



**BINDURA UNIVERSITY  
OF  
SCIENCE EDUCATION**

**An investigation into the teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of  
conflict in Harare Schools: A case of Kambuzuma Circuit**

by

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A research project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of  
Science Education Honours Degree in Mathematics

in the

*Faculty of Science Education  
Department of Curriculum & Educational Management Studies*

## DECLARATION

I, Nyarai Jani, declare that this dissertation is the result of my own research and that sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged. This work has not been previously submitted to any university other than Bindura University of Science and Education for the award of the Bachelor of Science Education Honours Degree in Mathematics.


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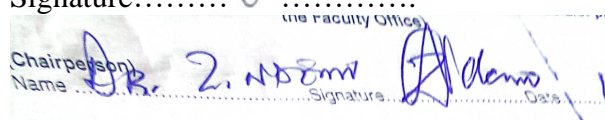
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### Supervisor

I, Dr Mudavanhu, declare that I have supervised this dissertation from project formulation through its data collection and final write-up. I am satisfied that it can be submitted to the Department of Science and Mathematics Education of the Bindura University of Science Education.

Date.....23.07.2024.....

Signature.....  .....



Date: 14/10/24

## DEDICATION

*To my family, who support me unconditionally and to all the individuals who participated in this research.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I would like to express my gratitude to all the people who made it possible for me to carry out the research. In particular, I would like to thank the Provincial Education Director of the Harare Metropolitan Province who granted permission for schools within his jurisdiction to be investigated. In addition, I would like to thank all the participants who participated in the research.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of conflict among teachers in two secondary schools in Kambuzuma, Harare, by applying Moore's (2003) analytical framework. Constructivism or interpretivism was the ontological and epistemological philosophical assumption that underpinned the qualitative methodology employed in this study. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews with 30 purposefully selected teachers based on professional qualifications and teaching experience, as well as focus group discussions and document analysis. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

The findings of this study showed that conflicts among teachers were prevalent in the two schools, which demonstrates that conflicts are inevitable and a part of the teachers' lives. The sources of conflict as identified by the participants were categorised into data conflicts, interest conflicts, relationship conflicts, structural conflicts and value conflicts in line with Moore's conceptualisation. Research findings showed that data-based conflict was related to lack of information or misinformation, lack of transparency and consultation, and gossip or grapevine. Under this theme, lack of information was the main cause of conflict according to participants. Interest-based causes of conflict were linked to competition over limited resources, limited opportunities for promotion and professional growth, and lack of recognition. In this category, competition over limited resources was cited as the main cause of conflict by participants. Relationship conflict was connected to lack of communication or miscommunication, favouritism, and lack of respect and tolerance for different opinions. Under this theme, poor communication or lack of communication was cited as the main cause of conflict by participants. Structural-based causes of conflict were attributed to the provision of resources, allocation of duties and responsibilities, failure to meet deadlines, unpunctuality and absenteeism, and the school administration's leadership style. Most participants were mainly concerned with lack of provision of resources and their colleagues' failure to adhere to set deadlines for completing administrative work. Value-based conflict stemmed from different beliefs and viewpoints of the teachers, gender differences, and the existence of cliques of factions. Many participants felt that values about people's beliefs and principles were a major cause of conflict among teachers.

The findings also showed that some of the above-mentioned sources of conflict were interrelated or interconnected. For instance, structural conflict impacted interest conflicts, while value conflicts influenced the relations between parties involved. Additionally, data conflicts influenced relations between the parties involved. Furthermore, the interest related to promotion appeared to influence relationships because of favouritism. Differences in values and viewpoints under value-based conflicts also appeared to influence relations.

Finally, by exploring the nature and causes of conflict among teachers in the two Kambuzuma schools in Harare, the researcher gained valuable insights into conflict among teachers at the schools, which could benefit both teachers and education practitioners in general. Moore's analytical framework has helped unpack the causes of conflict, which is essential for conflict resolution. The study, therefore, encourages researchers and school managers to use Moore's analytical framework to obtain a comprehensive understanding of conflict involving teachers.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Moore’s analytical framework, School leaders, Secondary school

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATS	Association of Trust Schools
HOD	Head of Department
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
PSC	Public Service Commission
SDC	School Development Committee
SMT	School Management Team
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

## 1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the background to the study and defines the problem to be addressed by the study. It states the aim, objectives and research questions of the study. The chapter further reflects on the significance and limitations of the study and outlines operational definitions of terms of terms used in the study.

## 1.1 Background to the study

There is potential for conflict in schools as organisations because they are communities in which teachers and learners interact daily (du Plessis & Cain, 2017). These conflicts may occur among school administrators, teachers, or between school leaders and teachers, teachers and learners, parents themselves, teachers and parents and the students themselves (Göksoy & Argon, 2016; Rai & Singh, 2021).

Conflict is inevitable in schools because stakeholders have different cultures, values, beliefs, attitudes, needs, preferences, ideas, goals, and interests (Göksoy & Argon, 2016; Makaye and Ndofirepi, 2012). Sources of conflict in schools include inter alia, diversity, misuse of power or authority, dress code, poor communication, heavy workloads, resistance to change and a lack of transparency, personality or style differences as well as family problems (Göksoy & Argon, 2016; Makaye & Ndofirepi, 2012).

In schools, conflict negatively affects teachers' job performance, compromises the morale of teachers, decreases the quality of education, and negatively impacts learners' performance (Göksoy & Argon, 2016; Mapolisa & Tshabalala, 2013a). This is supported by Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012) who indicated that in Masvingo District in Zimbabwe, barely a month passed without conflict occurring between headmasters and teachers or among the teachers themselves. Similarly, Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2013a) found that in Nkayi District in Zimbabwe, headmasters dealt with at least one conflict situation every week. Therefore, to enhance effective learning in schools, the authorities should ensure that teachers and learners operate in a conflict-free environment (Khan, Saeed & Fatima, 2009).

Headmasters or principals are usually blamed for the occurrence of conflicts in schools and are crucified for perceived incompetence in school management even though other players such as teachers, non-teaching staff, students, and parents are also involved in fanning conflict (Onwe

& Nwogbaga, 2014). Given the foregoing, Ekundayo (2010) suggested that principals or headmasters should be knowledgeable about ways of effectively dealing with conflict in schools before they escalate. It is, therefore, pertinent for managers of schools to know the causes of conflicts within their institutions so that they can address them properly. This can be achieved by sponsoring them to attend training programmes to equip them with skills for managing conflict in schools. Given the prevalence of conflicts in schools which negatively impact headmasters, teachers and learners, there is a need to investigate conflict in schools to come up with ways of minimising them.

## 1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of conflict in selected government secondary schools in Harare. using Moore (2003)'s analytical framework.

## 1.3 Statement of the problem

Based on personal experience as a teacher working in Mazowe District, the researcher has observed high levels of conflict occurring among teachers both at the workplace and in the Mazowe Cluster. Given that conflicts have the potential to negatively impact the teachers, learners and learning, it is important to ascertain their causes so that they can be appropriately dealt with or minimised. To be able to understand the causes of conflict and teachers' perceptions of the conflict, the research questions indicated in the next section emerged.

## 1.4 Research Questions

### 1.4.1 Main Research Question

What are the teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of the conflicts in secondary schools?

### 1.4.2 Sub-research questions

1.4.2.1 What are the teachers' perceptions of the nature of conflict in secondary schools?

1.4.2.2 What are the teachers' perceptions of the causes of conflict in secondary schools?

## 1.5 Assumptions

It is assumed that participants will answer the interview questions honestly and candidly after being assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the research and that they may withdraw

from the study at any time and with no consequences. The participants have all experienced the same or similar conflicts.

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will contribute to the body of literature on the nature and causes of conflict in public schools in the Zimbabwean context., The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) can use the findings to sensitise headmasters or principals, teachers, School Governing Bodies, School Development Committees, and School Inspectors about the teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of conflict. This could help administrators to design strategies to minimise conflicts among teachers and enhance teacher productivity and learner performance. Finally, researchers and academics can use the findings as a basis for further research.

### 1.7 Delimitations of the study

The study is confined to the Kambuzuma Circuit, Harare. The circuit has two public secondary schools, namely Kambuzuma High 1 and Kambuzuma High 1,

### 1.8 Limitations of the study

The study uses a qualitative approach with a small sample. The study is also confined to government secondary schools in the Kambuzuma Circuit in Harare. This means the findings cannot be generalised to all the schools in Zimbabwe. It is also confined to teachers and headmasters as respondents, thereby leaving out other stakeholders such as parents, pupils, education officers, as well as School Development Committees. Despite the foregoing, the study identifies some of the causes of conflict in public schools.

### 1.9 Definitions of terms (key variables/factors)

**Conflict:** conflict refers to the tension between two or more social entities (individuals, groups, or organizations) that arises from the failure to obtain desired responses (Anderson, 2001).

**Conflict management:** conflict management refers to the process of diagnosing the nature and causes of conflict and employing appropriate methods to resolve the differences between the disputing parties in the school setting (Hart, 2002).

**School:** is an institution where teaching and learning take place.

**Primary School:** a school whose classes run from Grades one to seven.

**Government Secondary school:** a school whose classes run from form one to form six.

## 1.10 Organisation of the study

This study is divided into five chapters. This introductory chapter has presented the research setting. It has presented the background to the study, formulated the research problem, described the research aim, the objectives, the assumptions of the study, the justification of the research, the delimitation and limitations of the study.

Chapter Two provides an in-depth review of the related literature on causes of conflict under the respective sub-headings or themes. It also discusses Moore's analytical framework that is applied to the study.

Chapter Three presents the methodology. It explores the philosophical underpinnings of the research, justifies the qualitative case study selected, and outlines the data collection instruments, how the data was analysed as well as ethical issues.

Chapter Four presents the research findings. It presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, namely gender, age, marital status, level of education and work experience of the teachers. The chapter then presents the analysis and discussion of the research findings as per study objectives in line with Moore's analytical framework.

Chapter Five provides the summary as well as the analytical and policy conclusions of the study. The chapter revisits key findings and major conclusions emanating from the two research questions pursued. Reflections on Moore's analytical framework and possible areas of future research are also outlined.

## 1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the background to the problem, the statement of the problem, the research aim, objectives and research questions, the significance of the study, and the limitations and delimitation of the study. It has also outlined the operational definitions and the organisation of the study. The next chapter provides a review of relevant literature.



## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the concept of conflict, Moore's analytical framework, the nature of conflict, the causes of conflict, teachers' perceptions and the research gap.

### 2.1 Concept of conflict

Johdi and Apitree (2012) and Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2013a) posit that conflict is inevitable and a fact of life in many organizations. Conflict occurs between various individuals in institutions because of their frequent interaction (Makaye and Ndofirepi, 2012). There is no one agreed definition for the word conflict. Scholars in various fields such as peacebuilding, political science, international relations and conservation have defined conflict differently. For example, LeBaron and Pillay (2006: 12) define conflict as "a difference within a person or between two or more people that touches them in a significant way". The authors add that conflict can occur over hierarchy in relationships, power, resources, and status, and is exacerbated by poor communication or negative images of the other. Peterson, Peterson, Peterson and Leong (2013: 94) define conflict as "expressed disagreements among people who see incompatible goals and potential interference in achieving these goals". In the field of conservation, conflict is said to occur between stakeholder groups with divergent goals over natural resource management (Kovács, Fabók, Kalóczkai, & Hansen, 2016; Madden & McQuinn, 2014). Robinson, Lloyd and Rowe (2008) argued that conflict occurs because people have different needs, ideas, interests, views and values. The authors further argue that conflict lies in the minds of the people involved and only becomes tangible when it manifests itself during interaction.

Okolo (2005) and Robbins (2000) argue that conflicts can be positive or constructive if they are managed and resolved successfully. According to Göksoy and Argon (2016), conflicts only become a problem when they are poorly managed. The authors add that the emergence of conflict helps to address the raised problems. In agreement with the above authors, Robbins (2000) argues that a certain amount of conflict in an organisation is healthy because it prevents stagnation and the implementation of myopic decisions. Similarly, Larson and Mildred (2000) believe that the effective management of conflicts results in productive outcomes and the creation of a healthy organisation over time. In the same vein, Wattam (2005) asserts that conflict is a necessary agent to stimulate change, innovation and efficiency in an organisation.

