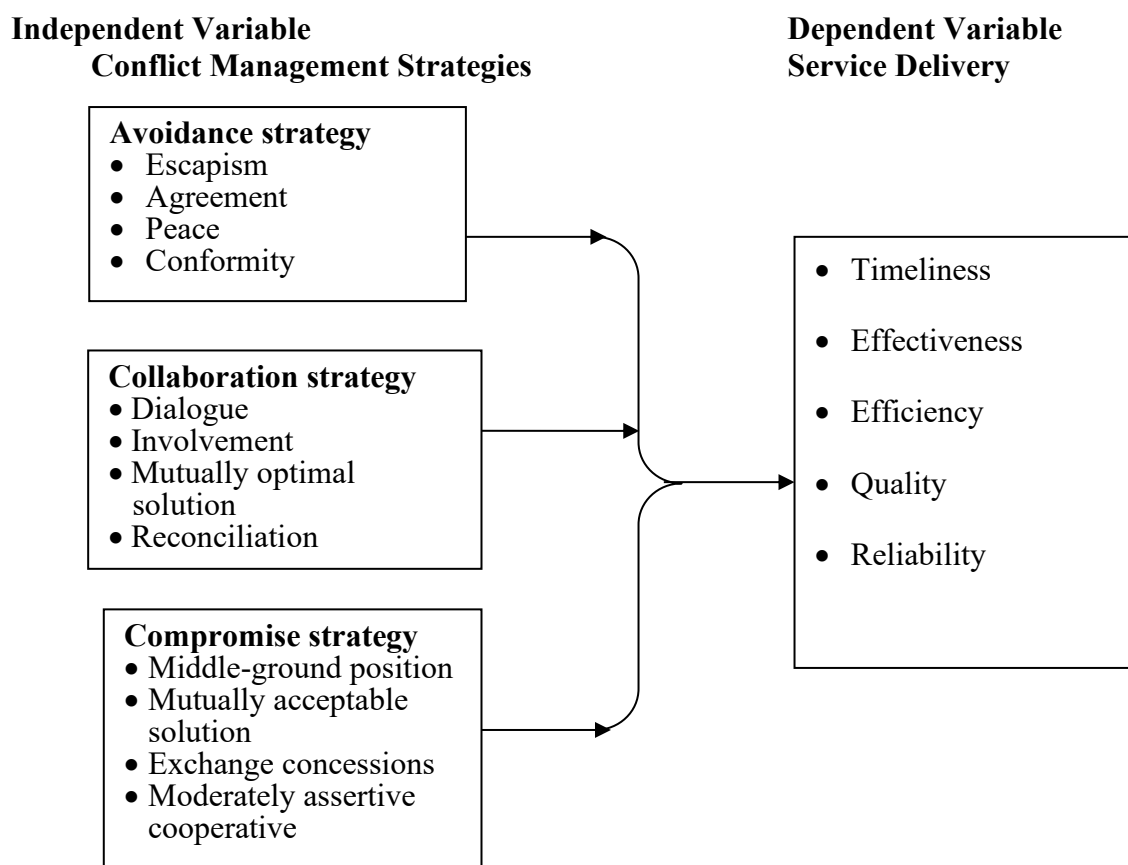


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

Source: Researcher, 2025

4. Methodology

This study adopted an explanatory research design, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to examine cause-and-effect relationships between conflict management strategies and service delivery. Quantitative data were collected first through questionnaires and analyzed statistically, followed by qualitative interviews analyzed thematically to interpret and enrich the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2013; Best & Kahn, 2016). The design enabled investigation in a natural setting using probability sampling, enhancing both depth and generalizability (Cooper & Schindler, 2018). The research was conducted at the University of Eldoret, a public university in Kenya with a rich institutional history and accessible informants, making it a suitable site for this mixed methods approach. The study targeted a population of 718 administrative staff, including top, middle, and junior-level employees.

