

Applying Collaborative Approaches towards Conflict Management

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Applying Collaborative Approaches towards Conflict Management

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Abstract

Conflicts in any given society can be an undesirable occurrence which affect peace, sustainability and development. Effective, efficient and expeditious conflict management is therefore desirable in order to spur peace, development and sustainability. Conflict management involves the use of several approaches including collaborating, competing, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising. Collaborative approaches towards conflict management have been hailed as the most ideal due to their potential to produce satisfactory and long term results. This paper critically examines collaborative approaches towards conflict management. It argues that these techniques can ensure efficient and effective management of conflicts towards peace and sustainability. The paper highlights and discusses some of the collaborative approaches towards conflict management. It also interrogates the advantages of these approaches. The paper further explores some of the concerns with these approaches and suggests measures towards applying collaborative approaches towards conflict management.

1.0 Introduction

Conflicts are a common phenomenon in human relationships and interactions¹. They are an inevitable part of living because they are related to situations of scarce resources, division of functions, power relations and role-differentiation². The term conflict

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¹ Muigua, K., 'Reframing Conflict Management in the East African Community: Moving from Alternative to 'Appropriate' Dispute Resolution.' Available at <https://kmco.co.ke/wpcontent/uploads/2023/06/Reframing-Conflict-Management-in-the-East-African-CommunityMoving-from-Alternative-to-Appropriate-Dispute-Resolution> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

² Bercovitch, J., 'Conflict and Conflict Management in Organizations: A Framework for Analysis.' Available at

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generally refers to a situation in which two or more parties perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals³. Conflicts can also occur due to misalignment of goals, actions or motivations which can be real or only perceived to exist⁴. It has been argued that conflict is not in itself a negative phenomenon⁵. For example, non-violent conflict can be an essential component of social change and development, and is a necessary component of human interaction⁶. Non-violent resolution of conflict is possible when individuals and groups have trust in their governing structures, society and institutions to manage incompatible interests⁷.

Conflicts become problematic when societal mechanisms and institutions for managing and resolving them break down, giving way to violence⁸. Societies with weak institutions, fragile political systems and divisive social relations can be drawn into cycles of conflict and violence⁹. In such situations, conflicts are an undesirable occurrence since they affect peace, sustainability and development¹⁰. It has rightly been pointed out that development is not feasible in a conflict situation¹¹. Effective, efficient and expeditious conflict management is therefore a desirable ideal in order to spur peace, development and sustainability¹².

<https://ocd.lcwu.edu.pk/cfiles/International%20Relations/EC/IR403/Conflict.ConflictManagementinOrganizations.pdf> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

³ Demmers. J., 'Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction' (Routledge, New York, 2012)

⁴ Kaushal. R., & Kwantes. C., 'The Role of Culture and Personality in Choice of Conflict Management Strategy.' *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 30 (2006) 579–603

⁵ United Nations., 'Land and Conflict' Available at https://www.un.org/en/land-natural-resources-conflict/pdfs/GN_ExeS_Land%20and%20Conflict.pdf (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Muigua. K., 'Reframing Conflict Management in the East African Community: Moving from Alternative to 'Appropriate' Dispute Resolution.' Op Cit

¹¹ Muigua. K & Kariuki. F., 'ADR, Access to Justice and Development in Kenya.' Available at <http://kmco.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ADR-access-to-justice-and-development-inKenyaRevised-version-of-20.10.14.pdf> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

¹² Ibid

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Conflict management generally refers to the processes and techniques adopted towards stopping or preventing overt conflicts and aiding the parties involved to reach a durable and peaceful solution to their differences¹³. Conflict management therefore involves handling all stages of a conflict as well as the mechanisms used in the management of conflicts¹⁴. The goal of conflict management is to affect the entire structure of a conflict so as to contain the destructive components in the conflict process (such as hostility and use of violence) and help the parties possessing incompatible goals to find some solution to their conflict¹⁵. Various approaches and techniques can be adopted towards managing conflicts ranging from the most informal negotiations between the parties themselves through increasing formality and more directive interventions from external sources to a full court hearing with strict rules of procedure¹⁶. Effective conflict management succeeds in minimizing disruption stemming from the existence of a conflict, and providing a solution that is satisfactory and acceptable¹⁷.

