

Enhancing community engagement in conflict resolution among secondary school students in Sumbawanga Municipal Council, Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the enhancement of community engagement in conflict resolution among secondary schools' students in Sumbawanga Municipal Council. Specifically, the study focused on identifying the conflict resolution strategies utilized by the community in addressing conflicts, assessing the role of local community leaders in conflict resolution, and exploring the impact of community involvement on students' academic performance. The study employed Social Capital Theory (SCT). A qualitative approach utilizing case study design was utilized. The target population included students (class monitors), discipline teachers, and community leaders, from whom 20 participants were picked purposively for interviews. Further, data were thematically analyzed. The findings revealed mediation, counseling, and dialogue were commonly used by the community to resolve student conflicts. Moreover, local leaders played a pivotal role in promoting peace and restoring relationships as well as strengthening collaboration among students at schools. On top of that, it was demonstrated that active community participation in conflict resolution positively influenced students' academic performance, as a conducive learning environment with fewer disruptions encouraged discipline. The study concludes that sustainability of conflict resolution requires active participation of competent stakeholders alongside school management. The study recommends strengthening school-community partnerships, capacity-building for community leaders for conflict management and policy support for community participation in academic settings.

Keywords: Community Engagement, Conflict Resolution, Secondary Schools Students, Sumbawanga Municipal Council, Tanzania

I. INTRODUCTION

Strengthening community participation in conflict resolution among secondary school students is a highly effective approach to foster peaceful, inclusive and resilient educational settings. The parents, local leaders and non-governmental organizations engagement helps in establishing a collective responsibility for students' welfare. Usually, during interactions people encounter conflicts, which can either help or hinder the achievement (Nukus, 2020). Though, conflicts are a normal part of daily life, need to be addressed quickly to ensure fairness and quality education settings. According to Elijah and Safiyanu, (2025) conflicts in organizations can slow down progress and success. Ngwama (2024) added that conflict can be disruptive, most institutions focus on managing and resolving it to keep things running smoothly and ensure good behavior among employees. Nonetheless, conflicts in education settings can harm the quality of education; therefore, the need for community participation in solving these conflicts is vital.

Instances worldwide underscore the importance of engaging various stakeholders, including the community, in implementing effective conflict resolution strategies to minimize their impact. Countries like the United States, particularly in California conflicts in education settings are a result of racial segregation, discrimination and prejudice (Mlay & Otieno, 2023). Peer Mediation program is useful at the Bronx High School of Science, where students facilitate discussions on topics like social cliques and academic pressures; molding a collaborative atmosphere while minimizing tensions (Nakata et al., 2025). In the UK, the Peer Mediation Program is famous at Harris Academy in Croydon, where trained student mediators help in resolving bullying and social dynamics; enhancing harmony and cooperation (Artyukhov et al., 2024). In the Netherlands, the Restorative Justice Schools project is significant, with institutions like Carmel College in Twente implementing for bringing together students, teachers, and parents to discuss conflicts for collective resolutions (Artyukhov et al., 2024). In India, the Bharat Scouts and Guides program has introduced a course on conflict resolution training in schools with cultural sensitivity (Lauwo & Mkulu, 2021).

In South African learning institutions, are driven by increased operating costs, rising fees due to inflation, and dwindling government funding (Lukman, 2021), these issues have led to serious unrest (Halevy & Cohen 2020). According to Lukman (2021) social disparities and cultural misunderstandings in Benin affect teaching and learning in educational settings. Similarly, differing perceptions, communication barriers, authority structures, and varying attitudes are contributing factors for conflicts in several Kenyan secondary schools (Kilonzo & Ivita, 2019). Like many other

countries, the Tanzania landscape is not devoid of conflicts (Kisiangani et al., 2024; Ikhielea, 2024). Nonetheless, issues extend to both public and private secondary schools, with notable disputes affecting institutional stability as posed by Mlay and Otieno (2023) in the Morogoro. Similarly, Miah et al. (2024) noted tensions between teachers and parents in private secondary schools over the policy that mandates academically struggling students to repeat grades. Concurrently, Vinokur et al., (2024) pointed that, conflicts emerge from communication breakdowns, differing needs, values, ideas and power struggles. Organizational conflict in educational settings is a widespread issue (URT, 2002) and can arise from various sources, involving different people within and beyond the educational environment (Ngwama, 2024).