Sampling

The sample size for this study was determined using Yamane's formula (1964), yielding a total of 220 respondents from a target population of 718 administrative staff at the University of Eldoret. The population was proportionally stratified into three categories: top management (20), middle management (200), and junior/support staff (498), resulting in respective sample sizes of 6, 61, and 153. The study adopted a combination of stratified, purposive, and simple random sampling techniques to ensure representative selection across all levels. Stratified random sampling was initially applied to group respondents based on management level, which allowed proportional representation and minimized sampling errors (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Purposive sampling was used for top management due to their specific relevance to the study, while simple random sampling was applied to middle and junior/support staff to ensure each individual had an equal chance of being selected, thus enhancing fairness, cost-efficiency, and reliability (Acharya et al., 2013; Cooper & Schindler, 2018).

Research Instruments

The study collected primary data using two main research instruments: structured questionnaires and interview schedules (Willig & Rogers, 2017). Questionnaires were distributed to middle management and support staff using a five-point Likert scale, offering standardized options to express levels of agreement with statements aligned to the study objectives (Cooper & Schindler, 2018). These structured, self-administered tools were selected for their cost-effectiveness and efficiency in handling large populations (Denscombe, 2014). In contrast, a structured interview schedule was administered to top management to collect richer verbal data, based on the understanding that respondents often provide more detailed insights orally (Orodho, 2008). To ensure that the instruments were both valid and reliable, a pilot study was conducted at Kisii University, a public institution comparable to the study site. Following Cooper and Schindler's (2011) guideline, 22 respondents (10% of the sample) were selected through stratified sampling to participate in the pilot. Content and construct validity were ensured through expert consultation with supervisors and lecturers, alignment with the conceptual framework, and item review for relevance and clarity. Face validity was also established to confirm that the questionnaire items appeared appropriate and understandable at first glance. Construct validity was verified through alignment with theoretical constructs and was supported by statistical analysis using factor analysis. Reliability was tested using the test-retest method and Cronbach's Alpha, with scores of 0.708 for avoidance, 0.780 for collaboration, and 0.778 for compromise—exceeding the 0.7 threshold suggested by Field (2013) and thus

indicating strong internal consistency (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The actual data collection procedure began after securing a permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation through Moi University's School of Postgraduate Studies. Questionnaires were delivered using the drop-and-pick method with a two-week completion window, while interviews with top managers were conducted in-person and audio-recorded, each lasting about five minutes. Advance notice and follow-up communication helped improve the response rate and ensured effective engagement with the study participants.

Data Analysis and Model Specification

The study analyzed both qualitative and quantitative data to examine the relationship between conflict management strategies and service delivery. Qualitative data from interviews were thematically analyzed using content coding, while quantitative data were processed in SPSS (Version 26) using descriptive statistics (frequencies, means) and inferential techniques, including Pearson's correlation and multiple regression analysis. Multiple regression model assumed the following equation:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon$$

Where:

Y = Performance, A = Constant Term, β_1 , β_2 and β_3 = Coefficients of determination of the independent variables, X_1 = Avoidance, X_2 = Compromise, X_3 = Collaboration, ϵ = Error term

5. Findings And Discussion

This section presents the findings on the effects of conflict management strategies on service delivery at the University of Eldoret, based on data collected through questionnaires and interviews. The analysis was guided by the study's main objective to determine how avoidance, collaboration, and compromise strategies affect service delivery and to identify measures for enhancing it. Data were collected from 220 employees across various staff categories, achieving a 100% response rate, which exceeded the 75% benchmark considered excellent by Nyamjom (2013). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis, and the results are organized into background information, descriptive analysis, correlation, and multiple regression sections. The high response rate was attributed to the effective use of self-administered questionnaires.