Conflict management can either result in settlement or resolution of the underlying conflict¹⁸. Settlement refers to an agreement over the issues in a conflict which often involves a compromise¹⁹. It involves the use of mechanisms such as litigation and arbitration which are highly coercive, power based²⁰. Settlement can be effective in providing an immediate solution to a conflict but fail to address underlying issues in a conflict leaving the likelihood of conflicts reemerging in future²¹. Resolution on the other hand refers to a conflict management process where the outcome is based on mutual

¹³ Leeds. C.A., 'Managing Conflicts across Cultures: Challenges to Practitioners.' *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Volume 2, No. 2, 1997

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Bercovitch. J., 'Conflict and Conflict Management in Organizations: A Framework for Analysis.' Op Cit

¹⁶ Muigua. K., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice in Kenya.' Glenwood Publishers Limited, 2015

¹⁷ Bercovitch. J., 'Conflict and Conflict Management in Organizations: A Framework for Analysis.' Op Cit

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Bloomfield. D., 'Towards Complementarity in Conflict Management: Resolution and Settlement in Northern Ireland,' *Journal of Peace Research.*, Volume 32, Issue 2

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Muigua. K., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice in Kenya.' Op Cit

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problem-sharing whereby parties to a conflict cooperate in order to redefine their conflict and relationships²². It generally involves the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes such as mediation, negotiation and facilitation which are non-coercive, non-power based and focus on the needs and interest of parties²³. Resolution mechanisms result in mutually satisfying outcomes that address the root causes of conflicts therefore creating long lasting outcomes²⁴.

Conflict management can involve different approaches. These techniques include collaborating, competing, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising²⁵. Collaborative approaches towards conflict management have been hailed as the most ideal due to their potential to produce satisfactory and long term results²⁶.

This paper critically examines collaborative approaches towards conflict management. It argues that these techniques can ensure efficient and effective management of conflicts towards peace and sustainability. The paper highlights and discusses some of the collaborative approaches towards conflict management. It also interrogates the advantages of these approaches. The paper further explores some of the concerns with these approaches and suggests measures towards applying collaborative approaches towards conflict management.

²² Bloomfield. D., 'Towards Complementarity in Conflict Management: Resolution and Settlement in Northern Ireland,' Op Cit

²³ Muigua. K., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice in Kenya.' Op Cit

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Samuel. A., 'Is the Collaborative Style of Conflict Management the Best Approach?' Available at <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/collaborative-style-conflict-management-best-approach-samuel-ansah> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

²⁶ Ibid

2.0 Interrogating Collaborative Approaches towards Conflict Management

Collaborative conflict management refers to the use of a wide range of informal approaches where competing or opposing stakeholder groups work together to reach an agreement on a controversial issue²⁷. In addition, it has been pointed out that collaborative conflict resolution encourages teams to work through disagreements through empathy, listening, and mutually beneficial solutions²⁸. Collaboration, unlike compromise, does not focus on both sides making sacrifices²⁹. Instead, in collaborative approaches, both parties come up with mutually beneficial solutions³⁰. Collaborating has been identified as a powerful approach to conflict resolution built on cooperation, open communication, and finding win-win outcomes³¹. It has been argued that among all conflict management techniques, collaborative approaches are the most likely to identify the root cause of a conflict, pinpoint the underlying needs of the parties involved, and come to a win-win outcome for everyone³². Through collaboration, all parties to a conflict come together to openly discuss the issue causing tension, actively listen to each other, and work towards a solution that is mutually satisfactory and acceptable to everyone³³.

It has been pointed out that collaborative conflict management aims to achieve several objectives which include: promoting the participation of diverse or competing stakeholder groups in order to reach agreement on a controversial issue³⁴; assisting stakeholders in adopting an attitude that is oriented towards cooperation rather than

²⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization., 'Collaborative Conflict Management for Enhanced National Forest Programmes (NFPs)' Available at <https://www.fao.org/3/i2604e/i2604e00.pdf> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

²⁸ Miroslavov. M., 'Mastering the Collaborating Conflict Style In 2024' Available at <https://www.officernd.com/blog/collaborating-conflict-style/#:~:text=It's%20one%20of%20the%20strategies,their%20underlying%20needs%20and%20interests.> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Ibid

³² May. E., 'Collaborating Conflict Style Explained In 4 Minutes' Available at <https://www.niagarainstitute.com/blog/collaborating-conflict-style/> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization., 'Collaborative Conflict Management for Enhanced National Forest Programmes (NFPs)' Op Cit

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pursuit of individual interests³⁵; establishing new forms of communication and decision making on important issues, and raising awareness of the importance of equity and accountability in stakeholder communication³⁶; developing partnerships and strengthening stakeholder networks³⁷; creating space for stakeholders to communicate in order to bring about future agreements so that concrete action can be taken³⁸; and producing decisions that have a strong base of support³⁹. In addition, it has been observed that collaborative approaches towards conflict management aim to preserve relationships, build trust, and promote long term positive change⁴⁰. Collaborative conflict management is based on certain principles key among them being ensuring open communication, finding common ground, and creating a culture of trust⁴¹.