Likewise, Owens (2001) argues that healthy competition and rivalry can lead to better decision-making. Given the foregoing, headmasters, teachers and learners need to understand the nature and causes of conflict for them to be able to constructively manage them (Göksoy & Argon, 2016). Having considered the above-mentioned definitions, the operational definition of conflict used for this study is differences of opinion, opposing actions, disagreements, and clash of ideas among teachers resulting from the incompatibility of attitudes, beliefs, expectations, interests, goals and values.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework (Moore 2003 framework)

There are several ways of categorising conflict using diverse analytical frameworks. For example, the Levels of Conflict framework (Canadian Institute for Conflict Resolution, 2000), an analytical tool for exploring the types and intensity of conflict, was adapted by Madden and McQuinn (2014) to provide a useful analytical construct for understanding conservation conflicts. The framework identifies three levels of conflict, namely disputes, underlying conflicts and deep-rooted or identity-based conflicts. Speakman and Ryals (2010) classify the causes of conflict into four levels, namely intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup and intergroup. Tshuma, Ndlovu and Bhebe (2016) categorise causes of conflict in schools into structural and personal. Hanson (1991) classifies conflict into six categories namely intra-role, inter-role, intra-departmental, intra-organisational, intrapersonal and interpersonal. Jehn and Mannix (2001) divided conflicts into three types, namely relationship (which stems from interpersonal incompatibilities), task (related to disagreements in viewpoints and opinions about a particular task), and process (which refers to disagreement over the group's approach to the task). An analytical framework developed by Moore (2003) to analyse complex social conflict situations identifies the causes or sources of conflict as data-based, interest-based, relationship-based, structural-based and value-based. In addition to Moore's conceptualisation, Bradshaw (2008) adds another source of conflict, namely needs-based conflict. Therefore, Bradshaw's six sources of conflict are structures, values, data, relationships, needs, and interests. This study applies Moore's conceptualisation of conflict to the causes of conflicts in schools in the Kambuzuma Circuit, Harare.

Moore identifies data, interests, relationships, structural matters and values as the sources of conflict (Figure 1). According to the author, the analytical framework can be adapted to any type of conflict situation. The framework stresses the need for the recognition of the attitudes of the parties involved in the conflict, the relationships between them, their shared and

divergent values, the extent to which those involved in the conflict can access and interpret information, the interests of the parties involved in the conflict, as well as the structural conditions of conflicts.

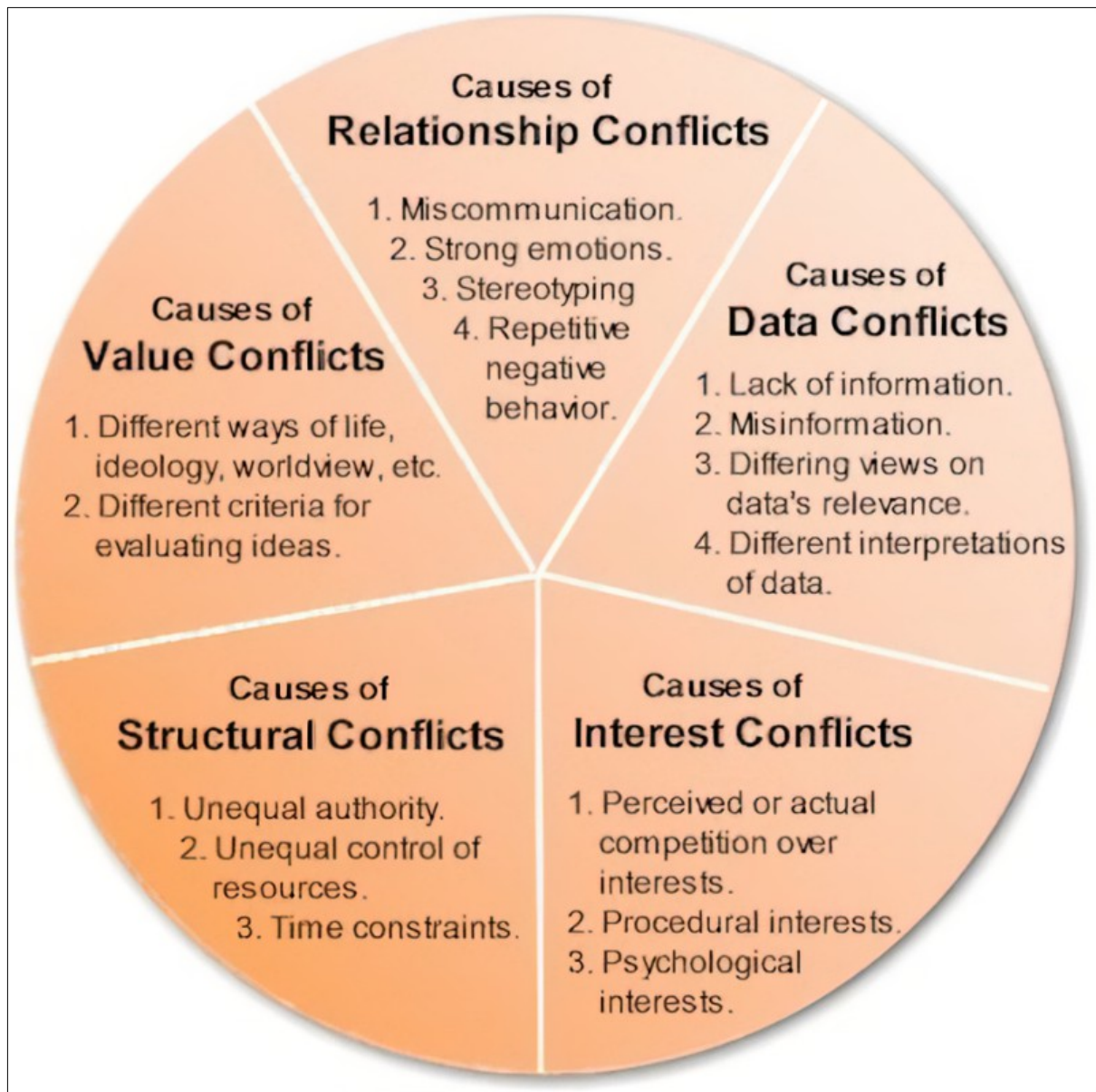


Figure 2.1. Source of Conflict-Adapted from Moore (2003)

### 2.2.1 Data conflicts

According to Moore (2003), data conflicts are caused by a lack of information, misinformation, distortion of information, divergent views on the relevance of data, opposing interpretations and assessment of data, or by following different assessment procedures.

### 2.2.2 Interest conflicts

Interests relate to a “party’s basic needs, wants, and motivations” (Patton, 2005:280-281). Individuals have different interests that result in them taking specific positions or viewpoints regarding some issues. Interest-based conflicts result from perceived or actual competition over resources. For example, this occurs when parties fail to agree on how resources should be distributed and shared (Rahim, 2001). Additionally, the conflict is caused by the shortage of resources in the organisation, which makes the parties involved feel that they will not be able to achieve personal and professional objectives. This scarcity of resources results in intensified competition among employees in the workplace (Zide, 2005).

### 2.2.3 Structural conflicts

Structural conflicts are caused by unequal distribution of resources or unequal power. Additionally, time or legal constraints, and geographical, physical, or environmental factors are also important because they hinder cooperation. These conflicts are also related to how work is organised (Aquinas, 2006). This implies that when certain rules are not adhered to when dealing with certain aspects of work, conflict ensues.

### 2.2.4 Relationship conflicts

According to Moore (2003: 64), relationship-based conflicts result from “strong emotions, misperceptions or stereotypes, poor communication or miscommunication and repetitive negative behaviour”. They relate to the interaction among people in an organisation, including previous engagement, which influences how workmates interact with one another. Interaction has the potential to impact the relationships of the parties involved.

### 2.2.5 Value conflicts

Value conflicts are based on people’s different ways of life, cultural beliefs, political beliefs, ideology and religion. According to Hicks (2001) and Hitlin (2003), values are beliefs, goals and standards held by people, which embody their sense of who they are. According to Mayer and Louw (2009:3), “values are often un-reflected and unconscious until conflict occurs”. Mayer (2000:11) states that values pertain to “what distinguishes right from wrong and good from evil”. This means conflict occurs when decisions are made by people who have different goals, standards and beliefs. This also means disputes only arise when people attempt to force their beliefs on others who have different beliefs. Value-based conflicts are difficult to resolve

because the parties involved see their positions as tied to their respective identities (Hicks, 2001; Nie, 2003).

### 2.2.6 Strengths and limitations of Moore's analytical framework

Moore's analytical framework was employed for the following reasons. Firstly, it is comprehensive because it reveals the multifaceted nature of conflict. This means it considers the various aspects of conflict, providing an understanding of the conflict dynamics. Secondly, it is flexible, which means it can be applied to different conflict scenarios, making it a versatile tool for conflict analysis. The analytical framework, therefore, provides a holistic analysis of complex social conflicts in schools. Thirdly, it is suitable for addressing the research objectives and questions, and the interpretive qualitative research design. Lastly, the framework helps to analyse the causes of conflicts and their intensity in order to come up with effective conflict mitigation measures (Kovács, Fabók, Kalóczkai, & Hansen, 2016).

However, the analytical framework has some limitations. The five sources of conflict in the analytical model are overlapping and interconnected, thereby adding to the complexity of the situation. For instance, structural conflict can impact interest conflicts, while value conflicts can affect the relations between parties involved because of opposing value systems. Additionally, data conflicts can affect relations between the parties involved. However, Moore's analytical framework does not capture the interconnectedness of the various types of conflicts. This demonstrates the need for more case studies to uncover the interconnectedness of the causes of conflict and integrate them into the framework (Kovács et al., 2016).

## 2.3 Nature and Causes of conflict in schools

### 2.3.1 Provision of resources

The provision of inadequate resources and the inequitable sharing of scarce resources is a common cause of conflict in schools (Dick & Thodlana, 2013; Johdi & Apitree, 2012). Dick and Thodlana (2013) indicate that it is not feasible for all departments to be allocated funds for the purchase of their requirements. This inequitable distribution of scarce resources creates conflict between departments, between teachers and between departments and the school management (Dick & Thodlana, 2013; Kipkemboi and Kipruto, 2013). For example, the lack of teaching and learning resources was a major source of conflicts in church-sponsored Public Secondary Schools in the Kipkaren Division in Kenya (Kipkemboi & Kipruto 2013). Similar findings were also made by Shanka (2017) who studied the conflict between teachers

and school leaders in primary schools of Wolaita Zone, Ethiopia using a mixed method approach, Manesis, Vlachou, and Mitropoulou (2019), who investigated Greek teachers' perceptions of the types and the consequences of conflicts within elementary schools by employing a quantitative methodology, and Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012) who investigated conflict between headmasters and teachers in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, using the mixed method. Teachers feel that school heads expected better work performance and demanded good results yet they failed to provide the requisite resources (Adeyemi, 2009).

### 2.3.2 Distribution of work

Failure by headmasters to equally distribute work among the teachers results in conflict. Studies by Shanka (2017) and Manesis et al. (2019) showed that some teachers complained about unbalanced timetables because they were allocated more classes than others. Similarly, Tshuma et al. (2016) who studied the causes of conflicts in Gwanda, Zimbabwe, using a descriptive survey research design, and Edet, Benson, and Williams (2017) who carried out a quantitative study of conflict between teachers and learners in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, show that the allocation of students to other teachers following the absence of the responsible teachers led to conflicts because the teachers felt overburdened.

### 2.3.3 Communication

Poor communication or lack of communication causes conflict in schools. Barmao (2012) and Isik (2018) argue that conflict stems from poor communication or the inability to control one's emotions. In this regard, the author stresses the need for timely communication of concise and accurate information to minimise the number and severity of conflicts. Göksoy and Argon (2016), who studied the causes of conflict in Bolu Central District, Turkey, using qualitative research methods, found that conflicts resulted from a lack of communication. Poor communication was also reported to be a cause of conflict between teachers and administration in public secondary schools in Nyakach district, Kenya by Adhiambo and Samatwa (2011) who employed a quantitative approach as well as by Isik (2018) who employed the same method in State schools in Bartın, Turkey. The same finding was made in public primary schools in Eldoret, Kenya, by Barmao (2012), who used a mixed-method approach. However, Wattam (2005) argues that conflict can improve communication because when parties involved in conflict voice their opinions, the managers react by setting up formal channels to deal with future conflicts.



### 2.3.3 Leadership styles

An autocratic leadership style by principals or headmasters results in tension between school heads and teachers. Dick and Thodlana (2013) indicate that school management practices are usually characterised by a dictatorial or autocratic leadership style which elicits harsh consequences for any form of dissent. Onwe and Nwogbaga (2014), who investigated the causes of conflict in Nigerian schools by reviewing textbooks, internet materials and journal publications, found that one of the causes of conflicts was an authoritarian or dictatorial style of management by principals. Similarly, an authoritarian leadership style was found to be a cause of conflict in secondary schools in Moscow, Russia by Frolova, Rogach, Ryabov and Zuykina (2019) who used a quantitative approach. In the same vein, Karim (2015), who used a qualitative case study of one secondary school in Gilgit, Pakistan, found that strict rules and regulations in schools and harsh penalties for violating the rules caused conflict between school heads and teachers.