Descriptive and correlation Statistics

The findings of the study reveal that all three conflict management strategies—avoidance, compromise, and collaboration—are perceived as positively contributing to service delivery at the University of Eldoret, as evidenced by both descriptive and correlation analyses. Descriptively, respondents agreed with the statements assessing service delivery ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.55$), as well as those assessing avoidance ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 0.49$), collaboration ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.52$), and compromise ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 0.52$), indicating general consensus on the relevance and application of these strategies

within the university. Correlation results show that avoidance strategy had a moderate but significant positive relationship with service delivery ($r = 0.453$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that while typically viewed as passive, avoidance may help de-escalate minor or sensitive conflicts that could otherwise hinder performance. This finding aligns with Kagucia and Poipoi (2014), who noted that avoidance strategies, when used appropriately, support employee performance. The compromise strategy exhibited the strongest correlation with service delivery ($r = 0.683$, $p < 0.01$), highlighting its effectiveness in facilitating fair and timely resolutions that balance differing interests and promote institutional harmony, a finding supported by Kagwiria (2019), who found compromise instrumental in enhancing service outcomes in healthcare settings. Collaboration strategy also showed a strong positive correlation with service delivery ($r = 0.592$, $p < 0.01$), confirming that inclusive and participatory approaches in conflict resolution lead to improved service outcomes by fostering mutual understanding, teamwork, and shared responsibility. These results collectively suggest that while all three strategies significantly influence service delivery, the compromise approach may yield the most substantial improvements when conflicts are managed constructively and fairly, reinforcing the importance of context-specific conflict management in advancing performance within public universities.

Table 1: Descriptive and Correlation Analysis

	Service delivery	Avoidance	Compromise	Collaboration	Mean	SD
Service delivery	1				3.78	0.55
Avoidance	.453**	1			3.82	0.49
Compromise	.683**	.687**	1		3.77	0.52
Collaboration	.592**	.336**	.294**	1	3.58	0.43

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

Multiple Regression Analysis (Hypotheses Testing)

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between one dependent variable and multiple predictor variables (Hair et al., 2006). Multiple regression analysis was conducted, revealing that the coefficient of determination (R squared) was 0.644. This indicates that 64.4% of the service delivery at the University of Eldoret can be attributed to conflict management strategies. The adjusted R-square value of 0.639 suggests that, excluding the constant variable, the conflict management strategies accounted for a 6.39% change in service delivery. The remaining percentage of the variation is attributed to other factors not included in the model. The results, $F(3, 216) = 130.118$, $P=0.000$ at 0.05 significance level, demonstrate that the model was statistically significant and can be used to predict the effect of conflict management strategy on service delivery. This indicates that the regression model used in the investigation has a high degree of goodness of fit.

Based on the equation provided, if the three predictor variables (avoidance, compromise, and collaboration) are held at a constant level of zero, the service delivery at the University of Eldoret would be -0.216. Overall, the results of the regression analysis indicated that compromise and collaboration had a positive correlation with service delivery, as evidenced by beta coefficient values of 0.684 and 0.568, respectively. In contrast, avoidance was negatively related to service delivery, indicated by a beta coefficient value of -0.160, with all p-values being less than 0.05. The t-test

associated with the β -values was significant, showing that conflict management strategies as predictors made a meaningful contribution to the model.

The study hypothesized that the avoidance conflict management strategy would have no significant effect on service delivery. However, the findings demonstrated a negative significant impact of avoidance on service delivery ($\beta_1 = -0.160$ and $p\text{-value} < 0.05$). Consequently, an increase in the avoidance conflict management strategy resulted in a decrease in service delivery at the University of Eldoret by 0.160, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_{01}). It was concluded that avoiding conflict management strategies negatively affects service delivery at the University of Eldoret, indicating a significant inverse relationship between the use of avoidance strategies and service delivery.

Regarding the hypothesis that the compromise conflict management strategy would have no significant effect on service delivery, the findings revealed a positive significant impact ($\beta_2 = 0.684$ and $p\text{-value} < 0.05$). A unit change in the compromise strategy produced a positive change of 0.684 in service delivery at the University of Eldoret. Given that the p -value for compromise was below 0.05, the significance level indicated a meaningful relationship between the use of compromise conflict management strategies and service delivery. Thus, a strong positive and significant relationship exists between the application of the compromise strategy and service delivery in the University of Eldoret, Kenya. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) was rejected, and an increase in the compromise strategy led to an improvement in service delivery by 0.684. This suggests that the compromise conflict management strategy positively influences service delivery at the University of Eldoret.