Collaborative approaches towards conflict management has been hailed as the “win-win” strategy to conflict management⁴². It is an effective means of restoring peace⁴³. It has been argued that collaborative approaches are a better way to conflict management since they encourage freedom of expression, where the conflicting parties express their thoughts and concerns verbally, which makes all parties involved in the dispute feel valued and be aware of each other’s concern⁴⁴. In addition, it has been argued that collaborating sets the tone for future conflict resolution and gives those involved the shared responsibility to manage conflicts prior to escalation⁴⁵. Further, it has been argued that managing conflicts in a collaborative way helps to develop trust and strengthen

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Miroslavov. M., ‘Mastering the Collaborating Conflict Style In 2024’ Op Cit

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Samuel. A., ‘Is the Collaborative Style of Conflict Management the Best Approach?’ Op Cit

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid

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communication channels between the various parties⁴⁶. For example, it has been pointed out that in conflicts related to natural resources, collaborative approaches help in generating inclusive solutions that arise from wider stakeholders' views, and therefore helps clarify policies, institutions and processes that regulate access to – or control over – natural resources⁴⁷.

It has been observed that collaborating entails all parties to a conflict sitting down together, discussing the conflict, and working towards a solution together⁴⁸. Collaborative approaches towards conflict management have been identified as vital when it is necessary to maintain all parties' relationships or when the solution itself will have a significant impact on large group of people⁴⁹. In such situations, collaborating ensures a win-win solution is found so that everyone is satisfied which creates the condition for peace and sustainability⁵⁰. It has been pointed out that for collaborative approaches to be effective, it is necessary for all parties to have collaborating skills such as the ability to use active or effective listening, confront situations in a non-threatening way, analyze input, and identify underlying concerns⁵¹. Collaborative approaches towards conflict management are important in fostering effective and long lasting outcomes⁵². It is therefore necessary to apply collaborative approaches in order to ensure effective and efficient management of conflicts.

⁴⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization., 'Collaborative Conflict Management for Enhanced National Forest Programmes (NFPs)' Op Cit

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict"' Available at <https://www.beyondintractability.org/bksum/isenhardt-collaborative> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Burrell. B., 'The Five Conflict Styles' Available at

<https://web.mit.edu/collaboration/mainsite/modules/module1/1.11.5.html> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

⁵² Ibid

3.0 Applying Collaborative Approaches towards Conflict Management: Opportunities and Challenges

One of the key collaborative approaches that can be applied in conflict management is mediation⁵³. Mediation has been defined as a method of conflict management where conflicting parties gather to seek solutions to the conflict, with the assistance of a third party who facilitates discussions and the flow of information, and thus aiding in the process of reaching an agreement⁵⁴. Mediation is usually a continuation of the negotiation process since it arises where parties to a conflict have attempted negotiations, but have reached a deadlock⁵⁵. Parties therefore involve a third party known as a mediator to assist them continue with the negotiations and ultimately break the deadlock⁵⁶. A mediator does not have the power to impose a solution upon the parties but rather facilitates communication, promotes understanding, focuses the parties on their interests, and uses creative problem solving to enable the parties to reach their own agreement⁵⁷.

Some of the core values and principles guiding mediation as a collaborative approach towards conflict management include impartiality, empathy, valued reputation, and confidentiality⁵⁸. It has also been pointed out that mediation has certain attributes which include informality, flexibility, efficiency, confidentiality, party autonomy and the ability to promote expeditious and cost effective management of dispute which makes it an ideal mechanism for managing disputes⁵⁹. Mediation is an effective mechanism that can foster collaboration due to its potential to build peace and bring people together, binding them

⁵³ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict" ' Op Cit

⁵⁴ Muigua. K., 'Resolving Conflicts through Mediation in Kenya.' Glenwood Publishers Limited, 2nd Edition., 2017

⁵⁵ Bercovitch. J., 'Mediation Success or Failure: A Search for the Elusive Criteria.' *Cardozo Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 7, p 289

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict" ' Op Cit

⁵⁹ Muigua. K., 'Resolving Conflicts through Mediation in Kenya.' Op Cit

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towards a common goal⁶⁰. Mediation can also foster effective management of conflicts by building consensus and collaboration⁶¹. It has been argued that mediation can enhance collaboration towards conflict management due to its emphasis on the need for a mediator who listen to the wants, needs, fears, and concerns of all sides⁶². Therefore, for mediation to be effective in fostering collaboration, the approach must be mild and non-confrontational because the goal is to make all parties feel comfortable expressing their views and opinions⁶³.