### 2.3.4 Personalities

According to Johdi and Apitree (2013), diverse personalities and opinions can result in tension between headmasters and teachers. The authors argue that conflicts occur because teachers have individual differences and perceive situations differently. These individual differences can relate to group activities, differences in experience, political views, and cultural differences (Rai & Singh, 2021). Personality clashes also result from competition, differences in opinions, criticism, and lack of cooperation (Göksoy & Argon, 2016; Rai & Singh, 2021). Vestel and Torres (2016) who conducted a quantitative study with principals in community schools in Texas, the United States, found that conflict was caused by competition and personality differences. This was exacerbated by a lack of cooperation and differences over carrying out a particular task. Additionally, differences in opinions result from teachers' varied philosophies, beliefs, goals, attitudes, socio-economic status and political interests result in conflict as shown by Johdi and Apitree (2013) and Salleh and Adulpakde (2012) who found these to be prominent in Islamic secondary schools in Yala, Thailand. Both authors employed a mixed method (survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview).

### 2.3.5 Teachers' qualifications and experience

For example, some teachers do not obey the principals or laid down rules because they do not like to be told what to do (Rai & Singh, 2021). In some instances, some of the teachers feel more competent than their headmaster, especially if they possess higher qualifications than the

school head. For example, Ertürk (2022) who carried out a qualitative case study on conflict in elementary schools, middle schools and high schools in the Yeniçağa district of Bolu, Turkey, found that conflict between teachers stemmed from jealousy of success and qualifications of others. The other cause of conflict is the fact that some schools are staffed with experienced long-serving teachers and inexperienced young ones who possess the most recent teaching ideas (Tshuma et al. 2016). This results in a lack of cooperation between experienced and inexperienced teachers because the young teachers usually perceive the elderly teachers as old-fashioned.

## 2.4 Teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of conflict

People have different perceptions of conflict (Stanley & Algert, 2007). Individuals' perceptions of conflict determine how they deal with it. Conflicts schools may occur between teachers (Mapolisa & Tshabalala, 2013a; Tshuma et al., 2016), between headmasters and teachers (Makaye & Ndofirepi, 2012; Salleh & Adulpakde, 2012), between students (Nkomo et al., 2020), between students and teachers (Basit, Rahman, Jumani, Chishti & Malik, 2010; Edet et al., 2017), and between teachers and parents (Maunjiri & Uzhenyu, 2017).

Studies have shown that teachers perceive conflicts as disagreements (du Plessis & Cain, 2017). These disagreements manifest in actions that they take when expressing their feelings and articulating their perceptions. For example, du Plessis and Cain (2017) and Msila (2012) indicate that disagreements arise when people are unable to find common ground. This is supported by Ramani and Zhimin (2010), who indicate that such conflict unravels when persons fail to reach an agreement due to divergent goals, needs and behaviour.

Nkomo et al. (2020) who researched conflict in Mberengwa Peri-urban Cluster primary schools found that teachers perceived conflicts as divergences and disagreements among group members over the task being performed. The authors cited the perceived sources of conflict as inadequate resources, poor governance, poor communication and unfairness. They further perceived the common causes of conflict as administrative given that school heads play a significant role in communication, school governance and procurement of resources.

Conflicts among teachers are also perceived as misunderstandings among each other. These misunderstandings arise due to incompatibilities and insufficient or inadequate information regarding an issue (Tshuma et al., 2016). This conflict takes place when there is a misunderstanding among different teams or cliques within the school (Nkomo et al., 2020).



Sometimes, conflict is perceived as a verbal and non-verbal altercation between teachers (du Plessis & Cain, 2017). This is in line with the views of Barsky and Wood (2005) who associate conflict with fighting in a verbal and non-verbal way, as well as physical confrontation and between those embroiled in issues of conflict.

According to Msila (2012), conflict can be perceived as an expression of diverse views or opinions. This includes differences in opinions on certain issues such as schemes of work, teaching methods and lesson plans (Tshuma et al., 2016). This stems from people's personalities, which leads them to approach issues in different ways (du Plessis & Cain, 2017). The authors add that the conflict emanates from the different beliefs that people hold. The foregoing is supported by Agoli and Rada (2015) who found that teachers in Albania perceived conflicts between teachers as divergent interests and viewpoints. Similarly, Isik (2018) found that physical education teachers in Bartın, Turkey perceived conflicts as a clash of opinions.

In their study of conflict resolution between school heads and teachers in Masvingo District, Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012) found that the perceived causes of conflict included unequal allocation of resources, unfair distribution of stationery, accommodation and classes as well as grapevine or gossip. Furthermore, most teachers were not satisfied with the unsatisfactory resolution of their problems by headmasters. Additionally, unresolved conflicts resulted in communication breakdown, thereby affecting the smooth running of the school.

Tshuma et al. (2016), who investigated teachers' perceptions of the causes of conflict among teachers in secondary schools in Gwanda District, established that conflict was influenced by both structural and personal factors among personnel. Findings showed that conflicts occurred among teachers, between teachers and the school heads, as well as between parents and teachers, and teachers and students. The authors classified the sources of conflict into structural (the nature of the organisation and how work is organised) and personal (differences between organizational members). The main structural causes of conflict were identified as inequitable sharing of resources, poor working conditions and the leadership's autocratic administrative style, while the major personal factors that caused conflict were differences in personalities, poor dissemination of information and favouritism.

A study carried out on the causes of conflict among teachers in Nkayi District in Zimbabwe by Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2013a) using a qualitative methodology and a case study research design revealed that the perceived causes of conflict included competition for resources,

gossiping about a workmate, poor communication, incompetence, alcohol abuse, favouritism, power struggles, and lack of compensation for work done.

## 2.5 Research gap

A search of various online databases revealed that previous studies on conflict in Zimbabwean schools were undertaken by Gazimbe and Gutuza (2016), Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012), Mapolisa and Tshabalala (2013a), Nkomo et al. (2020), Maunjiri and Uzhenyu (2017) and Tshuma et al. (2016). However, none of these studies have framed the causes of conflict in schools using Moore's Analytical framework. This study utilises Moore's (2003) conceptualisation of the sources of conflict to categorise the causes of conflict among teachers. It adopts a qualitative case study since the study is aimed at obtaining a deeper understanding of the nature and causes of conflicts in schools. By combining Moore's analytical framework and a qualitative case study, this study provides insights into the complexity of the conflict among teachers.

## 2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature related to the study at hand. The literature was presented under the following themes: concept of conflict and causes of conflict. The chapter ends by introducing the analytical framework that guides the study. Having reviewed the relevant literature and discussed the analytical framework, the task is now to understand how the analytical framework is employed in designing an appropriate methodology and methods for collecting data on the causes of conflict in schools. This is done in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 Introduction

Having discussed the analytical framework in the previous chapter, this chapter aims to adapt it and apply it to the study. Part of the application process will entail a description of the research design (research paradigm, research approach, research strategy), population and sampling techniques, data collection methods, analysis methods, validity and reliability. presentation. The chapter then concludes by discussing ethical considerations.

### 3.1 Research design

Having discussed the analytical framework, the next step is to translate it into the appropriate methodology and methods for investigating the causes of conflict in two secondary schools in the Kambuzuma Circuit in Harare. Research design is a method of changing a research idea into a research plan for implementation by a researcher and is guided by research questions that provide clues about the problem a researcher intends to address (Creswell, Hanson, Plano & Morales, 2007; Wahyuni, 2012). It entails the formulation of specific research methods as well as data analysis methods and provides a researcher with the strategies for solving an identified research problem.

#### 3.1.1 Research paradigm

Crotty (1998) posited that a researcher's philosophical position informs the methodology, which informs the choice of methods. Therefore, the choice of a research paradigm has implications for both the methodology and the research methods (Carter & Little, 2007). A paradigm is an overall theoretical research framework (Mack, 2010). Creswell (2013) defines a paradigm as a worldview while Scotland (2012) calls it beliefs, assumptions, and values about the aim of a method shared by a researcher. A paradigm comprises a set of assumptions, concepts, theories and beliefs of how the world is perceived, which serve as a framework that guides the behaviour of the researcher (Wahyuni, 2012).

Paradigms determine how researchers view both the phenomena they study and the research methodology that they should employ to study those phenomena (Tuli, 2010). A paradigm consists of four components namely ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods (Scotland, 2012). According to Tuli (2010), Scotland (2012) and Mack (2010), the research methodology that guides a research activity is determined by one's view of reality or how one sees the real world (ontology), the view of how one creates, acquires and communicates

knowledge that informs the research or assumptions about the best way to study the world (epistemology), and how that knowledge is gained (methodology). Every paradigm is based upon its own ontological and epistemological assumptions; hence, different paradigms have differing assumptions of reality and knowledge which underpin their particular research approach (Scotland, 2012; Wahyuni, 2012). Ontological assumptions inform a researcher's epistemological assumptions which in turn inform the methodology and these all give rise to the data collection methods (Mack, 2010). Methodology is a research strategy that translates the ontological and epistemological principles in the process of research activity (Scotland, 2012; Tuli, 2010). Therefore, ontology and epistemology are the two philosophical assumptions that shape the way social science researchers view and study social phenomena.

Creswell (2009) summarises the paradigms into three categories namely positivism, interpretivism or constructivism, and pragmatism. The respective paradigms deal with quantitative research, qualitative research, and mixed methods. According to constructionists or interpretivists, one can make sense of the world through multiple realities (Baxter & Jack, 2008). They perceive reality as socially constructed through the interaction between the researcher and participants (Crotty, 1998; Mack, 2010; Scotland, 2012; Tuli, 2010). Constructivists claim that truth is relative and dependent on one's perspective and also recognise the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning (Baxter & Jack, 2008). In this regard, the constructionist epistemological position assumes that different individuals construct the meaning of the same object or phenomenon in different ways (Crotty 1998; Creswell 2009). Subjectivist epistemology holds that what constitutes knowledge depends on how individuals perceive and understand reality (Moon & Blackman, 2014). Furthermore, an individual's understanding of the world is based on their cultural, historical, and social perspectives (Crotty 1998; Creswell 2009). Constructivism also stresses the social construction of reality and close collaboration between the researcher and the participant (Carter & Little, 2007). Therefore, the stories told by participants when describing their views of reality enable the researcher to understand the participants' actions better. In this regard, the goal of interpretivists is to understand the meaning of social phenomena from the point of view of those who experience them (Tuli, 2010). Additionally, interpretivists rely on personal contact between the researcher and the group being studied, thereby resulting in deeper insight into the context under study as well as richness and depth of the data to successfully address the research objectives (Patton, 2002; Tuli, 2010). According to constructionists, the role of the

researcher is to understand and analyse participants' views in constructing meaningful findings (Scotland, 2010; Tuli, 2010).

This study uses constructionism or interpretivism as an epistemological position which allows the researcher to engage with the social world of the different stakeholders when collecting data. The interpretivist paradigm was appropriate for this study because the researcher aimed to obtain a deeper understanding of the research participants' perception of the causes of conflict in their schools. This helped to understand the construction of reality from the perspectives of the teachers who experience conflict in the selected schools. The subjective experiences of the participants when describing their views of reality enabled the researcher to understand the participants' actions better (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Scotland, 2010). Additionally, the paradigm was best suited for data collection using the qualitative approach, which provides participants with an opportunity to reveal their perspectives, perceptions and experiences or "to gather their stories" (Patton, 2002:240). In this regard, a qualitative case study is employed to obtain rich information on the causes of conflict among teachers in schools in the Kambuzuma Circuit. The data collection methods used are semi-interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The use of multiple data sources in case studies enhances data credibility (Yin, 2014).

### 3.1.2 Research approach

Qualitative approaches stem from constructivism or interpretivism, in which there is a belief that there are multiple realities (Prokopy, 2011). The author adds that qualitative research uses a largely inductive approach to understand the world (Prokopy, 2011). The approach is an inductive methodological approach that provides a rich insight into the issues under investigation (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). Since the aim was to obtain a rich insight into the causes of conflict among school teachers, the study employed a qualitative approach. The goal of qualitative research is to understand social phenomena from the participants' viewpoint, instead of the researcher's perspective (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011).

