CHURCH RESILIENT IN CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

The Church is expected to be peaceful union of Christians leading to a holistic life on the way to heaven. This calls for total peace, which is only achievable in absence of all types of conflicts, this is not so within the Anglican Communion. The Anglican Church is a product of conflict based sub‑divisions and has also experienced complex conflicts that have led to further sub‑divisions. This study sought to investigate the nature of conflicts experienced among the Churches within Maseno North Diocese in Kenya. The objective of the research was the assessment of the nature of conflicts experienced among the Churches within the Diocese. The target population was the 43 parishes in the Diocese while the study population was 520 leaders of the parishes and all congregation members. A sample of 390 respondents was selected using cluster random sampling in the study which was carried out as a case study research. Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted in this study because it involved different parishes which were treated as subgroups. Closed ended Questionnaires and In-depth Interview Guide was used to collect Data from the randomly selected leaders and congregation members in a Face to Face interview. The findings were; Intra-church and inter-church conflicts were frequently experienced in the Anglican Church. Leadership conflicts were the most common intra-church conflicts followed by financial conflicts, marital conflicts, ideological conflicts and spiritual conflicts respectively. The inter-church conflicts experienced in the Anglican Church were financial, ideological, human resource, Material and spiritual conflicts.

Keywords: Conflicts, Anglican Church, Resilient.

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, the Church is expected to be one cohesive and peaceful union of Christians leading a fully holistic life on the way to heaven. Therefore, peaceful co- existence of all Christians regardless of their origins and background is a core value of the Church. This calls for total peace, which is only achievable in   absence of all types of conflicts (Rubin, 2006). Major changes and continued turbulence in the religious, social, political, techno-logical and economic environments from local to global level, are continuously creating an uncertain and complex environment in which organizations have to operate. This is predominantly fuelled by rapid advances in the information and communications technology sector, globalization has become both a cause and a consequence of sustained change (Van Tonder, 2008), which, by all accounts, appear to be in-creasing in magnitude and pace (Nikolaou, 2004). Increasing uncertainty and complexity in the operating environment of organizations provide fertile ground for the onset of conflict in the workplace. The Anglican Communion has not been spared either. As Adedeji (1999) notes, Africa continues to be devoured by various types of conflicts, according to Deng (2005) 20% of the sub-Saharan population lives in countries that are at war within themselves. The continent now accounts for more war-related deaths than the rest of the world combined as a result of poor leadership (Human Security Report, 2005). Leadership has challenged many people from virtually all walks of life and organizations including churches because of the complex nature of situations that leaders have to handle (White *et. al*, 1960). The Anglican Church is a product of the conflict-based subdivisions and has also experienced complex conflicts that have led to further split or subdivisions. This split

is responsible for the breakaway of denominations like the Episcopal Church in Kenya and Church of Christ in Africa (CCA). The study was undertaken in Maseno North one of the largest Anglican dioceses in Western Kenya with 43 parishes. Anglican Diocese of Maseno North has had several conflicts most of which are linked to Church leadership. This is responsible for the breakaway of the Episcopal Church and Holiness and Repentance Altar. This explained why the Anglican Church especially Maseno North Diocese was a good test case for this kind of study. The Churches within the Diocese also experienced inter church conflicts especially over the management of Human Resources. For example the Maseno North Diocese had lengthy court case over the Bishopric elections (Daily Nation, 1995). It has been argued that democracy, dictatorship and free reign are the major leadership styles in the whole world (Greiman et al., 2007). Therefore, leaders of all organizations including the Anglican Church have to choose from the three. Warren *et.al* (1990) found that no leadership style is appropriate for all types of organizations and people in all situations. Therefore, the leaders including those of the Anglican Church have to mix or blend different leadership styles to different extents depending on prevailing circumstances.

According to Turay (2001), understanding how people perceive conflict is fundamental to understanding the types of conflicts they deal with, their root causes and how they respond to them. Conflict occurs when the goals of two or more people, groups of people, communities, organizations and states are incompatible. Constantino and Merchant (1996) argue that, in the organizational context, conflict is an expression of dissatisfaction or disagreement with an interaction process, product or service. Deutsch and Coleman (2000) established that conflicts are generally caused by: Misuse of power, poverty, Poor communication, Lack of access to resources and critical information, Oppression or suppression, Lack of democratic participation in decision making, Selfishness and greed, Ignorance ,Unmet basic needs ,Discrimination, Gender inequality, Racism, Abuse of basic human rights, Dishonesty, Lack of openness, Misinformation, Lack of respect to others, Misconception and stereotypes, Lack of access to and control of local resources and Intolerance of diversity in leadership styles. Therefore this study is designed to facilitate determination of appropriate leadership styles for management of conflicts within the ACK Maseno North Diocese.

Turner (1991) observes that apart from Inefficiency and lack of productivity, slow work, deliberate delay, low morale , loss of energy, withholding Knowledge and failure of leaders to motivate their subjects are also potential causes of intra- conflicts within many corporate cultures and organizations hence the focus of this study on church leadership. Brown (1983) states that conflict is disruptive, dangerous and indicator of underlying social pathologies. Therefore, too much conflict produces high energy coupled with antagonistic attitudes, restricted and distorted flows of information, low quality decisions based on poor commitments and continuing tensions that under cut future relations among the parties concerned especially in the church. In this regard, Holtzhausen (1994) has argued that organizational conflict can be resolved if the causes are identified and solutions are found which accommodate all the parties involved. Indeed, attempting to deal with and manage conflict successfully without identifying the causes of such conflict is a lost cause (Havenga, 2002). Fisher *et al,* (2000) agree that, "conflict transformation addresses the wider social and political sources of conflict and seeks to transform the negative energy of war into positive and social and political change." White and Lippertt (1960), in a study of "Autocracy and Democracy" identified Leissez faire, democratic and autocratic, as the three main leadership styles in the world.