Another key collaborative approach towards conflict management is negotiation⁶⁴. It has been defined as an informal process that involves parties to a conflict meeting to identify and discuss the issues at hand so as to arrive at a mutually acceptable solution without the help of a third party⁶⁵. Negotiation is one of the most fundamental methods of managing conflicts which offers parties maximum control over the process⁶⁶. It aims at harmonizing the interests of the parties concerned amicably⁶⁷. Negotiation has been described as the process that creates and fuels collaboration⁶⁸. Negotiation fosters collaboration since it involves all parties sitting down together, talking through the conflict and working towards a solution together⁶⁹. Negotiation has been described as the most effective collaborative approach towards conflict management since it starts with an understanding by both parties that they must search for solutions that satisfy

⁶⁰ International Organization for Peace Building., 'Natural Resources and Conflict: A Path to Mediation.' Available at <https://www.interpeace.org/2015/11/natural-resources-and-conflict-a-path-to-mediation/> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

⁶¹ Ibid

⁶² Quain. S., 'The Advantages & Disadvantages of Collaborating Conflict Management' Available at <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/advantages-disadvantages-collaborating-conflict-management-36052.html> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict"' ' Op Cit

⁶⁵ Muigua. K., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice in Kenya.' Op Cit

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict"' ' Op Cit

⁶⁹ Ibid

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everyone⁷⁰. It enables parties to a dispute to come together to openly discuss the issue causing tension, actively listen to each other, and come up with mutually satisfactory solutions⁷¹. If negotiation fails, parties may resort to other collaborative approaches such as mediation and facilitation where they attempt to manage the conflict with the help of a third party⁷².

Facilitation is another key collaborative approach towards conflict management⁷³. Facilitation entails a third party known as a facilitator who helps parties to a conflict to understand their common objectives and achieve them without while remaining objective in the discussion⁷⁴. A facilitator assists conflicting parties in achieving consensus on any disagreements so that they have a strong basis for future action⁷⁵. It has been pointed out that facilitation is effective in fostering collaboration in conflict management particularly in conflicts which are complex in nature or those that involve multiple parties⁷⁶. In such conflicts, it is necessary to seek outside help from a neutral third party to facilitate the discussion as parties work towards mutually acceptable outcomes⁷⁷.

Applying collaborative approaches towards conflict management offers several advantages. It has been pointed out that collaborating results in mutually acceptable solutions⁷⁸. Such solutions can therefore be effective and long lasting negating the

⁷⁰ Verma. V. K., 'Conflict Management' Available at http://www.communicationcache.com/uploads/1/0/8/8/10887248/conflict_management.pdf (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

⁷¹ May. E., 'Collaborating Conflict Style Explained In 4 Minutes' Op Cit

⁷² Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict"' Op Cit

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization., 'Collaborative Conflict Management for Enhanced National Forest Programmes (NFPs)' Op Cit

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict"' Op Cit

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likelihood of conflicts reemerging in future⁷⁹. Collaborating signifies joint efforts, gain for both parties and integrated solutions arrived at by consensual decisions⁸⁰. Collaborating is also very effective when it is necessary to build or maintain relationships since it focuses on the needs and interests of all parties in a dispute⁸¹. It has been observed that collaborative approaches emphasize trust-building, open communication, and empathizing with each other's perspectives which goes beyond resolving conflicts to facilitate deeper understandings of each other⁸². Collaborative approaches can therefore lead to better interpersonal connections⁸³. Collaborating can also result in constructive decision-making since encouraging active engagement and open dialogue helps others think outside of the box and explore innovative paths towards conflict management⁸⁴. Further, by encouraging the participation and involvement of all stakeholders, collaboration ensures that everyone feels heard, valued and understood which is very essential in managing conflicts⁸⁵. In addition, collaborating sets the tone for future conflict resolutions since it gives those involved the shared responsibility to resolve their problems⁸⁶.