The qualitative approach was used because of the following reasons. Firstly, it is more flexible than the quantitative approach, which emphasises the use of standardised questions and large representative samples to allow statistical analysis and broad generalisability (Teye, 2012). Secondly, a qualitative approach gives respondents a chance to explain their responses in greater detail, which enhances the understanding of the causes of conflict (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). Thirdly, it helps to gather in-depth information that is unlikely to be collected

using other methods (Prokopy, 2011). Fourthly, the method allows the researcher to follow up on new ideas or to probe further (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). Lastly, it employs direct quotes from participants from the original interviews which brings to life the complexity of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013).

However, qualitative research has some disadvantages. It is labour-intensive and time-consuming since it involves collecting and analysing large amounts of data (Njie & Asimiran, 2014). Additionally, the incorporation of quotes to provide participants' perspectives lengthens the study (Creswell, 2012).

### 3.1.3 Research strategy

This study employs a qualitative case study to obtain detailed information from research participants on the causes of conflict in schools to address the aim and objectives of the study (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2013; Yin, 2014). A qualitative case study is an in-depth investigation of a problem in one or more real-life settings or case sites to provide insight into an issue under investigation (Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) identified six sources of data for case studies, namely archival records, documents, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts. Among these, this study used semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis. The triangulation of these multiple sources of evidence or data triangulation (Patton, 2002) helped to address the research aim and objectives and to corroborate the research findings which enhanced their rigour, trustworthiness and credibility (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Yin, 2014).

The advantage of this approach is that there is a close collaboration between the researcher and the participant (Onwuegbuzie, Leech & Collins, 2010). Through their stories, the participants can describe their views of reality which enables the researcher to clearly understand their actions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Another advantage of a case study is that it enables the researcher to answer "how" or "why" questions instead of giving a brief view of the phenomenon studied (Yin, 2014). Since there is close collaboration between the researcher and the participants, the latter gets a chance to tell their stories by describing their views of reality, thereby enhancing a researcher's understanding of their actions (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

## 3.2 Population and sampling

### 3.2.1 Population

Population refers to all the cases that are the target of the research or a section of people who have common attributes (Ritchie et al., 2003). For this research, the participants were recruited from two secondary schools in Kambuzuma, Harare. The circuit has two public secondary schools, namely Kambuzuma High 1 and Kambuzuma High 1. The research population in the two secondary schools comprised 81 teachers, including headmasters, deputy headmasters and heads of departments (see Table 1). After the identification of the population, one has to select a sample. This is discussed in the next section.

Table 3.1. Population and sample size

<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Sample size</b>
Kambuzuma High 1	45	15
Kambuzuma High 2	36	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>30</b>

### 3.2.2 Sample

A sample is a subgroup of the population to be studied or those persons identified to take part in a research project (Ritchie et al., 2003). For this study, the sample comprised 30 headmasters, deputy headmasters, heads of departments and teachers from the two selected schools. The participants were selected using a combination of convenience and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling involves the collection of data from a research population that is effortlessly reachable to the researcher and has the advantage of being cost-effective (Rahi, 2017). Convenience sampling was used because the researcher resides in the vicinity, which made it easier to engage with the research participants at the selected schools. Purposive sampling was used to select a sample of 30 teachers, who formed the respondents of the study. Purposive sampling involves handpicking the cases or people to be included in the sample based on the researcher's judgment (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech & Zoran, 2009). It ensures that the researcher chooses participants for a particular purpose. In this case, it was purposive as the purpose was to explore the participants' perceptions of the causes of conflict in the two schools that are within a similar social context. Its advantage is that the researcher uses his/her research skills and prior knowledge to choose respondents (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009).

The use of a small sample is common in qualitative research because, unlike quantitative research, the qualitative approach emphasises the quality of data associated with each unit observed rather than the number of units observed since it is the issues that arise that are transferable to other contexts (Yin, 2014). The approach is not generally designed to make broad claims about a population, but instead, seeks an in-depth understanding of the causes of conflict in schools (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). Thus, in qualitative research, a small sample is adequate to facilitate an in-depth inquiry into the issues under investigation (Morse, 2000). According to Ritchie et al. (2003), qualitative samples are often less than 50 because what is more important is meaning and not a generalisation of findings. This is supported by Teye (2012) who posits that a sample of 20 to 40 people is adequate since the research emphasises process and meanings rather than measures of quantity and frequency. They further suggest that a single-digit sample is adequate for detailed studies.

### 3.3. Data collection methods

#### 3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

Data were collected from 31 May to 14 June 2024. Thirty face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers (15 teachers per school) to understand their experiences about the causes of conflict. They provided participants with an opportunity to construct their perceptions and understanding related to the causes of conflict. The researcher facilitated the conversation using an interview guide (see Appendix 1) framed around the five themes proposed by Moore (2003) as well as the aim and objectives of the study. These interviews helped to obtain a detailed understanding of the respondent's perceptions of the causes of conflict. Each interview lasted for about one and a half and two hours (Wahyuni, 2012). The interviews were conducted in English. Data collection was done until no new causes of conflict emerged from the interviews (Ritchie et al., 2003). This theoretical saturation signalled the completion of data collection (Mason, 2010). The theoretical saturation helped to increase the transparency of the research findings. Semi-structured interviews help in determining research themes (Drury, 2011). However, the interviews take long to complete and analyse (Drury, 2011).



### 3.3.2 Focus group discussions

Four focus group discussions with six participants per focus group were conducted (see Appendix 2). This is in line with Rabiee's (2004) suggestion of between 6 and 10 as the generally manageable number of participants for a focus group. Each focus group session lasted for two and a half hours and was audio-recorded after seeking permission from the participants (Grønkjær, Curtis, de Crespigny & Delmar, 2011). A focus group has advantages over other data collection methods. Firstly, it is economical in that data can be collected faster and efficiently at a low cost since participants are interviewed in a group setting (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). Secondly, a focus group yields more detailed, in-depth and richer information in a relatively short period than that obtained from one-on-one interviews (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Rabiee, 2004). Lastly, the results of a focus group can be supported by quotations from the participants (Creswell, 2013). However, data from a focus group session takes a long to transcribe in full (Rabiee, 2004).

### 3.3.3 Document analysis

Document analysis involves a review of secondary sources of data such as records both in the public domain and in government institutions. The documents were used to provide background information and corroborate the causes of structural conflicts obtained through in-depth interviews and focus groups. This was done by checking the results from the interviews using background documents and relevant regulations from the MoPSE. Documents have advantages over other data collection methods. Firstly, they provide specific details of an event and can be reviewed repeatedly (Yin, 2014). Secondly, the information in a document cannot be distorted as what may happen with interviews during interaction between the researcher and the respondent. Lastly, documents are cost-effective since the information has already been produced. However, some documents may have inaccurate and incomplete data (Bowen, 2009; Patton, 2002) and may reflect the bias of the originator (Yin, 2014).

## 3.4 Data analysis methods

After the transcription of interviews, data were analysed qualitatively using inductive analysis which entailed grouping causes of conflict to create categories or themes (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Thomas, 2006). Data were analysed according to the five categories of conflict proposed by Moore (2003), which were used to indicate the five main themes, namely data conflicts, and interest conflicts, relationship conflicts, structural conflicts, and value conflicts. The analysis was done using the coding procedures suggested by Thomas (2006) which entailed: the

preparation of raw data files in Microsoft Word and data cleaning; repeatedly reading the raw text in detail to familiarise me with the data and the themes contained in the text; coding and categorising; re-examining overlapping and redundant text; and continuous revision and refinement of the category system. Categories and themes were derived from the literature and the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Open coding was used to identify the emerging themes in the data (Thomas, 2006). Preliminary codes for the data were generated by reading through all the responses from the participants to determine the emerging common themes (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Axial coding was then used to further interconnect the categories and organize the identified themes. Thematic content analysis entailed analysing word or sentence repetition and keyword-in-context to develop themes for the causes of conflict (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Quotes from the interviews were then selected to support the themes arising from the data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). During data analysis codes such as T1 (Teacher 1), T2 (Teacher 2), and T30 (Teacher 30) were assigned to the 30 participants.

The inductive analysis of qualitative data done using the procedures suggested by Thomas (2006) is described in detail below:

#### 3.4.1 Preparation of raw data files or data cleaning

This involved reviewing all the typed transcripts which were stored in a computer as raw data word files. The raw data files were sorted and arranged according to the sources of information. Each interview or raw data file was printed separately.

#### 3.4.2 Close reading of text

This stage involved exploring the data by repeatedly reading the raw text in detail to familiarise it with the data and the themes and details contained in the text. As the reading was being done, memos (short phrases and ideas) were made in the margins and a consideration of the multiple meanings in the text was made.

#### 3.4.3 Coding and categorising

In this stage, categories or themes were identified and defined. Coding data involves subdividing or reducing data into meaningful segments and assigning names or categories to the data (Basit, 2003; Creswell, 2012). It involved segmenting sentences or paragraphs into categories and labelling these categories with a term (Creswell, 2012). The more general categories were derived from the research objectives. Specific categories were derived from the rereading of the raw data.

#### 3.4.5 Re-examining overlapping and redundant text

This involved the re-examination of segments of text that were coded into more than one category and a considerable amount of the text that had not been assigned to any category to determine if they were still relevant to the research objectives. Through this process, irrelevant information was discarded.

#### 3.4.6 Continuing revision and refinement of the category system

Sub-topics were searched within each category as well as contradictory points of view and new insights. This also involved the selection of appropriate quotations that conveyed the core theme or essence of a category. Sub-categories with similar meanings were grouped as categories while those that had similar meanings were linked under broader higher-order categories (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

To gain more insight into the research approach, Figure 2 below presents a summary of the research methodology employed by this study.

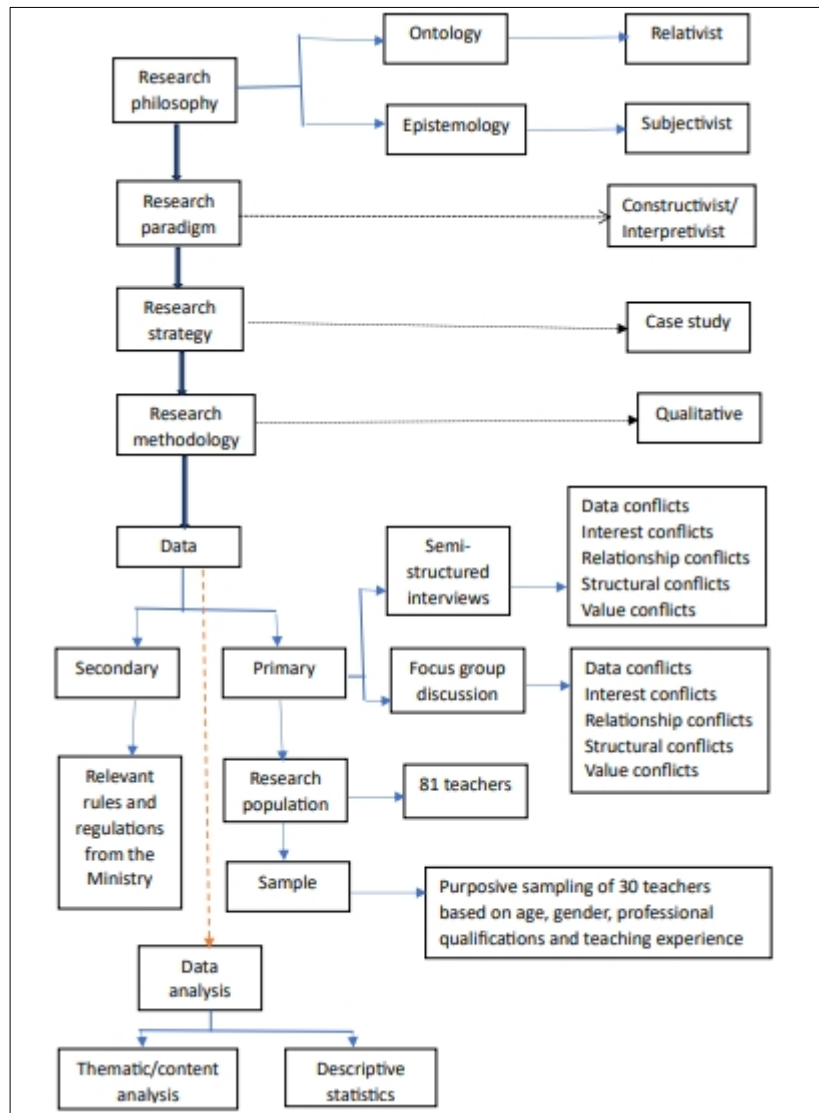


Figure 3.1. Summary of the research methodology (Source: Researcher's construct, 2024)

### 3.5 Validity and reliability of the data

The reliability and validity of the qualitative approach refer to trustworthiness, credibility, rigour and quality (Golafshani, 2003; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002). Since the qualitative case study has been criticised for its subjectivity as well as lack of rigour and representativeness and for failing to generalise the findings to a larger population (Teye, 2012), the rigour, validity and quality of research findings were achieved by using multiple data collection sources, namely semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis, which were used to triangulate findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Patton, 2002; Yin, 2014).