In relation to the hypothesis that collaboration conflict management strategy would not significantly affect service delivery, the findings displayed a positive significant effect ($\beta_3 = 0.568$ and $p\text{-value} < 0.05$). An increase in the collaboration strategy resulted in an improvement of 0.568 in service delivery at the University of Eldoret. Since the p -value was below 0.05, the null hypothesis (H_{03}) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted, confirming that the collaboration conflict management strategy has a positive impact on service delivery.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	-0.216	0.224		-0.963	0.337
Avoidance	-0.160	0.063	-0.143	-2.517	0.013
Compromise	0.684	0.059	0.649	11.563	0.000
Collaboration	0.568	0.055	0.449	10.367	0.000
Model Summary					
R	0.802				
R Square	0.644				
Adjusted R Square	0.639				
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.329				
ANOVA (goodness of fit)					
F	130.118				
Sig.	.000				

a. Dependent Variable: Service delivery

6. Discussion of Findings

The study findings indicated that the avoiding conflict management strategy, which involves avoiding unpleasantness, withdrawing from conflict situations, avoiding being put on the spot, avoiding taking positions that may create controversies, and using avoidance to prepare and collect facts, had a significant negative effect on service delivery. This strategy prevents timely resolution of conflicts, allowing issues to escalate and reducing effective communication and collaboration. It leads to important issues being ignored, undermining transparency and accountability, and resulting in employee disengagement and decreased job satisfaction. Furthermore, reliance on avoidance fosters a culture of fear and reluctance to address issues directly, undermining trust and openness within the organization and stifling creativity and innovation. Consequently, while avoidance may provide temporary relief, it ultimately hampers service delivery by fostering a toxic work environment and hindering organizational improvement and adaptability. This finding aligns with Abdullah (2015), who noted that avoidance leads to delayed responses to factors contributing to organizational conflicts, exacerbating the issues. Similarly, Alajekwu and Alajekwu (2017) found that organizational conflicts among school administrators, teaching staff, students, and non-teaching staff had a significant unfavorable effect on employees' performance within southeastern Nigerian universities. Their study also found a negative correlation between the use of avoidance conflict resolution techniques and employees' performance, supporting the idea that avoidance hampers effective conflict resolution and service delivery. In contrast, Agusioma (2018) highlighted that staff participation in conflict and dispute resolution had a strong positive impact on the performance of staff at the Kenyan Public Service Commission (PSC). This study concluded that effective dispute resolution improved employee performance, emphasizing that proactive conflict management plays a favorable role in enhancing staff and organizational performance. This perspective suggests that avoiding conflict management strategies may miss opportunities for constructive engagement and resolution, ultimately affecting service delivery negatively. However, Kagucia and

Poipoi (2014) presented a different view, indicating that the avoidance strategy had a positive effect on employee performance. They concluded that avoidance conflict resolution strategy can affect employee performance, with organizational factors moderating the relationship between avoidance and employee performance. This suggests that in some contexts, avoidance might be seen as a beneficial strategy, possibly due to specific organizational cultures or environments where avoiding direct conflict may prevent immediate disruptions.