In Tanzania, change in curriculum and educational reforms lead to conflicts in education system (Kisiangani et al., 2024). Literature indicate that community stakeholders and teachers pose different views over changes in educational policies and curricula (Maeda, 2022). Despite the involvement of educational stakeholders to implement curricula changes for conflicts resolutions among students and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning (Paschal & Mkulu, 2020), the issues still persist. On top of that, most nonpublic secondary schools have implemented conflict resolution policies, though there is inadequate literature on the effectiveness of these mechanisms and their contribution on overall educational quality (Khalid & Xu, 2024). Without effective strategies to control and manage conflicts among secondary schools' students, the quality of education could be paralyzed. Therefore, this study intended to assess community participation in conflict resolution among public secondary schools' students in Tanzania, using Sumbawanga Municipal Council as a case study.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The ongoing conflicts in most public secondary schools in Tanzania are disturbing issue that need urgent attention (Mlay & Otieno, 2023; Alex & Mukadi, 2022; Msangi, 2024). Usually, teachers use superficial solutions, namely punishment with a belief that conflicts should quickly be resolved to keep learning on track (Vinokur et al., 2024). This strategy does not consider the amplifying root causes of disagreements and disregards the complexities of these misunderstanding within the student emotional health. Despite government and stakeholders' efforts in fostering unity and compliance with disciplinary frameworks among students and teachers (Msangi, 2024), conflicts continue to harm the quality students. In addition, the inadequacies of empirical data on conflict settlement in education settings (Gomez et al., 2022) emphasize an important gap on the causes and the effectiveness of current resolution methods. At this juncture, the current study focused on assessing the community involvement in conflict resolution among public secondary schools' students in Sumbawanga Municipal Council in Tanzania.

1.2 Research Questions

- i. What are conflict resolution strategies employed by the community to address conflicts among students in secondary schools?
- ii. What are the roles of local community leaders in facilitating conflict resolution among students in secondary schools?
- iii. What are the impacts of community involvement in conflict resolution on students' academic performance?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Social Capital Theory (SCT)

A sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in the late 1970s introduced a Social Capital Theory (SCT), and in early 1980s, insisted the significance of social networks and relationships being an important asset to enable individuals and groups achieve their targets (Bakel & Horak, 2024). In the 1990s Robert Putnam strengthened the concept, notably in his influential work *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* in 1995) which he explored the demise of social capital in the United States of America and its effects on civic participation and community cohesion (Bakel & Horak, 2024). In the context of this study, SCT suggests that relationships, networks and norms of reciprocity serve as an important resource that enhance mutual understanding, collaboration, and the attainment of shared academic and social objectives.

SCT enhances community participation through relationships, networks, and trust that exist among students, teachers, families, and community stakeholders within and around the school settings (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2022). The theory highlights the importance of interpersonal networks and mutual trust in enhancing collaboration and social cohesion. Schools can use the concept to organize workshops and team-building activities in encouraging belonging, and interaction among students. Furthermore, strengthening connections between students, educators, parents, and community organizations influences collective responsibility (Bakel & Horak, 2024). Promoting engagement is significant, as involving diverse student groups in conflict resolution programs builds empathy and cross-cultural understanding (Tsounis & Xanthopoulou, 2024). Therefore, collaborative projects, mixed-group discussions, and

partnerships that reflect varied cultural backgrounds help students in a great extent to appreciate diversity while working together for common goals (Horak & Paik, 2022).

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Conflict Resolution Strategies Employed by the Community to Address Conflicts

Malingumu (2022) assessed disagreements management styles in Tanzanian secondary schools and found that school authorities usually resolve disagreements through disciplinary committees in combination with guidance and counselling sessions. Similarly, Msangi (2024) observed that meetings, negotiations, and the involvement of experienced staff members played a key role in conflict resolution; while communication skills showed little impact, collaboration and problem-solving abilities were significantly associated to successful outcomes. Weber (2020) emphasized the effectiveness of community-building interventions such as peer mediation and emotional intelligence training in reducing student conflicts. Correspondingly, Rahayu (2021) identified group assignment disputes and bullying as the most prevalent forms of conflict, with peer mediation and teacher intervention commonly applied.