All the questions posed during the interviews were directly linked to the aim and objectives of the research (Morse et al., 2002). Additionally, participants were drawn from ordinary teachers,

heads of departments, deputy headmasters and headmasters. The researcher made sure that all the major themes were covered by demonstrating saturation during data collection, which helped to increase the transparency of findings (Bowen, 2008; Whittemore et al., 2001). Saturation occurs when no new information is collected from interviews. Analysing data using Moore's conceptualisation of conflict to group the causes of conflict into five themes enhanced the credibility of the findings.

Qualitative data were also transcribed and analysed meticulously, which also ensured rigour. Rigour was achieved by conducting multiple levels of data analysis, starting with narrow codes or themes to broader interrelated themes (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, direct quotations from interviews were included during the presentation of research findings to explain common themes that emerged from the data, which increased the transparency of findings (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Creswell, 2013; Whittemore et al., 2001), and helped to illustrate the context of the conflicts.

### 3.6 Ethical considerations

In compliance with research ethics, permission to conduct the study was sought from the Provincial Education Director of the Harare Metropolitan Province (see Appendix 3) after receiving an introductory letter from Bindura University of Science Education (see Appendix 4). Appendix 5 shows the letter of permission to conduct the research from the Provincial Education Director. This study was carried out in line with the Bindura University of Science Education ethical procedure before the commencement of data collection. The study embraced ethical principles aimed at protecting and respecting the rights of the respondents. The questions posed by the researcher, the techniques used to collect data and the recording of research findings were informed by a sensitivity to ethical concerns (Banister, 2007; Ferreria, Buttell & Ferreria, 2015). The researcher was sensitive to gender and cultural differences as well as the dynamics of the research population (Ferreria et al., 2015).

Before the start of every interview or focus group session, participants were fully informed about the aim and objectives of the research, the purpose of the research, the envisioned duration of the interviews as well as the institution overseeing it (Dowling, 2010). Consent was then sought before continuing with the data collection. Appendix 6 shows a sample of the consent form that was signed by participants. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were emphasised before the commencement of the research (Ausbrooks et al., 2009; Ferreria et al., 2015). The participants were also assured that their responses would remain confidential.

Before the commencement of the interview, it was emphasised that respondents were free to withdraw at any moment (Banister, 2007; Dowling, 2010; Ferreria et al., 2015). The refusal by prospective respondents to participate in the research was respected. Participants were kindly asked to give consent to the use of a recording device during the data collection exercise.

The identities of respondents were protected by using codes or numbers instead of their names (Dowling, 2010; Ferreria et al., 2015). Data were also recorded in such a way that the identity of participants would remain confidential. Quotes from the participants were also attributed using the participant's code to ensure anonymity.

### 3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the research design, philosophy, paradigm, strategy, and method adopted to address the aim and objectives of the research. It has highlighted the research population, sample size and sampling technique that was used, as well as the data collection instruments. The chapter concludes by discussing data analysis and the ways of achieving validity and reliability as well as ethical considerations. This next chapter presents the research findings using Moore's conceptualisation of conflict.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation and discussion of the research findings. It first presents the demographic characteristics of the research participants, namely age, gender, level of education and work experience. After that, the chapter presents the research findings in line with the research question and Moore's conceptualisation of conflict.

### 4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

As indicated in the previous chapter, during data analysis, codes such as T1 (Teacher 1), T2 (Teacher 2), and T30 (Teacher 30) were assigned to the 30 participants drawn from two secondary schools in Kambuzuma, Harare. Table 4.1 below summarises the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 4.1. Demographic characteristics of the teachers

Nickname	Gender	Age	Qualifications	Work experience
Teacher 1 (T1)	Male	56	Master's Degree	32
Teacher 2 (T2)	Female	31	Diploma	7
Teacher 3 (T3)	Female	41	First Degree	16
Teacher 4 (T4)	Female	28	First Degree	5
Teacher 5 (T5)	Male	51	Certificate	24
Teacher 6 (T6)	Female	40	First Degree	15
Teacher 7 (T7)	Female	43	First Degree	14
Teacher 8 (T8)	Male	35	First Degree	10
Teacher 9 (T9)	Female	27	Diploma	3
Teacher 10 (T10)	Female	43	First Degree	18
Teacher 11 (T11)	Male	36	Diploma	9
Teacher 12 (T12)	Male	53	First Degree	28
Teacher 13 (T13)	Male	29	Diploma	6
Teacher 14 (T14)	Male	45	Master's Degree	21
Teacher 15 (T15)	Female	33	Diploma	8
Teacher 16 (T16)	Female	47	First Degree	22
Teacher 17 (T17)	Female	54	Certificate	27
Teacher 18 (T18)	Female	27	Diploma	3
Teacher 19 (T19)	Female	47	First Degree	15
Teacher 20 (T20)	Female	38	Diploma	15
Teacher 21 (T21)	Male	49	Masters' Degree	25
Teacher 22 (T22)	Male	29	Diploma	6
Teacher 23 (T23)	Female	42	First Degree	17
Teacher 24 (T24)	Male	37	Diploma	13
Teacher 25 (T25)	Male	46	First Degree	22
Teacher 26 (T26)	Male	37	First Degree	12
Teacher 27 (T27)	Female	49	Certificate	23
Teacher 28 (T28)	Male	28	Diploma	4
Teacher 29 (T29)	Female	41	First Degree	16
Teacher 30 (T30)	Male	34	Diploma	11

Source: Fieldwork 2024

The demographic characteristics of the participants are described in more detail below, according to gender, age, marital status, educational qualifications and work experience.

#### 4.1.1 Gender of respondents

Table 4.1. Gender of respondents (N=30)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female	16	53.3
Male	14	46.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Fieldwork (2024)**

As shown in Table 4.2, sixteen (53.3%) participants were females while 14 (46.7%) were males. This shows that there was more female than male representation in the study.

#### 4.1.2 Age of respondents

Table 4.2. Age of respondents (N=30)

Age in years	Frequency	Percentage
Below 30 years	6	20
31-40	9	30
41-50	11	36.7
51 and above	4	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Fieldwork (2024)**

As illustrated in Table 4.3, the majority of the respondents (36.7%) were aged between 41-50 years followed by those aged between 31-40, those below 30 and those aged 51 and above, respectively. This shows that the majority of respondents were mature, which implies that they could be more active and innovative.

#### 4.1.3 Level of education of respondents

Table 4.3. Level of education of respondents (N=30)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate in Education	3	10
Diploma in Education	11	36.7
First degree	13	43.3
Master's degree	3	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Fieldwork (2024)**

As shown in Table 4.4, 13 respondents (43.3%) had first degrees, 11 (36.7%) had teaching diplomas, 3 (10%) held certificates and another 3 (10%) had Masters degrees. These qualifications imply that the majority of the respondents were seasoned professionals. However, the diverse educational backgrounds may result in teachers differing on certain issues resulting in conflict.



#### 4.1.4 Work experience of respondents

Table 4.4. Work experience of respondents (N=30)

Work Experience (years)	Frequency	Percentage
0-5	4	13.3
6-10	6	20
11-15	7	23.4
16-20	4	13.3
21 and above	9	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Fieldwork (2024)**

As illustrated in Table 4.5, the majority of respondents (66.7%) had worked for more than 10 years. In Zimbabwe, such teachers are considered to be eligible to apply for any senior post, such as that of deputy headmaster. The experience of the teachers could imply that they were mature and had worked long enough to have encountered and resolved conflicts during their teaching careers.

#### 4.2 The nature and causes of conflict

The teachers' perceptions regarding the nature and causes of conflict presented below were categorised according to Moore's (2003) conceptualisation of conflict. The five themes identified were data conflicts, interest conflicts, relationship conflicts, structural conflicts and value conflicts. Each of the five main categories is presented as a theme, which is further divided into respective sub-categories.

##### 4.2.1 Data conflict

Most participants identified the causes of conflict as lack of information or misinformation, lack of transparency and consultation, and gossip or grapevine. These sources of conflict are discussed below.

##### *4.2.1.1 Lack of information or misinformation*

Lack of information or misinformation was cited by respondents as the main cause of conflict in the two schools. Most participants attributed the occurrence of conflict to the failure of the school leadership to timeously announce important information to teachers. Poor information dissemination of information caused misunderstandings among teachers, which resulted in conflict among staff members. Participants lamented either the absence of information or the failure of headmasters to put across the intended message. This was indicated by a teacher who said: "Sometimes the failure by the management to put the message across may cause confusion, which fuels conflict" (T3, School A). The teachers indicated that school heads did

not inform staff members and other stakeholders of their decisions or expectations as well as developments in the school. Lack of information meant that the teacher's duties and responsibilities were not laid out. Furthermore, inaccurate information resulted in the erosion of trust among teachers and between teachers and the school administration.

Lack of information resulted in the spread of falsehoods through gossiping as suggested by Moore (2003) who argues that lack of information and misinformation results in conflict escalation. Additionally, Moore (2003) and Littlejohn and Domenici (2007) posit that lack of information may lead to misperception and misunderstanding, which causes conflict among staff members.

#### *4.2.1.2 Lack of transparency and consultation*

This source of conflict is linked to lack of information referred to in Section 4.2.1.1 above. Most teachers felt that there was lack of transparency and consultation when important decisions were made. They said they did not have access to management decisions about the day-to-day running of the school. The participants indicated that school heads single-handedly made decisions without consulting other teachers. As one participant stated:

*The school leadership does not open up when doing certain things. It seems as if they are hiding something. This causes conflict in our school (School A, Focus Group Discussion 1).*

This was supported by another participant who said,

*Lack of transparency is shown by the fact that teachers are not made aware of developments in the school by the school leadership. As a result, teachers doubt the school leadership and this causes conflict (T28, School B).*

Furthermore, the participants complained that the headmasters did not listen to the views of their teachers. Lack of transparency and consultation was found to be a cause of conflict among teachers in South Africa (du Plessis & Cain, 2017).

#### *4.2.1.3 Gossip or grapevine*

In the absence of clear information, rumours and gossip spread causing tension and conflicts among teachers. Therefore, the spread of gossip is closely linked to lack of information or miscommunication referred to in Section 4.2.1.1. Participants cited the spreading of falsehoods, especially by the headmasters' "blue-eyed boys" who were assigned to spy on other teachers.

This was indicated by a staff member who said: “The spreading of lies about other teachers results in tensions. This is usually caused by jealousy and envy.” (T26, School B). Another participant said:

*Some teachers just spread unsubstantiated information on other teachers to the school leadership in return for favours such as carrying out tasks that have monetary rewards (T9, School A).*

The participants indicated that grapevine resulted in divisions between teachers, which made it difficult to work together. It also resulted in teachers targeted by gossip failing to execute their duties properly because they were worried about what was being said. This resulted in toxic and fragile relationships.

Regarding the spread of rumours, Scott (2010) contends that gossip circulated among educators may lead to an escalation in conflict. This is supported by Ngcobo (2003) who states that teachers spread unsubstantiated or inappropriate comments about their colleagues during their administrative time in staffrooms.

#### 4.2.2 Interest conflict

The causes of conflict under this theme were competition over limited resources, limited opportunities for promotion and professional growth and lack of recognition. These causes of conflict are presented below.

##### 4.2.2.1 Competition over limited resources

Competition over limited resources was cited as the main cause of conflict under this theme. The conflict was mainly caused by the inequitable sharing of scarce learning and teaching materials. Some teachers indicated that it was difficult to give homework to learners because five learners shared a single textbook. They also said the school administration even failed to provide red pens for them to mark learners' exercise books. This was attributed to a lack of financial resources. This was noted by a participant who said:

*Some teachers do not have desks in their classrooms. When you ask for teaching and learning materials, you are told there is no money'. This causes conflict with the administration (Teacher 17, School B).*

Additionally, the school administration faced opposition from teachers who felt that the allocation of resources was biased or unfair. As one teacher said:

*When it comes to purchasing textbooks, the English Department gets more textbooks compared to other departments because the headmaster is an English teacher. At one time, the Shona Department was left out when textbooks were purchased. This resulted in conflict among teachers as it gave the impression that Shona was not an important subject (T11, School A).*

The above scenario resulted in teachers feeling unfairly treated since they did not have access to the same resources as their colleagues. This also resulted in teachers from the Shona Department lamenting that the school headmaster expected them to produce good results yet their department was starved of learning resources. Additionally, this negatively affected pupils' learning of the Chishona subject because they did not have the same resources as their peers, potentially affecting their academic performance. The situation further resulted in rivalry between departments.