The findings indicate that the compromise conflict management strategy—characterized by mutual concessions, negotiation with co-workers, openness to bargaining processes, and striving to achieve a fair balance of gains and losses—had a positive and significant effect on service delivery. This is because compromise fosters a collaborative approach to conflict resolution, encouraging all parties involved to find common ground and work towards mutually acceptable solutions. By engaging in compromise, individuals and teams are able to address and resolve conflicts in a way that considers the needs and concerns of all stakeholders. This collaborative process not only helps in reaching agreements but also enhances trust and communication among team members. As a result, conflicts are resolved more effectively, leading to improved working relationships and a more harmonious work environment. Moreover, compromise helps in balancing competing interests and reducing potential disruptions that can arise from unresolved disputes. When team members feel that their concerns are acknowledged and addressed, they are more likely to be satisfied with the outcomes and remain engaged in their work. This improved satisfaction and engagement contribute to higher productivity and better service delivery, as employees are more motivated and cooperative in their roles. These findings are largely supported by the literature. Anono (2018) confirms that compromise facilitates finding quick middle ground, which helps maintain productivity and encourages equal sharing of power among parties. This aligns well with the observed positive effect on service delivery, as compromise promotes a collaborative environment that can lead to improved outcomes. Similarly, Tumwebaze, Wandiba, and Osunsan (2020) found that compromise had a substantial influence on employee performance, which supports the positive impact on service delivery reported in the study. Saiti (2015) also supports these findings, indicating that compromise encourages cooperation and effective conflict handling among employees, contributing to better service delivery. However, there are nuances to consider. Jaden (2015) highlighted that while compromise can ensure a fair distribution among involved parties and build conflict management skills, it often results in temporary solutions that may not fully resolve underlying issues. This perspective aligns with the positive effects observed but suggests that compromise may not always offer long-term resolutions. Additionally, Ndulue (2016) pointed out that while compromise is effective for rapid solutions, especially when other strategies fail, its applicability might be limited to specific situations. This suggests that while compromise is beneficial, its effectiveness might not be universal. In contrast, Aoun, Mubarak, and Hasnan (2020) found that while conflict management, including compromise, had a constructive effect on employee performance, the correlation was weak. This contrasts with the strong positive effect on service delivery reported in the study, indicating that the impact of compromise may vary in strength. Similarly, Alhamali (2019) showed that while compromising has substantial positive impacts on team performance, it is one of several strategies contributing to overall performance.

This implies that while compromise is beneficial, it may not be a standalone solution and should be considered alongside other strategies.

The results revealed that the collaboration conflict management strategy, characterized by practices such as accepting co-workers' suggestions, investigating issues together to find mutually acceptable solutions, reconciling differences to achieve win-win outcomes, using neutral third parties when needed, and addressing all concerns openly and promptly, had a significant positive effect on service delivery. This positive impact can be attributed to several factors inherent in collaborative approaches. First, collaboration fosters open communication and mutual understanding among team members, which helps to address and resolve conflicts effectively. By involving all parties in the problem-solving process and working towards solutions that benefit everyone, collaboration enhances trust and cooperation within the team (Mwaniki & Muathe, 2021). This improved teamwork contributes to more efficient and effective service delivery. Additionally, collaboration encourages a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution. By investigating issues together and utilizing neutral third parties when necessary, teams can ensure that all perspectives are considered and that solutions are fair and balanced. This inclusive approach not only resolves conflicts but also prevents issues from escalating, thereby maintaining a positive and productive work environment (Amaeshi, et al., 2021; Yusuf and Ibrahim, 2019). Furthermore, the emphasis on addressing all concerns openly and promptly ensures that potential problems are tackled before they become major obstacles. This proactive approach minimizes disruptions and keeps operations running smoothly, which directly enhances service delivery (Nwokolobia et al., 2021). Overall, the collaborative conflict management strategy's focus on open communication, inclusiveness, and fair problem-solving leads to improved team dynamics and more effective service outcomes. The results indicating that the collaboration conflict management strategy positively impacts service delivery are well-supported by the literature. Lee and Bonk (2014) affirm this by highlighting that effective conflict resolution through collaboration can significantly enhance organizational performance. They note that properly managed conflicts lead to increased staff satisfaction and improved performance, which aligns with the observed positive effect of collaboration on service delivery. Similarly, Hidayanto and Setyady (2014) show that the use of collaborative tools positively impacts team performance, reflecting the benefits of collaboration in improving service delivery. Additionally, Assbeihat (2016) and Echaaobari, Adim, and Ihunda (2018) support the findings by demonstrating that collaboration positively influences team performance and productivity. Their studies indicate that effective conflict resolution through collaboration enhances overall performance, reinforcing the positive impact on service delivery observed in the study. Kalei (2018) further agrees, showing that collaboration improves employee performance through joint decision-making and integration, which supports the observed positive effect on service delivery.