Amedome et al. (2024) further noted that interpersonal and academic-related conflicts were the most widespread, whereas violent incidents, including those involving weapons, were comparatively rare. Similarly, Maeda (2022) found that the most commonly used conflict resolution strategies included compromise, accommodation, and formal meetings aimed at settling disputes. In a broader context, Rozmus (2017) peer mediation programs are effective in addressing conflicts, it also raised ethical concerns about the appropriateness of students serving as mediators. Supporting this view, Mlay and Otieno (2023) argued that effective conflict resolution mechanisms help establish a disciplined, inclusive, and well-coordinated learning environment that encourages stakeholder collaboration and enhances educational quality. Conversely, Khalid and Xu (2024) reported that persistent conflicts often stemmed from the absence of a standardised resolution framework, with schools instead relying on ad hoc methods that lacked consistency and suitability to the specific nature of each conflict.

2.2.2 Role of Local Community Leaders in Facilitating Conflict Resolution among Students

Lubbungu and Siame (2025) argued that proverbs serve as powerful tools for conflict resolution, playing a vital role in promoting peaceful coexistence, fostering mutual understanding, and maintaining social harmony. Traditional leaders, when mediating disputes, should adopt a complementary rather than competitive approach, distinguishing traditional methods from formal conflict resolution systems. Moran et al. (2024) reported that restorative practices help de-escalate conflicts, enhance student voice and accountability, and foster a culture of relational repair within schools. Effective implementation often involves collaboration with parents, faith leaders, and community mediators, although much of the evidence is based on teacher self-reports and limited in geographic scope. Likewise, Hakvoort (2022) demonstrated that peer mediation and school-wide conflict resolution programmes can reduce bullying and interpersonal disputes when implemented comprehensively combining training, supervision, and curriculum integration and when supported by adults such as community leaders, parents, and faith figures who reinforce positive norms beyond school settings. Similarly, Driessen's (2025) review revealed that religious leaders and elders often act as trusted mediators, leveraging moral authority and community values to build trust and foster reconciliation, particularly in contexts where faith holds significant social influence. Platforms such as interfaith councils and local religious networks can also play an important role in preventing and mediating conflicts.

Similarly, Cipriano et al. (2024) reported that numerous studies, predominantly from the United States, demonstrated that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programmes consistently led to small-to-moderate reductions in aggressive behaviour and improvements in social skills, emotional regulation, and peer relationships outcomes that significantly support conflict resolution among students. The impact on behaviour was found to be greater when SEL initiatives were integrated with community or parental engagement. Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2020), in the White Paper on Traditional Leadership and Governance, noted that traditional leaders are mandated to bridge the gap between customary justice systems and modern judicial frameworks while upholding national legislation and the South African Constitution. They also possess the authority to resolve tribal disputes through customary courts before such cases advance to local or provincial courts. Furthermore, traditional leaders contribute to maintaining peace and security by participating in community policing and developing strategies to reduce theft, robbery, and conflicts. Momoh (2021) highlighted the recognition within the Mende community of the essential role traditional leaders play in reconciling disputing parties and restoring social harmony. In a related study, Momoh (2019) emphasised that elders facilitate three key processes of conflict management and prevention negotiation, mediation, and adjudication which typically occur in an informal and amicable setting designed to build trust between conflicting parties and the mediating authorities.

2.1.3 Impact of Community Involvement in Conflict Resolution Academic Performance

Nguyen et al. (2022) investigated conflict resolution in Ghanaian senior high schools using a descriptive research design that collected data from 43 schools across the Ashanti Region. Their findings revealed that effective conflict management enhances school performance, improves outcomes, and boosts overall institutional efficiency.

Similarly, Wike, (2025) observed that conflicts straining student-teacher relationships, making it challenging to restore positive interactions and adversely affecting students' academic performance, especially when learning resources such as desks and books are damaged. Moran (2024) reported that teachers frequently noted better classroom relationships, reduced suspensions, and greater student engagement following the introduction of restorative practices, which they associated with improved learning conditions and academic potential. Darling-Hammond et al. (2023) further demonstrated that large administrative datasets can capture system-level impacts when implementation is consistent, though direct effects on academic achievement are often modest or inconsistent due to challenges in measuring fidelity, reliance on proxy indicators, and potential confounding from simultaneous reforms.