The issue of competition over limited resources as a cause of conflict is in sync with findings made by Dick and Thodlana (2013), Makaye and Ndofirepi (2012), Manesis et al. (2019), and Shanka (2017) who indicate that contestation over limited resources could exacerbate conflict among educators.

It is noteworthy that the issue of resources is also discussed under structural conflict in Section 4.2.4.1. This shows that the sources of conflict are intertwined.

#### *4.2.2.2 Limited opportunities for promotion and professional growth*

The participants felt that their interests and needs for professional growth and personal development were not met. Competition for limited promotion opportunities caused tension and conflict among teachers. The teachers lamented that, despite furthering their education, they remained class teachers for many years, which resulted in frustration as their goals of executing managerial or leadership roles were not achieved. The limited opportunities for promotion resulted in teachers feeling that their careers had stagnated, leading to frustration and demotivation. The teachers indicated that the MoPSE rarely advertised promotion posts, adding that when these promotion posts were advertised, there was a lot of competition from many qualified teachers. One teacher said:

*There is limited possibility for promotion for teachers by the Ministry. We have been improving our qualifications with the hope of getting promoted, but we have remained ordinary teachers for more than 20 years. In our school setup, it is even difficult to be*

*appointed a senior teacher or head of department. This causes frustration among teachers (T16, School B).*

Some teachers felt that the appointment of some teachers to senior teachers or heads of departments was not done on merit as those who were friends with the headmaster were appointed. As one teacher said, “Those who are not friends with the headmaster are overlooked for promotion. As a result, those who are left out feel appreciated and unrecognised” (T24, School B). Participants felt that some teachers were appointed to school management based on belonging to the headmaster’s faction or clique instead of their qualifications or experience. As a result, there was a lack of respect for those who were promoted without the necessary experience.

Regarding the issue of promotion, Ngcobo (2003) contends that bitterness arises among educators when they fail to access promotion posts in schools. Similarly, Thapa (2016) points out that staff members often view their colleagues as rivals in competing for promotion posts. The perceived unfair promotion was also found to be a cause of conflict among teachers in South Africa (du Plessis & Cain, 2017).

The issue of promotion is also cited under favouritism, a sub-theme of relationship conflict, which is discussed in Section 4.2.3.2. This shows that the sources of conflict are interrelated.

#### *4.2.2.3 Lack of recognition*

Some teachers complained about lack of recognition for the work they did at their schools. They indicated that their performances were not acknowledged by school management. For example, they mentioned that those who produced good academic results as well as those who made learners perform well in various sporting disciplines were not adequately acknowledged. As one participant said, “We simply want our effort to be acknowledged. We are not demanding any monetary rewards.” The lack of appreciation resulted in teachers feeling demoralised and undervalued. Furthermore, the participants complained about perceived favouritism or bias in the recognition of teachers, which caused tension among teachers.

#### *4.2.3 Relationship conflict*

Relationship conflict was attributed to a lack of communication or miscommunication, favouritism, and lack of respect and tolerance for different opinions. These causes of conflict are presented below.

#### 4.2.3.1 Lack of communication or miscommunication

According to participants, lack of communication or poor communication by the school management was the main cause of conflict among teachers. The lack of clear communication channels used by administrators resulted in teachers failing to communicate with school managers. The participants complained that sometimes the school managers did not communicate with teachers regarding issues they should be informed about. As one participant said:

*I was assigned a duty which needed to be performed after normal working hours without my knowledge. I learned about it from another teacher. I declined to perform the duty because I had other commitments. As a result, conflict ensued with the school management. (T19, School B).*

Another participant said: “There is no clear, honest and effective communication by the headmasters” (T30, School B). According to participants, lack of communication resulted in assumptions and misunderstandings, which exacerbated conflict. Furthermore, uncommunicated concerns and unaddressed issues simmered and eventually evolved into conflict. Participants added that the headmasters did not ask for the opinions of teachers and did not give them constructive feedback, which resulted in conflict and demotivation. Additionally, inadequate communication by school headmasters resulted in gossip and rumours, causing further tension and conflict among teachers.

According to participants, poor communication also resulted in misunderstandings and lack of coordination, which made it difficult to execute tasks to achieve set goals or targets. They indicated that it was difficult for teachers to raise concerns because of communication barriers. This meant that there were no channels of communication to solve disputes among teachers.

The above findings are in sync with those of Johdi and Apitree (2012) and Dick and Thodlana (2013) who indicate that conflict among teachers is fuelled by poor or lack of communication. Similar findings were made by Barmao (2012) who found that restricted and poor communication channels caused conflicts, which resulted in frustration, anger, distrust and resentment.

#### 4.2.3.2 Favouritism by the school management

Showing favouritism towards some staff members resulted in conflict among teachers. Participants complained that management showed an inclination toward certain staff members

who were close to them. School heads were reported to favour some teachers at the expense of others, which fostered resentment towards those who were preferred. Sometimes this favouritism was demonstrated when such teachers were appointed heads of departments or senior teachers without the requisite experience. According to the participants, attempts to resolve the disputes failed, especially if the teacher involved in the conflict was close to the headmaster. As one staff member said:

*The school leadership shows a clear preference for some teachers over others. For example, they value those teachers' views. But when some of us make contributions, our views are not considered. This causes conflict among staff members (T7, School A).*

The exhibition of favouritism by school headmasters resulted in the erosion of trust among teachers and between teachers and the school management, thereby leading to the creation of a toxic work environment as well as decreased morale, motivation and job satisfaction. It also made it difficult for teachers to work together in harmony.

Favouritism by the school leadership was found to be a cause of conflict as corroborated by Tshuma et al. (2016) who found that the phenomenon was one of the main factors fuelling conflict in Gwanda secondary schools. The authors add that the resentment that arises from favouritism results in rumours and jealousy, which cause conflict, thereby hindering effective teaching and learning.

As mentioned in Section 4.2.2.1 under interest conflict and Section 4.2.4.1 under structural conflict, such favouritism also manifested in the inequitable distribution of resources among departments. Once again, this demonstrates that the sources of conflict are interlinked.

#### *4.2.3.3 Lack of respect and tolerance for different opinions*

Differences of opinion among teachers resulted in constant disagreements among teachers, which made it difficult for them to work together in harmony. Failure to tolerate or accept colleagues' views resulted in conflicts and delays in completing allocated tasks. As a result, some teachers became withdrawn because they felt uncomfortable sharing their opinions with colleagues who did not value them. As one participant said:

*Confrontations among teachers occur due to differences of opinions, views or ideas. Because of personal differences, some teachers disrespect their colleagues' views. Some teachers believe that their views are always correct. (T4, School A).*

Furthermore, fear of judgement or ridicule for their opinions created a culture of silence. It also hindered collaboration and the sharing of ideas among teachers. Another teacher said:

*Some teachers do not respect their colleagues and lack tolerance for other people's ideas. Lack of respect or tolerance for other people's ideas causes conflict because the affected person feels frustrated when his valuable contributions are discarded (T12, School A).*

Participants felt that management was not prepared to listen to what teachers had to say. As one participant indicated, "When the headmaster does not consider the views of his teachers, tension arises between the two parties" (T2, School A). This autocratic style of management by headmasters is also highlighted under structural conflict in Section 4.2.4.4 under structural conflict.

Regarding lack of respect and tolerance for different opinions, Schermerhorn, Hunt and Osborn (2000) argue that personnel who have senior positions are reluctant to accept assistance from colleagues who are below them, thereby causing conflict.

#### 4.2.4 Structural conflict

Structural conflicts emanated from aspects related to the way the school was organised. These aspects included the provision of resources, allocation of duties and responsibilities, failure to meet deadlines, unpunctuality and absenteeism, and the school administration's leadership style. These issues are presented below.

##### 4.2.4.1 Provision of resources

The provision of inadequate resources by the school management was reported to be a common cause of conflict by participants. The scarcity of resources in the selected schools meant that it was difficult to equitably share them among teachers and learners. The teachers blamed school heads and the School Development Committees (SDC) for the lack of teaching and learning resources, resulting in conflict between the school leadership and teachers. Teachers felt that failure to provide adequate teaching and learning resources affected the quality of teaching and learning. Lack of teaching resources resulted in difficulty in lesson planning. In the two schools, there are rotational classes (hot sitting). The teachers of classes that shared the same classrooms complained that those who used the classrooms in the morning left them uncleaned. One participant said:



*The classroom should always be properly cleaned. We have irresponsible teachers who leave the classrooms with litter everywhere (T29, School B).*

The issue of resources is corroborated by Tshuma et al. (2016) who indicate that some schools in Gwanda did not have basic resources, including teaching and learning materials, which demotivated teachers and resulted in conflict. The existence of conflict over sharing resources concurs with findings by Johdi and Apitree (2012) who indicate that the sharing of scarce resources among teachers results in conflict. The study also confirms the findings by Dick and Todhlana (2013) and Kipkembi and Kipruto (2013) that conflict over the provision of resources is inevitable because it is not feasible to purchase all their requirements for all departments due to high budgetary constraints. The authors add that the inequitable distribution of scarce resources creates conflict between departments, between teachers and between departments and the school management.

It is noteworthy that the issue of resources is also discussed under interest conflict discussed in Section 4.2.2.1. Thus, interest conflict is interlinked with structural conflict.

#### *4.2.4.2 Allocation of duties and responsibilities*

Participants complained about the unfair allocation of tasks by the school management. For example, in one of the schools where there is streaming according to learner ability, teachers complained that they were always allocated classes for slow learners, but were expected to produce good results. Friction also resulted from the perceived unfair allocation of teaching subjects. Some teachers felt that they were allocated subjects in which they did not have the necessary content knowledge. This was highlighted when a participant stated:

*When you are given a subject which is not your area of specialisation, there is tension with the school leadership, which expects you to deliver good results (Teacher 1, School A).*

The failure of some teachers to play their roles in line with their job title, description of duties, and agreements with the school management was attributed to the headmasters' lack of clarity in the definition of the functions and roles of teachers. The participants cited that some teachers had heavy workloads because they were involved in teaching, as well as supervising learners during sports and club activities, while other teachers were not involved in extracurricular activities at all. They complained that the same individuals remained after school for sports and club activities, while others went home. This stemmed from the lack of clearly outlined

procedures regarding participation in sports and club activities, hence the occurrence of conflict. Conflict ensued because some teachers' roles related to extracurricular activities were not clearly defined and both the teacher and school administration had a different understanding of that role. For example, one teacher could be involved in many roles such as teaching students supervising the debate club, and leading a house for sports, among other roles.

As a result, some participants felt that there was favouritism during the allocation of tasks. This was demonstrated by a participant who said:

*When duties are distributed during staff meetings, the easiest duties are assigned to teachers who are close to the school management. So, when those assigned arduous tasks fail to perform them effectively, they end up having a conflict with the management. There should be equitable allocation of responsibilities (T21, School B).*

Additionally, the lack of consultation by the school administration when assigning roles and responsibilities to teachers was a cause of conflict. Participants felt that the duties and responsibilities were unfairly allocated by the school management because they were not consulted on their responsibilities. As one teacher said: "Allocations of certain roles and responsibilities to staff members results in conflict when there is no consultation" (T3, School A).

Role ambiguity resulted in conflict since personnel were not given clear instructions regarding their tasks and duties as argued by Plocharczyk (2007). This is also attributed to the fact that the headmaster may expect a teacher to spend much time preparing lessons as well as coaching the soccer team (Steyn & Van Niekerk, 2002).

#### *4.2.4.3 Failure to meet deadlines, unpunctuality and absenteeism*

Lack of professionalism among teachers in violation of the Public Service Commission (PSC) Code of Conduct resulted in conflict, especially between teachers and the school leadership. This strained the relationship between teachers and school management, creating a negative work environment. The conflict stemmed from the teachers' failure to complete administrative tasks assigned to them as well as adhere to stated deadlines or time frames. For example, the teachers failed to meet deadlines related to the submission of schemes of work and records of marks. One participant said:

*Some of my colleagues fail to hand in examination mark schedules on time so that learners' reports can be processed as scheduled at the end of each term. Furthermore, if*

*you are a class teacher, you still have to forward the report cards to the headmaster or deputy headmaster who does the final analysis. This causes conflict between class teachers and subject teachers (T25, School B).*

There were also reports of teachers who did not attend lessons on time and came to work late. This resulted in delayed start to classes and disruption to the school schedule, which impacted learners learning time. One participant said:

*I always experience conflict with some of my colleagues who fail to come to class on time. They attend their classes very late, thereby compromising students' learning time. The teachers also arrive late for playground duties to supervise learners. We earn money for doing our work (teaching) (T22, School B).*

The unpunctuality also inconvenienced colleagues who relied on the teachers for collaborations and meetings. Furthermore, it undermined the efforts by the teachers to instill discipline and punctuality in learners. Cain and du Plessis (2017) found that unpunctuality and failure to meet laid-out deadlines resulted in significant conflict among staff members.