However, Kumar, Subramanian, and Arputham (2018) provide a nuanced view by suggesting that while collaboration is beneficial, misalignment with ideal practices can have detrimental effects. This perspective acknowledges that collaboration is effective when properly implemented but may not always be perfect in every context. Jirgba, Eriba, and Achor (2018) also note that collaboration works best when there is room for debate and low levels of disagreement, which may not always be present. These insights suggest that while collaboration generally enhances service delivery, its effectiveness can depend on its application and context. Overall, the literature largely supports the

finding that collaboration positively impacts service delivery, though it also highlights the importance of proper implementation and contextual factors.

7. Conclusion

Collaboration conflict management strategy had positively significant effect of on service delivery in university of Eldoret. Compromise conflict management strategy had significant positive effect on service delivery in university of Eldoret. The avoiding conflict management strategy negatively affects service delivery. Application of avoidance as a conflict management technique negatively affected the service delivery in university of Eldoret. This means that avoidance as a conflict management technique should not be used to resolve workplace conflicts in Kenya's public universities unless the conflicts in the question are trivial or inconsequential. The timeliness, effectiveness, efficiency and quality/reliability affected the service delivery at university of Eldoret. The avoidance, collaboration and compromise conflict management strategies account for 64.4% of the service delivery at university of Eldoret. Avoiding strategies was inappropriate as it was found to have negative effects on service delivery.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings the study recommends that there should be frequent curriculum review like after every five years to ensure that there is continuous monitoring and evaluation by the commission of university education (CUE), of the quality of services offered in public universities. There is need for institutions to establish benchmarks to enable them measure position at any one time and establish and set targets. There is need for the leadership of this institutions right from the top to abolish many processes that could be made simpler and easier to ease the daily activities and achieve quality and timely service delivery to all stakeholders and especially the main stakeholders who are the students and the staff.

University management should be more committed to integrating the ideas of their staff into their managerial activities. Employees' participations should be encouraged in order to harness their suggestions. There is the need for an independent body or a committee that will be charged with the responsibility of looking into conflict issues. In addition, employees' welfare should be improved upon in order to foster productivity. The management should be less dominating in their conflict management approach but rather inculcate a sense of belonging into their staff. There is the need to routinely organize conflict management workshops by government and universities' managements where government officials, academic staff, members of a university's management as well as other stakeholders will be taught how to effectively manage conflicts whenever they arise.

The university staff should continue to be collaborating and compromising in their conflict management strategies in as much as that strategy will help to manage conflicts and promote their productivity. However, they must learn to adopt other strategies as situation and the issues may vary from time to time. Ministry of Education should embrace openness, dialogue and other multi-dimensional approaches in industrial relations. In addition, the outcomes or the agreements reached during dialogue should be respected and implemented. The University of Eldoret management should implement timeliness, efficiency, effectiveness, quality and reliability in their services to enhance service delivery.

9. Further Research

This study focused on three major conflict management strategies within the University of Eldoret. A wider study involving other public and private universities in the country is hereby recommended. This will enable a better and broader comparison to be made and also a better generalization of the study results to be made. The study did not consider other conflict management strategies that might have an influence on service delivery. There is need to carry out more research to establish how the negotiation, mediation, confrontational conflict management strategies influence service delivery in both public and private higher learning institution in order to make comparison. In addition, other studies may review the effect of other organizational conflict management techniques, not covered in this study, on employees' performance in the country's public and private universities. There is need to carry out more research to establish how the conflict management strategies influence service delivery both at individual level and at organizational level other than higher learning institution. A study should be done to establish the strategies adopted by another non-education institution to check whether there was similarity with the public university.

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