Lešková and Haburajová Ilavská (2023) found that both students and staff experienced enhanced conflict resolution skills, fewer recurring minor disputes, and a stronger sense of agency and belonging, contributing to improved engagement and learning outcomes. Pre- and post-intervention evaluations also showed increases in instructional time and reductions in classroom disruptions, suggesting indirect academic benefits. Likewise, Alex and Mukadi (2022) reported that effective conflict resolution strategies foster peace, strengthen teamwork, improve job and academic performance, support teacher retention, and enhance problem-solving within educational settings. Mlay and Otieno (2023) observed that the effective implementation of conflict resolution mechanisms enables schools to establish well-coordinated, disciplined, and inclusive learning environments that encourage collaboration among stakeholders and enhance overall educational quality. Hakvoort (2022) provided consistent evidence that conflict resolution and peer mediation programs improve students' social and behavioural outcomes by reducing incidents and enhancing interpersonal skills, although direct effects on academic performance were less consistent, with positive impacts largely occurring indirectly through better engagement and fewer classroom disruptions.

III.METHODOLOGY

3.1 Area and Population of Study

Sumbawanga Municipality was chosen as the study area due to its location as the researcher' working place. Also, the municipal council encounter various challenges related to conflict resolution within schools, which presents an opportunity to examine the role of local communities in addressing and resolving conflicts in school settings. The study population included community leaders, teachers and students effectively involved in assessing community engagement in conflict resolution among secondary school students in the Sumbawanga Municipal Council.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

The study employed a qualitative approach that helped a researcher for an in-depth understanding, comprehensive data gathering and analysis, ultimately leading to a robust conclusion. Further, this research adopted a case study design, which provide an in-depth, contextual understanding of the intricate factors that influence community engagement and conflict resolution. Further, this design allowed a researcher to investigate the specific nuances of individual communities, schools, and interactions, uncovering insights that may be overlooked in broader quantitative studies.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

This study utilized purposive sampling, where key informants were deliberately selected from five secondary schools to ensure their relevance and expertise. This study used 20 key informants were selected purposively among the target population. Specifically, one class monitor and two discipline teachers from each of five secondary schools; Katuma, Kizwite, Mazwi, Chanji and Mtipe. Two community leaders from each secondary school. This targeted approach ensures valuable input from individuals with firsthand experience in school and community life.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data collected through interview were recorded, transcribed immediately and the transcripts were shared with respondents for validation and correction if necessary. The data were then edited, summarized and presented narratively. A thematic content analysis was conducted on the qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews, with results summarized into narratives. The findings were triangulated after the presentation and discussion of responses for each research question to ensure validity.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

The researcher prioritized consent, confidentiality, privacy and anonymity throughout the study. Strict adherence to research ethics, policies and a code of conduct was maintained during the entire research process. To facilitate data acquisition, the researcher arranged the necessary logistics, including obtaining a data collection clearance letter from the administration of the University of Iringa. This letter was submitted to the research site to secure permission for conducting the study in the designated area. Additionally, the researcher properly acknowledged all

relevant literature sources to avoid plagiarism and ensure that data collection is accurate, with no unauthorized alterations, to prevent manipulation of results.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Results Overview

This study focused on enhancing community engagement in conflict resolution among students within secondary schools in Sumbawanga Municipal Council, Tanzania. The community leaders 5 (25%), teachers 5 (25%) and class monitors 10 (50%) were interrogated through threefold: to identify the conflict resolution strategies employed by the community in addressing conflicts among students, to examine the role of local community leaders in facilitating conflict resolution, and to explore the impact of community involvement on students' academic performance.

4.2 Conflict Resolution Strategies Employed by the Community

The findings from respondents were dialogue and mediation through elders, teachers, or community leaders, disciplinary committees and school boards, peer mediation and counseling, involving religious leaders, parental and guardian. Class monitors had this to say; "Most communities utilize dialogue and Mediation through elders, teachers, or community leaders' help in remedying conflicting students. Involving disciplinary committees and school boards facilitate listening and suggest solutions from warnings to reconciliation" (Class monitors, Interview Session, 24-26/07/2025). The findings imply that conflict resolution in schools is viewed as a shared responsibility, where elders, community leaders and school governance structures work alongside teachers and administrators, emphasizing that discipline are a collective effort. It also reflects a restorative focus, as the use of dialogue, mediation, warnings, and reconciliation prioritizes repairing relationships and fostering harmony rather than relying solely on punitive measures.