According to participants, absenteeism resulted in the disruption of the learning process, causing inconvenience to learners and colleagues. It also meant additional workload to colleagues, thereby causing conflict among teachers. This showed the teachers' lack of commitment to their work.

#### *4.2.4.4 The school leadership's management style*

The headmaster's autocratic management style was reported to be a cause of conflict by some participants. Participants revealed that the school management mainly employed dictatorial tendencies characterised by a top-down chain of command with harsh consequences for any form of dissent. The participants indicated that headmasters did not want their decisions questioned. This stemmed from a lack of trust in teachers and resulted in a lack of initiative by teachers. The participants reported that such autocratic tendencies by school heads demotivated teachers. They added that the headmasters were unpopular because of their strictness. As one participant stated: "Conflicts arising from the headmaster's authoritarian management style are common in our school." (T18, School B). The teachers' lack of input in decision-making and lack of feedback from the school management resulted in them feeling frustrated, disregarded, undervalued and intimidated, which stifled the teachers' creativity and innovation. The findings corroborate findings by Dick and Thodlana (2013), Johdi and Apitree (2012) and Mapolisa

and Tshabalala (2013b) that school headmasters' autocratic tendencies are a common cause of conflict with teachers and result in failure to achieve cooperation and collaboration among teachers.

#### 4.2.5 Value conflict

Many participants felt that values about people's beliefs and principles were a major cause of conflict among teachers. They attributed the occurrence of value conflicts to different beliefs and viewpoints, the existence of cliques of factions and gender differences. These sources of conflict, which are all interrelated, are discussed below.

##### 4.2.5.1 Different beliefs and viewpoints

Different beliefs and viewpoints were perceived to be the main cause of conflict. Some participants cited lack of tolerance and respect for colleagues' ideas and opinions, thereby resulting in conflict. For example, senior or experienced teachers were not receptive to the advice of recently qualified teachers who they felt were less experienced. The long-serving teachers felt that young teachers should follow their guidance related to methods of teaching since they had loads of experience in the teaching field, while young teachers felt they had acquired new teaching methods. As one experienced teacher said:

*These little fellows think they know it all since they have recently graduated from university. They have no respect for experienced teachers who have been teaching for more than 30 years. They do not want to learn from us. Because of that, we have been involved in conflict with these young teachers (T17, School B).*

Another participant said: "Valuable contributions from certain younger teachers are disregarded because they are stereotyped as inexperienced" (T10, School A).

The younger teachers declined to accept the guidance because of differences in values and beliefs. The younger teachers felt that the older teachers were trying to impose their beliefs and values on them. This was attributed to the fact that the teachers had different views of what was appropriate behaviour because they were from different backgrounds. One participant said:

*We are all different people because we have diverse backgrounds. This means we all have different points of view related to how we view and do our work. Therefore, lack of respect for diverse opinions and values has the potential to cause conflict (T23, School B).*

The foregoing shows that the participants viewed a lack of respect and tolerance for different opinions as a major cause of conflict. This lack of respect and tolerance was caused by the two groups' creation of images of each other, which perpetuated the conflict. As a result, the conflict perpetuated an 'us' versus 'them' dynamic, resulting in polarisation between the two groups. The polarisation between long-serving teachers and young and inexperienced teachers arising from different beliefs and viewpoints has also been reported by Johdi and Apitree (2012) and Tshuma et al. (2016).

Furthermore, incompatible goals and interests between the school management and teachers resulted in conflict. Some participants reported that school heads and heads of departments were involved in conflict because they had different goals for improving teaching and learning in their schools. Similar findings were made in Gwanda by Tshuma et al. (2016), albeit on a small scale, and in Thailand by Johdi and Apitree (2012) who found that conflict emanated from incompatible goals between teachers and the school administration as some departments concentrated on achieving departmental goals at the expense of the overall institutional goals.

It is noteworthy that lack of tolerance for different opinions and viewpoints is also discussed in Section 4.2.3.3 under relationship conflict. This, again, shows that the causes of conflict are interrelated.

#### *4.2.5.2 The existence of cliques or factions*

The existence of cliques in the two schools resulted in conflict among teachers. These cliques were created because of individual differences. The participants stated that conflicts occurred between teachers who belonged to different cliques because they held different beliefs. This is in sync with the findings by Rahim (2011) who points out that the formation of different camps results in feelings of doubt and mistrust between parties involved in conflict. The conflicts were exacerbated by teachers' creation of negative images of each other. According to some participants, this conflict was positive in the sense that there was competition for recognition between the cliques. Furthermore, adverse relationships among cliques were exacerbated by a history of unresolved conflicts by the school management and previous differences or disagreements. As one participant said: "The school management has failed to resolve conflicts between cliques that exist in this school." (T14, School A) This meant that previous disputes resurfaced whenever new misunderstandings arose. As a result, the history of unresolved conflicts resulted in mistrust and failure to find common ground between the members of the cliques.

#### 4.2.5.3 Gender differences

Some participants, especially women, felt that the causes of conflicts among teachers were gendered. Gender stereotyping led to assumptions and biases, causing tension and conflict between female and male teachers. Colleagues made prejudicial assumptions about others based on their gender. As one participant said:

*Our society is male-dominated. Even if a woman does something commendable, it is never appreciated. To some of our male counterparts, we are never good enough. Therefore, we always defend ourselves and our actions (T15, School A).*

Male teachers felt that they had heavier workloads than female teachers, who had lacked interest in extracurricular activities. This meant that male teachers remained at school with learners, while female teachers went home early.

Table 4.6 summarises the perceived causes of conflict in the secondary schools in Kambuzuma, Harare.

Table 4.5. Sources of Conflict in Kambuzuma Schools

Main theme	Categories	Sub-categories
Perceived causes of conflict among teachers in Kambuzuma Secondary Schools	Data Conflict	Lack of information or misinformation Lack of transparency and consultation Gossip or grapevine
	Interest Conflict	Competition over limited resources Limited opportunities for promotion and professional growth Lack of recognition
	Relationship Conflict	Lack of communication or miscommunication Favouritism Lack of respect and tolerance for different opinions
	Structural Conflict	Provision of resources Allocation of duties and responsibilities Failure to meet deadlines, unpunctuality and absenteeism School management's leadership style
	Value Conflict	Different beliefs and viewpoints The existence of cliques or factions Gender differences

Source: Fieldwork 2024

#### 4.3 Reflections on Moore's analytical framework

This study has demonstrated the suitability of Moore's analytical framework in identifying and understanding the sources of conflict among teachers in secondary schools in Harare. This study was able to identify the five sources of conflict from the collected data in line with

Moore's analytical framework. Even though it was possible to distinguish the five sources of conflict from the findings, more sources may exist. For example, in addition to Moore's conceptualisation, Bradshaw (2008) adds another source of conflict, namely needs-based conflict. Therefore, future research could explore the possibility of adding more sources of conflict and consider how different groups relate to the newly derived sources.

This study has uncovered the interconnectedness of the various sources of conflict, which is not captured by Moore's analytical framework. For instance, structural conflict impacted interest conflicts, while value conflicts influenced the relations between parties involved because of opposing value systems. Additionally, data conflicts influenced relations between the parties involved. Furthermore, the interest related to promotion appeared to influence relationships because of favouritism. Differences in values and viewpoints under value-based conflicts also appeared to influence relations. As indicated in Section 2.2.6, Moore's analytical framework does not capture the interconnectedness of the various sources of conflicts. This demonstrates the need for more case studies to uncover the interconnectedness of the causes of conflict and integrate them into the framework (Kovács et al., 2016).

Even though Moore's five sources of conflict are overlapping and interconnected, the study analysed them separately. Such an approach might be considered to be an oversimplification of the prevailing conflict in the selected schools. However, for this study, it was important to analyse the sources of conflict separately so that the most appropriate resolution measures can be proffered.

The framework has helped identify the causes of conflict in schools, which is essential for conflict resolution. The unpacking of the five sources of conflict has helped to proffer meaningful conflict resolution recommendations. The study, therefore, encourages researchers and school managers to use Moore's analytical framework to obtain a comprehensive understanding of conflict involving teachers. Additionally, the analytical framework should be used to conduct further research on causes of conflict in church-run schools and independent primary and secondary schools run by The Association of Trust Schools (ATS) as well as in Islamic schools. Future research could also investigate the causes of conflicts between teachers and learners and between teachers and parents. This would help school managers to work towards holistic conflict resolution in schools.

This study confirms the suitability of the qualitative approach in enhancing an in-depth understanding of issues under investigation since it provided rich data on the causes of conflict

that were investigated (Drury et al., 2011). By combining Moore's analytical framework and a qualitative case study, this study provides rich insights into the interrelatedness of the nature and causes of conflict as perceived by teachers in the selected schools. This study, therefore, underscores the importance of using qualitative methods to provide detailed information on the nature and causes of conflict among teachers in schools. However, future research could combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative analysis could help to establish the relationships between some socio-demographic variables and people's responses, while data from in-depth interviews can then be used to explain the reasons behind the existing patterns.

#### 4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the demographic characteristics of the research participants. It has also presented the research findings in line with the research question and Moore's conceptualisation of conflict. The next chapter presents a summary of the study, the overall conclusion of the research findings, as well as recommendations.



## CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the whole study, synthesises the research findings and outlines recommendations about policy and practice.

### 5.1 Summary of the study

This study sought to investigate the nature and causes of conflict among teachers in two secondary schools in Kambuzuma, Harare, by applying Moore's (2003) analytical framework to categorise the sources of conflict. These sources of conflict, according to Moore, are data conflicts, interest conflicts, relationship conflicts, structural conflicts and value conflicts. Constructivism or interpretivism was the ontological and epistemological philosophical assumption that underpinned the qualitative methodology employed in this study. The research paradigm was premised on the belief that one can make sense of the world through multiple realities socially constructed from the experiences of individuals who develop subjective meanings to understand the world. The qualitative approach provided the participants with a voice to articulate their inner feelings, perspectives, experiences and perceptions and helped generate rich information on the nature and causes of conflict in their schools. A sample of 30 teachers was purposefully selected based on the participants' professional qualifications and teaching experience to respond to face-to-face semi-structured interviews in line with the main research question and Moore's analytical framework. Data were also collected using focus group discussions and document analysis. Data were analysed using thematic analysis.

Research findings showed that data-based conflict was related to lack of information or misinformation, lack of transparency and consultation, and gossip or grapevine. Under this theme, lack of information was the main cause of conflict according to participants. Interest-based causes of conflict were linked to limited opportunities for promotion and professional growth, competition over limited resources and lack of recognition. In this category, competition over limited resources was cited as the main cause of conflict by participants. Relationship conflict was related to a lack of communication or miscommunication, favouritism, and lack of respect and tolerance for different opinions. Under this theme, poor communication or lack of communication was cited as the main cause of conflict by participants. Structural causes of conflict were attributed to the provision of resources, allocation of duties and responsibilities, failure to meet deadlines, unpunctuality and

absenteeism, and the school administration's leadership style. Most participants were mainly concerned with the provision of resources and their colleagues' failure to adhere to set deadlines for completing administrative work. The value-based conflict stemmed from different beliefs and viewpoints of the teachers, the existence of cliques of factions and gender differences. Many participants felt that values about people's beliefs and principles were a major cause of conflict among teachers.

## 5.2 Conclusions

The findings of this study showed that conflicts among teachers were prevalent in the two schools. The study has shown that conflicts were inevitable and part of the teachers' lives. The findings of this study, therefore, affirm that schools as organisations are not immune to conflict.

### 5.2.1 What are the teachers' perceptions of the nature of conflict in secondary schools?

The research findings showed that teachers viewed conflict negatively and associated it with disagreements, misunderstandings, diverse views or opinions and verbal altercation. Teachers perceived conflicts as disagreements among group members over the performance of tasks arising from the different beliefs that the teachers held. Conflicts were also perceived as misunderstandings among teachers, which arose due to lack of commitment in the performance of given tasks as well as inadequate information regarding a given task. Additionally, conflicts were perceived as a verbal altercation between teachers because of unfair allocation of tasks and resources. They were also perceived as an expression of diverse views or opinions on certain issues related to work.