However, collaborative approaches towards conflict management have also been associated with several drawbacks. For example, it has been observed that collaborative approaches may not be easy to implement since they involve a lot of effort to get an actionable solution⁸⁷. In addition, it has been observed that thorough discussions, active participation, and exploring multiple perspectives as envisaged by collaborative approaches take time⁸⁸. Collaborating may therefore require patience and dedication to

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Samuel. A., 'Is the Collaborative Style of Conflict Management the Best Approach?' Op Cit

⁸² Miroslavov. M., 'Mastering the Collaborating Conflict Style In 2024' Op Cit

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ May. E., 'Collaborating Conflict Style Explained In 4 Minutes' Op Cit

⁸⁶ Quain. S., 'The Advantages & Disadvantages of Collaborating Conflict Management' Op Cit

⁸⁷ Samuel. A., 'Is the Collaborative Style of Conflict Management the Best Approach?' Op Cit

⁸⁸ Miroslavov. M., 'Mastering the Collaborating Conflict Style In 2024' Op Cit

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ensure all voices are heard and meaningful resolutions are reached⁸⁹. Achieving consensus through collaborative approaches can also be difficult since conflicting opinions, varying conflict goals, and emotional variables can make the consensus-building process challenging and time-consuming⁹⁰. As a result of these challenges, it has been asserted that collaborative approaches towards conflict management are frequently the most difficult and time-consuming to achieve⁹¹. Further, it has been argued that over use of collaboration and consensual decision-making may reflect risk aversion tendencies or an inclination to defuse responsibility⁹². Despite these challenges, collaborative approaches towards conflict management are ideal in ensuring win-win and long lasting outcomes⁹³. It is therefore necessary to embrace and apply collaborative approaches towards conflict management.

4.0 Way Forward

It is necessary to embrace and utilize collaborative approaches in managing conflicts. These techniques include mediation, negotiation, and facilitation⁹⁴. These mechanisms are effective in managing conflicts since they encourage parties to embrace and address disagreements through empathy and listening towards mutually beneficial solutions⁹⁵. Collaborative approaches also have the potential to preserve relationships, build trust, and promote long term positive change⁹⁶. They also ensure a win-win solution is found so that everyone is satisfied which creates the condition for peace and sustainability⁹⁷.

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict" ' Op Cit

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Miroslavov. M., 'Mastering the Collaborating Conflict Style In 2024' Ibid

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict" ' Op Cit

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These approaches are therefore ideal in managing conflicts⁹⁸. It is therefore important to embrace collaborative approaches in order to ensure effective management of conflicts.

In addition, it is necessary for third parties including mediators and facilitators to develop their skills and techniques in order to enhance the effectiveness of collaborative approaches towards conflict management⁹⁹. For example, it has correctly been observed that mediators and facilitators should listen actively and empathetically in order to assist parties to collaborate towards managing their dispute¹⁰⁰. Therefore, when a dispute arises, the first step should involve listening to all parties involved with an open mind and without judgment¹⁰¹. This should entail active listening, which means paying attention to both verbal and nonverbal cues and acknowledging the emotions and perceptions involved¹⁰². It has been observed that by listening empathetically, a third party such as a mediator or facilitator can understand each person's perspective and start to build a foundation for resolving the conflict through collaboration¹⁰³.

In addition, while collaborating towards conflict management, it is necessary to encourage and help parties to focus on interests and not positions¹⁰⁴. It has been pointed out that focusing positions can result in a standstill which can delay or even defeat the conflict management process¹⁰⁵. However, by identifying and addressing the underlying interests parties can find common ground and collaborate towards coming up with creative solutions towards their conflict¹⁰⁶. Mediators and facilitators should also assist

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Ibid

¹⁰⁰ Weiss, J., & Hughes, J., 'Want Collaboration?: Accept—and Actively Manage—Conflict' Available at <https://hbr.org/2005/03/want-collaboration-accept-and-actively-manage-conflict> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ Isenhardt, M.W., & Spangle, M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict"' ' Op Cit

¹⁰⁵ Ibid

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

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parties to look for areas of agreement or shared goals¹⁰⁷. Identifying a common ground can build momentum and create a positive environment for resolving the conflict¹⁰⁸.