The findings align with Bos (2024), who emphasized that curricula should be structured to enhance conflict management strategies and encourage constructive dialogue among peers sharing common spaces. In contrast, Khalid and Xu (2024). Instead, conflict resolution was often handled through ad hoc approaches, which lacked consistency and were poorly aligned with the specific nature of disputes without a universally accepted resolution framework. Peer mediation and counseling in certain situations, peer-to-peer approaches are encouraged to resolve conflicts, helping to reduce students' fear of authority figures. Religious leaders, parents, and guardians, their involvement supports guidance and moral direction with cultural variations (Nakata et al., 2025). This challenges one-size-fits-all community strategies, showing that culturally diverse students may prefer different resolution approaches meaning interventions ignoring cultural dimensions may be ineffective.

Discipline Teachers emphasized that;

"The importance of peer mediation and counseling, where students are trained to help resolve conflicts among themselves. In certain situations, peer-to-peer solutions are encouraged to minimize students' fear of authority and promote openness. Additionally, parents, guardians, and religious leaders are involved in discussions about children's behavior to propose collective solutions. Religious leaders and elders play a vital role in offering moral and spiritual guidance, fostering respect, forgiveness, and peaceful coexistence. Disciplinary committees are also engaged to hear cases and recommend collective resolutions" (Discipline Teachers, Interview Session, 24-26/07/2025).

This approach implies that student's discipline is managed through a holistic, community-centered model that integrates peer support, family involvement, spiritual guidance, and institutional structures. This involves peer mediation with input from parents, elders, and committees, schools that create a balanced system that addresses misconduct and builds moral values. Complexly, Malingumu (2022) cemented that professional conflict management including collaboration, compromising and occasionally accommodating were the most commonly employed strategies. The findings aligned with Msangi (2024) that, while communication skills alone did not have a significant impact on conflict resolution, collaborative and problem-solving skills were positively associated with successful outcomes. Similarly, Rahayu (2021) concurs that conflicts such as group assignment disputes and bullying were common, and that peer mediation and teacher involvement were often used to address them. Rozmus (2017) also showed that peer mediation programs can work well in solving conflicts but raised ethical concerns about whether students should act as mediators. Further, Amedome et al. (2024) emphasized the importance of comprehensive, culturally sensitive conflict resolution programs that are tailored to the specific socio-cultural and educational context of the Volta Region. In similar vein, Hai District of the Kilimanjaro Region in Tanzania, Maeda (2022) indicated that commonly used strategies included compromising, accommodating, and conducting meetings to resolve conflicts.

Community Leaders perceived that;

"Parents and guardians are actively discuss about their children's behavior, where they work together with schools to propose collective solutions that strengthen accountability both at home and in school. In addition, religious leaders and elders are involved to provide moral and spiritual guidance, helping

students cultivate values of respect, forgiveness, and peaceful coexistence" (Community Leaders, Interview Session, 24-26/07/ 2025).

This approach implies that effective discipline and character formation extend beyond the school setting and require strong collaboration with families and community leaders. Findings were supported by Bakel & Horak, (2024) who established that bridging connections among students, teachers, parents and local organizations through forums, councils and committees can improve communication and collaboration. Further, involving diverse student groups in conflict resolution efforts; mixed-group discussions or collaborative projects reflecting various cultural perspectives, cultivates empathy, understanding in collective problem-solving as suggested by Horak and Paik (2022). Weber (2020) highlighted the value of community-building strategies involving peer mediation and emotional intelligence training conflicts resolutions. Apipalakul at al. (2017) built that greater community involvement leads to more effective conflict management and empowerment. According to Cachón-Rodríguez et al. (2022), enhancing conflict resolution using this framework involves tapping into the trust, connections, and relationships present within schools and their surrounding communities.

4.3 Role of Local Community Leaders in Facilitating Conflict Resolution among Students

The second objective demanded the researcher to uncover the roles of local community leaders in facilitating conflict resolution among students in secondary schools. In Tanzania, these leaders include ward and village executives, school board members, religious leaders, elders and respected cultural figures bare a certain authority within communities. It was found that, community leaders promote cultural and moral values, mediation and dialogue facilitation, encourage restorative justice and reconciliation instead of relying only on punishment, parental and community engagement and enhancing school discipline structures.