### 5.2.2 What are the teachers' perceptions of the causes of conflict in secondary schools?

The causes as perceived by the participants were categorised into data conflict, interest conflict, relationship conflict, structural conflict and value conflict. Research findings showed that teachers perceived the main causes of conflict as lack of information or misinformation, competition over limited resources, lack of communication or miscommunication, the provision of inadequate resources, failure to adhere to set deadlines for completing given tasks and different beliefs and viewpoints of the teachers.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to minimise conflicts among teachers and to enhance cooperation in schools:

- ❖ Given that conflict is unavoidable and a part of life in schools, the MoPSE, through its District Inspectors, should facilitate the holding of seminars, courses and workshops for schools within the respective districts to make teachers aware of the perceived sources or causes of conflict and equip them with conflict resolution skills so that they can quickly identify conflict and deal with it effectively before it escalates. In this regard, presentations during these workshops should be conducted by officials from the Ministry.
- ❖ At the school level, workshops and professional development sessions should be conducted by principals or headmasters, deputy headmasters, heads of departments and SDCs to raise awareness on how to identify potential causes of conflict in schools so that they can be managed.
- ❖ Conflict resolution committees should be established in every school to deal with conflict that arises.
- ❖ The MoPSE and SDCs should improve teachers' working conditions to reduce conflict in schools.
- ❖ The MoPSE and school authorities should create clear communication channels for teachers to enhance effective communication with all stakeholders in the school to minimise conflict.
- ❖ School principals or headmasters, deputy headmasters and heads of departments should lead by example when executing their duties so that other teachers can respect them and follow their example.
- ❖ School administrators and teachers should participate in seminars or workshops on communication and interpersonal relations to minimise the occurrence of conflicts in schools.
- ❖ The government and school authorities should ensure that their institutions have adequate teaching and learning resources while headmasters and teachers should ensure that resources are distributed equitably and transparently to minimise conflict.
- ❖ The MoPSE, school administrators, SDCs, School Management Teams (SMTs) and teachers should be encouraged to embrace the positive effects of conflicts and use them as an opportunity to take corrective measures.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### Introduction

My name is Nyarai Jani. I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education and currently studying for a Bachelor of Science Education Honours Degree in Mathematics. I am undertaking this research as part of my academic study. My research topic is “**An investigation into teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of conflict in Harare Schools: A case of Kambuzuma Circuit**”. I would like to interview you for about one and a half hours. Your responses will be treated as strictly confidential and I will not request your name. The information from the interview is for research purposes only and if used in publications or reports, no reference will be made to your identity in any way. Participation in this research is voluntary and if at any time you feel you no longer want to carry on, please feel free to quit. During the interview, I will be recording and writing down your responses in a note book in order to capture all the detail. At the end of the discussion, I will also read out all the issues that I will have written down in order to ensure that all your contributions are correctly captured. The information will be very valuable in policy design and building knowledge on the causes of conflicts in schools. Please feel free to ask me to clarify anything that is not clear to you.

#### A. Demographic Characteristics

1. Code of interviewee\_\_\_\_\_
2. Name of School\_\_\_\_\_
3. Department\_\_\_\_\_
4. Position\_\_\_\_\_
5. Date\_\_\_\_\_

#### Demographic characteristics of the participants

6. Gender

Female	
--------	--

Male	
------	--

7. Age in years

Below 30 years	
31-40 years	
41-50 ears	
51 years and above	

8. Marital status

Single	
Married	
Separated	
Widowed	

9. Level of education

Certificate in Education	
Diploma in Education	
First degree	
Master's degree	

10. Work experience

0-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	
16-20 years	
21 years and above	

**Teachers' understanding of the term conflict**

11. What do you understand by the term conflict among teachers at your school?

12. Are there any conflicts among teachers at your school?

**Nature and causes of conflict (analysed using Moore's framework)**

13. What are your views on the nature of conflicts among teachers at your school?

14. What are your views on the causes of conflicts among teachers at your school?

**Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this interview.**



## APPENDIX 2. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) QUESTION GUIDE

Discussion date \_\_\_\_\_

Place/Location \_\_\_\_\_

Number of FGD participants: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Introduction**

My name is Nyarai Jani. I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education and currently studying for a Bachelor of Science Education Honours Degree in Mathematics. I am undertaking this research as part of my academic study. My research topic is “**An investigation into teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of conflict in Harare Schools: A case of Kambuzuma Circuit**”. I would like to interview you for about one and a half hours. Your responses will be treated as strictly confidential and I will not request your name. The information from the interview is for research purposes only and if used in publications or reports, no reference will be made to your identity in any way. Participation in this research is voluntary and if at any time you feel you no longer want to carry on, please feel free to quit. During the discussion, I will be recording and writing down your responses in a note book in order to capture all the detail. At the end of the discussion, I will also read out all the issues that I will have written down in order to ensure that all your contributions are correctly captured. The information will be very valuable in policy design and building knowledge on the causes of conflicts in schools. Please feel free to ask me to clarify anything that is not clear to you.

### **Teachers' understanding of the term conflict**

1. What do you understand by the term conflict among teachers at your school?
2. Are there any conflicts among teachers at your school?

### **Nature and causes of conflict (analysed using Moore's framework)**

3. What are your views on the nature of conflicts among teachers at your school?
4. What are your views on the causes of conflicts among teachers at your school?

**Thank you for your cooperation and participation in this interview.**

### APPENDIX 3. SAMPLE LETTER TO THE PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR

Glenara Secondary School

PO Box 736

Harare

9 April 2024

The Provincial Education Director

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

Harare

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS IN KAMBUZUMA, HARARE

The above subject matter refers.

I hereby sincerely request for permission to conduct a study in two secondary schools in Kambuzuma, Harare. I am a student at Bindura University of Science Education and currently studying for a Bachelor of Science Education Honours Degree in Mathematics under the supervision of Dr Young Mudavanhu. My study seeks to understand the causes of conflict in the selected schools. My research topic is **“An investigation into teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of conflict in Harare Schools: A case of Kambuzuma Circuit”**.

This study will engage headmasters, deputy headmasters, heads of departments and teachers in face-to-face semi-structured interviews in order to understand individual views on the issues under investigation. It is envisioned that data collection will be conducted in May 2024. Furthermore, the study will comply with the ethical requirements of engaging human subjects according to the Research Ethics Committee of Bindura University of Science Education. Results from this study will be valuable for policy makers as they will be able to formulate policies that seek to address the conflicts in schools. In the event that you would need any other information about this study, please contact me on +263775077351, or email me at janinyarai@gmail.com.

Your kindest cooperation in this regard will be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Nyarai Jani


#### APPENDIX 4. INTRODUCTORY LETTER

SAMED

P Bag 1020  
BINDURA  
ZIMBABWE

Tel: 0271 - 7531 ext 1038  
Fax: 263 - 71 - 7616

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 **BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION**

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Date: 9 APRIL 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

NAME: JANI NYARAI REGISTRATION NUMBER: B2255938

PROGRAMME: HRScEdMt PART: 2.2

This memo serves to confirm that the above is a bona fide student at Bindura University of Science Education in the Faculty of Science Education.

The student has to undertake research and thereafter present a Research Project in partial fulfillment of the HRScEdMt programme. The research topic is:

An investigation into the causes of conflict in Warre Schools! A case of Kambuzuma Circuit

In this regard, the department kindly requests your permission to allow the student to carry out his/her research in your institutions.

Your co-operation and assistance is greatly appreciated.

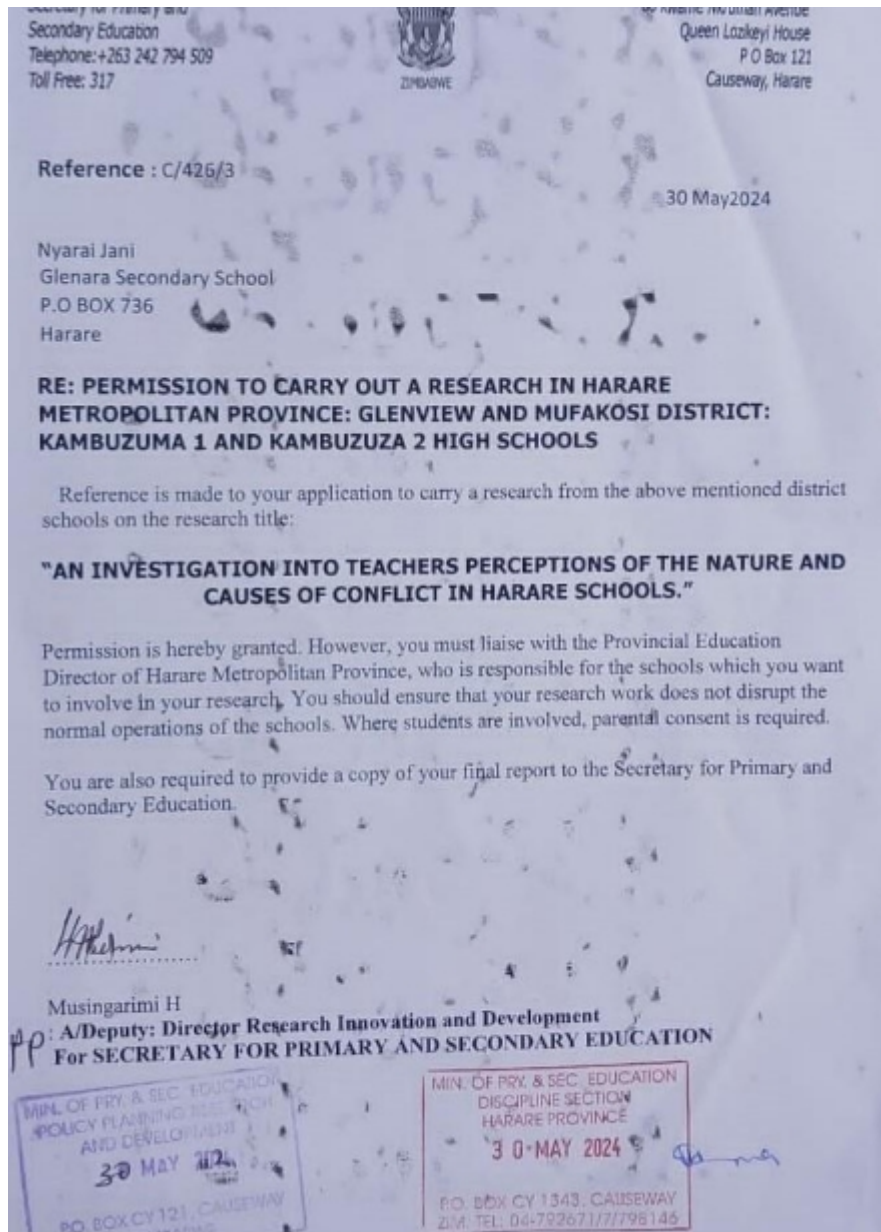
Thank you

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION  
FOUNDED 1987

9 APR 2024

Z Ndemo (Dr.) P. BAG 1020  
CHAIRPERSON - SAMED BINDURA

## APPENDIX 5. PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



## APPENDIX 6. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

My name is Nyarai Jani. I am an undergraduate student at Bindura university of Science Education. I am conducting research which is aimed at understanding the causes of conflicts in schools. My research topic is “**An investigation into teachers' perceptions of the nature and causes of conflict in Harare Schools: A case of Kambuzuma Circuit**”. I am kindly asking you to participate in the research study. The information that you will share with me will purely be for academic purposes and will be useful in coming up with policies on how to effectively address conflicts in schools. Please feel free to ask me to clarify anything that is not clear to you.

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to take part in the research. Your responses will remain confidential and your identity will be kept anonymous. Your anonymity will be protected by using codes rather than your real name. This interview will take a maximum of one and a half hours. I am kindly seeking your permission to record your responses with a recording device in order to capture all the detail. During the course of the interview, you have the right to withdraw at any given time and you are not obliged to answer questions which you are not comfortable with. You have the right to query concerns regarding the study at any time.

At the end of the interview, I will read out all the issues that I will have written down in order to ensure that all your contributions are correctly captured. Although your identity will at all times remain confidential, the results of the research study may be presented at scientific conferences or in specialist publications. Should this happen, the findings will not be linked to any names or individuals. I would be very grateful if you agree to share your views with me. May you please indicate if you agree to the interview. I kindly request you to express your views as openly as possible.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_