Further, in order to ensure the effectiveness of collaborative approaches in conflict management, it is necessary to build strong collaboration¹⁰⁹. It has been asserted that strong collaboration can be achieved by establishing a shared purpose, cultivating trust among parties, encouraging active participation by all parties, and promoting effective communication¹¹⁰. Strong collaboration enables parties to develop trust between and among themselves and strengthen communication channels between the various parties¹¹¹. It also helps to generate inclusive solutions that arise from wider stakeholders' views¹¹². Therefore while applying collaborative approaches, it is necessary for parties to foster strong collaboration by identifying common goals, building trust, ensuring that all stakeholders are involved, and communicating effectively in order to come up with win-win outcomes¹¹³.

Finally, while embracing collaborative approaches in conflict management, it is necessary for parties to consider seeking help from third parties if need arises¹¹⁴. For example, negotiation is always the first point of call whenever a conflict arises whereby parties attempt to manage their conflict without the involvement of third parties¹¹⁵. It has been described as the most effective collaborative approach towards conflict management

¹⁰⁷ Diana. M., 'From Conflict to Collaboration' Available at <https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/conflict-collaboration-beyond-project-success-1899> (Accessed on 01/03/2024)

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Miroslavov. M., 'Mastering the Collaborating Conflict Style In 2024' Op Cit

¹¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹¹ Food and Agriculture Organization., 'Collaborative Conflict Management for Enhanced National Forest Programmes (NFPs)' Op Cit

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Ibid

¹¹⁴ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict"' Op Cit

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Muigua. K., 'Alternative Dispute Resolution and Access to Justice in Kenya.' Op Cit

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since it starts with an understanding by both parties that they must search for solutions that satisfy everyone¹¹⁶. It enables parties to a dispute to come together to openly discuss the issue causing tension, actively listen to each other, and come up with mutually satisfactory solutions¹¹⁷. However, it has been correctly observed that negotiation may fail especially if the conflict is particularly complex or involves multiple parties due to challenges in collaborating¹¹⁸. In such circumstances, where negotiation fails, parties should consider resorting to other collaborative approaches such as mediation and facilitation where they attempt to manage the conflict with the help of a third party¹¹⁹. A mediator or facilitator can assist parties to collaborate and continue with the negotiations and ultimately break the deadlock¹²⁰.

The foregoing techniques among others are vital in applying collaborative approaches towards conflict management.

5.0 Conclusion

Collaborative techniques are a powerful approach to conflict management built on cooperation, open communication, and finding win-win outcomes¹²¹. They aim to preserve relationships, build trust, and promote long term positive change¹²². Some of the key collaborative approaches towards conflict management include negotiation, mediation, and facilitation¹²³. Collaborative approaches are ideal in managing conflicts since they build and maintain relationships, foster mutually acceptable and long lasting outcomes, and sets the tone for future conflict resolutions¹²⁴. However, these methods

¹¹⁶Verma. V. K., 'Conflict Management' Op Cit

¹¹⁷ May. E., 'Collaborating Conflict Style Explained In 4 Minutes' Op Cit

¹¹⁸ Ibid

¹¹⁹ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict"' Op Cit

¹²⁰ Ibid

¹²¹ Food and Agriculture Organization., 'Collaborative Conflict Management for Enhanced National Forest Programmes (NFPs)' Op Cit

¹²² Miroslavov. M., 'Mastering the Collaborating Conflict Style In 2024' Op Cit

¹²³ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict"' Op Cit

¹²⁴ Quain. S., 'The Advantages & Disadvantages of Collaborating Conflict Management' Op Cit

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have been associated with certain challenges such as delays due to difficulties in building consensus and collaboration in conflict situations¹²⁵. However, these processes are ideal and need to effectively applied in managing conflicts. It is therefore necessary to embrace collaborative approaches such as mediation, negotiation, and facilitation¹²⁶; develop necessary skills such as active and empathetic listening¹²⁷; encourage parties to focus on interests and not positions in order to establish common ground for collaboration¹²⁸; build strong collaboration¹²⁹; and encourage parties to seek help from third parties such mediators and facilitators where collaborative approaches such as negotiation fail¹³⁰. It is vital to apply collaborative approaches in order to achieve effective and efficient management of conflicts.

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict" ' Op Cit

¹²⁷ Weiss. J., & Hughes. J., 'Want Collaboration?: Accept – and Actively Manage – Conflict'

¹²⁸ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict" ' Op Cit

¹²⁹ Miroslavov. M., 'Mastering the Collaborating Conflict Style In 2024' Op Cit

¹³⁰ Isenhardt. M.W., & Spangle. M., 'Summary of "Collaborative Approaches to Resolving Conflict" ' Op Cit

¹³⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization., 'Collaborative Conflict Management for Enhanced National Forest Programmes (NFPs)' Op Cit

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