Class monitors Role of Local Community Leaders in Facilitating Conflict Resolution among students shown the emphasis that "Cultural and moral values are promoted through deliberate teachings that aim to instill respect, forgiveness, cooperation, tolerance, and discipline among students" (Class monitors, Interview Session, 24-26/07/2025). This implies that discipline in schools is concerned with behavior controlling and shaping character and nurturing responsible citizens. Consistently, Momoh (2019) highlights that elders facilitate three main processes of conflict management and prevention negotiation, mediation, and adjudication typically conducted in a friendly, informal atmosphere intended to build trust between conflicting parties and authority figures. Similarly, Lubbungu and Siame (2025) report that restorative justice and restorative practices correlate with reductions in suspensions and exclusions, improved relationships, and positive changes in student behaviour and school climate, although effects vary according to program model and implementation. However, Chandolia and Anastasiou (2020) concludes that leadership competence and conflict-management approaches within the school, rather than the involvement of external or local community leaders, are the primary determinants of successful conflict resolution.

Based on role of local community leaders in facilitating conflict resolution among students Discipline Teachers view that;

"Mediation and dialogue facilitation involve leaders serving as neutral mediators between students, teachers, and parents during disputes, creating a platform for open discussion and perspective sharing to ease tensions. This approach emphasizes restorative justice and reconciliation, where offenders are encouraged to take responsibility, apologize, and repair damaged relationships rather than face punishment alone. Parental and community engagement further strengthens this process by mobilizing parents and guardians to actively participate in addressing conflicts involving their children" (Discipline Teachers, Interview Session, 24-26/07/2025).

The findings imply that discipline and conflict resolution in schools are shifting from punitive approaches toward inclusive, restorative practices that build accountability and stronger relationships. The involvement of parents and community members reinforces collective conflict resolution while fostering trust, empathy and harmony among all stakeholders. Similarly, Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2020) emphasize that elders are empowered to bridge the gap between traditional justice practices and modern judicial systems, while upholding national legislation and constitutional provisions, as exemplified in South Africa. Also, Momoh (2021), who observed that the Mende people of Sierra Leone recognize the critical role traditional leaders' play in reconciling conflicting parties and restoring social harmony. Concurrently, Moran (2024) adds that teachers perceive restorative approaches as effective in de-escalating conflicts, amplifying student voice and accountability, and shifting school culture toward relational repair particularly when implemented alongside collaboration with parents, faith leaders, or community mediators.

Similarly, community leaders; elders and religious figures play a pivotal role in resolving student conflicts by acting as impartial mediators (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2022). Their involvement often results in quicker resolutions and is positively perceived by students, hence bringing cultural relevance and trust in local customs and values to the effectiveness of conflict resolution. In addition, social and emotional learning (SEL) programs produce consistent small-to-moderate reductions in aggressive behaviour and improvements in social skills, emotional regulation, and peer relationships outcomes that support student conflict resolution (Cipriano et al., 2024).

Community Leaders on the role of local community leaders in facilitating conflict resolution among students provided that;

"Enhancing school discipline structures involves leaders working hand-in-hand with the community through disciplinary committees and school boards to provide guidance and ensure consistent enforcement of school rules in resolving conflicts. At the same time, cultural and moral values are promoted through deliberate teachings that cultivate respect, forgiveness, cooperation, tolerance, and discipline among students" (Community Leaders, Interview Session, 24-26/07/2025).

This implies that effective conflict resolution and discipline in schools require both structural mechanisms and value-based education. While committees and boards ensure fairness and consistency in applying rules, the integration of cultural and moral teachings addresses the root causes of misbehavior by shaping students' attitudes and character. Together, these approaches strengthen accountability, foster peaceful coexistence, and contribute to a more harmonious learning environment. Driessen (2025) similarly observes that religious leadership platforms and elders frequently act as trusted mediators and interfaith councils and local prevent and mediate conflicts. Further, peer mediation and school-wide conflict resolution programs reduce bullying and interpersonal conflict when they are comprehensive incorporating training, supervision, and curriculum integration and supported by adult stakeholders (Hakvoort, 2022). In their qualitative research Lubungu and Siame (2025) underpinned that proverbs play a critical role in promoting peaceful coexistence, fostering understanding, and maintaining social harmony. Further findings in the similar study established that proverbs were powerfully utilized in resolving conflicts in a culturally appropriate way, and they are highly valued by the Tonga people in communicating complex ideas and emotions. Concurrently, Enwereji and Uwizeyimana (2020) cemented that elders are empowered to bridge the gap between traditional justice practices and modern judicial systems while upholding national legislation and the South African Constitution.

4.4 Impacts of Community Involvement in Conflict Resolution on Academic Performance

In this section, the researcher examined the positive impact of community involvement in conflict resolution on students' academic performance. The findings insisted on key benefits, including the creation of a more conducive learning environment, a reduction in absenteeism, the promotion of safer school settings, enhanced socio-emotional wellbeing, and increased accountability among educational stakeholders.

"Class monitors shared their perspectives, emphasizing that an improved learning environment was fostered through the active engagement of parents, community leaders, and elders who collaboratively addressed conflicts. This approach led to fewer disruptions and reduced truancy. Furthermore, they noted that conflict resolution efforts strengthened relationships among teachers, students, and parents, particularly through the involvement of community leaders and parental participation" (Class Monitors, Interview Session, 24-26/07/2025).

The findings imply that community leaders and parents' involvement in conflict resolution fosters stronger bonds between teachers, students, and parents as it promotes shared responsibility. These perceptions align with the findings of Mlay and Otieno (2023), who reported that effective conflict resolution mechanisms foster a well-coordinated, disciplined, and inclusive learning environment, enhance stakeholder's collaboration and ultimately improve the quality of education. In a related study, Kilonzo and Ivita (2019) established that efficient conflict resolution leads to improved performance and better outcomes, enhancing overall efficiency within the school system. On the other hand, conflicts negatively impact students' academic performance, particularly when learning resources, such as desks and books, are damaged. Moreover, conflicts strain student-teacher relationships, making it difficult to restore positive dynamics including learning (Nguyen et al., 2022; Wike, (2025). However, it's not consistent that, while community involvement improves social harmony, it must directly result into measurable academic performance outcomes. Improvements in relationships do not always result in higher test scores or school completion.

In their view, Discipline Teachers pointed that;

"Reduced dropouts and truancy are linked with community-driven mediation and support systems which influence reconciliation and reintegration of conflicted students into school. Conflict management which involves community elders and parents help consolidate the relationships between teachers, students, and families. Community-led programs also restore discipline and accountability, as students are guided to take responsibility for their actions while staying engaged in learning, rather than being suspended" (Discipline Teachers, Interview Session, 24-26/07/2025).

Findings imply that community-based mediation plays a vital role in reducing truancy and dropout rates by offering students second chances, thereby minimizing school exclusions and ensuring their continued access to education. At the same time, the involvement of parents and community leaders in discipline matters helps to strengthen school community relationships by building trust and collaboration, ultimately creating a more supportive environment for both teachers and learners. Findings were supported by Nguyen, et al. (2022) who revealed that efficient conflict resolution leads to improved performance outcomes and enhanced overall school system. The implementation of restorative initiatives enhances classroom relationships, reduces suspensions and increases student participation which

indirectly support academic performance (Moran, 2024). Similarly, the well-implemented restorative programs are correlated to decreased suspensions and improved school conducive learning climate as supported by Darling-Hammond et al. (2023). On the other hand, Brück et al. (2017) linked conflict with certain negative impact on students' academic performance. Further studies emphasize that school-based factors namely teacher competence, leadership style, curriculum, and pedagogy are stronger predictors of academic performance than external community participation in conflict resolution (Chandolia & Anastasiou, 2020). Globally, community conflict-resolution initiatives are not effectively reliable; mostly their impact vary according to the context, and in some cases traditional leaders do not have legitimacy to settle education related disputes. This undermines the assumption that community involvement will consistently enhance academic outcomes.

Community leaders have observed that

"Constructive disputes management promotes positive social and emotional development among students, fostering forgiveness, respect, empathy, and cooperation, while also enhancing memory retention and classroom participation. Through conflict management, the inclusive education is fairly and equitably encouraged for all students. Moreover, knowing that conflicts are handled fairly and supportively strengthens students' sense of belonging and safety, which contributes to long-term academic motivation" (Community Leaders, Interview Session, 24-26/07/2025).

Findings imply that community-led conflict management addresses behavioral huddles and supports holistic student learning participation and performance outcomes. Through emotional well-being, inclusivity, and a safe learning atmosphere, such practices enhance the overall effectiveness of education in the school. Supporting these findings, Alex and Mukadi (2022) reported that effective conflict resolution strategies positively impact school management and so enhancing academic and job performance. Usually, conflict mediation training and the use of information technology in conflict resolution reduce tensions and enhances a harmonious learning environment. Similarly, Hakvoort (2022) found consistent evidence that conflict-management and peer mediation initiatives improve social and behavioral outcomes, such as reducing incidents and enhancing social skills. Though, evidence for significant academic success is less consistent; positive effects are generally indirect through increased students' participation and reduced classroom disruptions and are strongest when these initiatives are combined into broader school improvement efforts. These findings support the argument that involving community leaders in conflict resolution is crucial for mitigating challenges and enhancing students' academic performance. Additionally, Mlay and Otieno, (2023) revealed that effective management of conflicts help overall academic performance and efficiency. According to Wike (2025) conflicts strain student-teacher harmonious relationships, making it difficult to restore good interactions and adversely affecting students' academic outcomes, particularly when learning resources are damaged.

Building on the Social Capital Theory, it was revealed the importance social interconnectedness, trust, and collaboration among parents, teachers and community members, which in turn contribute to effective conflict resolution in schools and influences students' academic success. According to Ndijuye (2022), when communities engage in managing conflicts, they create good learning atmosphere that minimizes disruptions, reduces stress, and promotes harmonious student-teacher relationships, all of which influence academic success. The use of social ties and collective responsibility, help students to benefit from reliable stakeholders' guidance and shared norms that shape discipline and promotes learning achievements. Moreover, citing Tanzania as case study, in the Social Capital Theory point of view, Ndijuye (2022) indicates a pivotal role played by teachers and parents than community leaders in molding student's conflict-resolution skills and influencing academic success; hence highlighting that external community participation may overstate its actual contribution to learning achievement. Promoting engagement is significant, as involving diverse student groups in conflict resolution programs builds empathy and cross-cultural understanding (Tsounis & Xanthopoulou, 2024). Therefore, collaborative projects, mixed-group discussions, and partnerships that reflect varied cultural backgrounds help students in a great extent to appreciate diversity while working together for common goals (Horak & Paik, 2022).

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Collectively, the strategies used illustrate a multi-stakeholder commitment to conflict resolution among secondary schools' students. These included dialogue and mediation facilitated by elders, teachers and community leaders; disciplinary measures implemented through school boards and committees; peer-led mediation and counselling programs; involvement of religious leaders; and active participation by parents and guardians. The efficiency of these initiatives, was found to vary mainly depending on the nature of the conflict and the level of collaboration among stakeholders as well as leadership. Further, the involvement of disciplinary committees, restorative justice initiatives and school community forums enables the development and implementation of culturally responsive conflict resolution strategies. Local community leaders play a crucial role in this process, serving as mediators and advisors as well as vital connectors. Their participation helps in building understanding and strengthen collaborative efforts in managing student

conflicts. The active collaboration of parents, local leaders, and community organizations plays a significant role in mitigating disruptive behaviours, reinforcing disciplinary standards, and strengthening relationships between students and teachers. These efforts collectively foster a good learning atmosphere that is more conducive to academic success. Therefore, community participation in conflict resolution is central in promoting students' academic success as it cultivates a harmonious learning atmosphere.

In conclusion, the study on enhancing community involvement in conflict resolution among secondary schools' students in Sumbawanga Municipal Council, Tanzania, stress on the vital role of community participation in cultivating peaceful and supportive learning environments. The findings revealed that various conflict resolution strategies namely mediation, counselling, and negotiation are routinely employed by community members and local leaders to address student disputes. Traditional elders, religious figures, and ward education officers emerged as key actors in bridging the schools and the community, thereby building trust and mutual understanding. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that active community participation in conflict resolution contributes to students' academic performance as a result of minimized disruptions, restored social cohesion, and promoting effective learning environment. Ultimately, the research emphasizes the effective stakeholders (teachers, families and community leaders) involvement in conflict management to ensure sustainability and enhancing better educational outcomes.

5.2 Recommendations

Cultural and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms must be meaningfully integrated into school practices by honouring respected local customs of reconciliation particularly mediation led by elders. Embedding such culturally grounded strategies within formal education systems strengthens the relevance and effectiveness of conflict management, ensuring that solutions resonate with the lived experiences of students and their communities. Also, there should be strengthened collaboration between educational institutions and the wider community. This can be achieved by investing in capacity building for community leaders and teachers through structured, regular dialogue forums.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be put in place at district and municipal levels to assess how schools are engaging communities in conflict resolution and their impact on student behavior and academic performance. In addition, government support and targeted funding for training programs, workshops, and community forums are essential for strengthening school-community engagement in conflict resolution practices. Such investment facilitates the development of local capacity, promotes collaborative problem-solving, and ensures the implementation of sustainable, contextually relevant strategies.

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