A leader at management level usually needs good job knowledge so that he/ she can properly organize and direct the work peacefully. This does not mean that he/she should be able to do

the work as well as or better than, the people he leads, otherwise he/ she might end up doing the work himself / herself to show his super skills. This is a serious mistake by many in the Anglican Church of Kenya. According to Ian and Bardwell (2004), leadership style depends on the situation and not inheritance. Each manager will have a natural style of leadership. This style will be set by the individual's personality, upbringing, beliefs and previous work and social experience. But, while all these factors influence and shape the style, it is still a learnt behaviour pattern; most managers were not born with natural leadership skills or hereditary traits, but infact learned them. The manager's natural style may or may not be effective in meeting the needs of the staff and the organization. For example, the manager who always relies on autocratic authority (one who demands that things be done without question) is likely to overlook the importance of his staff achieving their goals. He/she will be oblivious of the complexities of staff and their behaviour. In certain situations, however, the autocratic leader may achieve success, particularly where there are apathetic or conservative staffs (Byars *et al*, 1996).

Leithwood *et al.* (1994), in their study on leadership style and organization, found that a manager who is effective in selecting goals which will be assessed as meaningful by his/ her staff is much more likely to succeed than one who fails to define the goals in this way. The indecisive manager is likely to fail in this situation, as is the autocratic leader who simply demands that his/ her staff unquestioningly accept meaningless directives. It is important for the manager to consult his/ her staff when higher management announces new plans. This gives the staff time to adjust at it involves them in the plan's implementation, and allows them to make any protests in good time about details they do not agree with.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

This Research was guided by the following objective:
To determine the nature of conflicts experienced among the Churches within Maseno North Diocese.

RESEARCH QUESTION

On the basis of the study objective, the study was guided by the following question. What natures of conflicts were experienced among the Churches within Maseno North Diocese?

METHOD

This study utilized a case study research design. This design was appropriate for the study because it consisted of a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case, ACK Maseno North Diocese. This design was appropriate for the study because the nature of data required was supposed to be collected in only one round. According to Kothari (2007) and Casely and Kumar (1988), a case study research design was appropriate for studies where the nature of data required does not require time series over several rounds of data collection. According to Kasomo (2007), a case study research design is applicable where and when a researcher uses different categories of personnel at ago. This was applicable in this study because it covered different Anglican Church leaders at different levels or hierarchical positions within the Diocese. Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted for the leaders and those who are not leaders in this study. This was because according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000) it enhanced representatives in studies like this that dealt with sub-groups. During the sampling, the target population was purposively divided into 43 sub-groups on the basis of the existing parishes.

The first stage of sampling involved the use of multistage random sampling to select 13 parishes to be involved in the study. The second stage of sampling involved application of multistage random sampling to select 15 leaders from each parish to be respondents in the study. The third stage of sampling involved application of multistage random sampling to select 15 members who are not leaders from each parish to be respondents in the study. Simple random sampling was used because it allowed generilizability of research findings to a large population with a margin of error that was statistically determinable. In a case study research design, 30% of the target population appropriately represented the entire group (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2002). On that basis 13 parishes representing 30 % of the target population was used in this study. Gall and Borg (2003) established that in a case study research design like this one involving sub-groups; the minimum recommended size of each sub-group is 15 respondents. On that basis, every selected parish was a strata or sub-group in the study which was purposively sampled and allocated 15 respondents for leaders and 15 respondents for congregation who were not leaders. On that basis of 13parishes, an overall sample of 390 respondents was used in this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS
Establishment of the Nature of Conflicts in The Church

This study coved 206 congregation members and 207 church leaders in 13 parishes from the current 43 parishes in Maseno North Diocese. Each parish had two in-depth questionnaires adding to twenty six (26) for the thirteen parishes. For fairness each parish was allocated equal number of respondents. This objective was born out of the fact that proper understanding of the nature of conflicts experienced in an organization is the foundation of both conflicts management and resolution strategies across the globe. Prior to establishment of the nature of conflicts experienced in the Maseno North Diocese of the Anglican Church, it was critical to establish whether conflicts exist in the church or not. In the process of seeking answers to the question of What nature of conflicts were experienced among the Churches within Maseno North Diocese, information was sought from both congregation members and church leaders by way of interview using questionnaires and in-depth interviews schedules.

Approximately 202(98.0%) of the congregation members and 201(97.1%) of the church leaders were in agreement that conflicts exist in this church, the high percentages and more particularly the small differences between the congregation members and the church leaders were in agreement of the occurrence of the conflicts is a pointer to the frequency and magnitude of conflicts in this church. This finding was strengthened and confirmed by (Wijsen & Schreiter, 2007; Jenkins, 2002) who said that there were huge conflict in the Anglican Communion. The findings are in **Figure 1**

Figure 1: Conflicts occur within the church

Assessment of the frequency of conflicts on the basis of congregation members indicated that according to 51(24.9%) conflicts are very frequent, 102(49.3%) indicated conflicts are frequent while according to 35(16.9%) and 11(5.3%) of the congregation members conflicts are rare and very rare respectively. Assessment of the frequency of conflicts in the church established that according to the majority of both congregation members and church leaders, conflicts are frequent in the church. However, more church leaders were emphatic on this as compared to the congregation members 168&153(81 >74.2%) this was further accounted for by the higher proportion of church leaders 57(27.3%), according to whom conflicts were very frequently compared to only 51(24.9%) of the congregation members who held the same view. In the same wave length, more church leaders than congregation members felt that conflicts are moderately frequent 111(53.7%) compared to congregation 102 (49.3%). This findings is further confirmed by (Lang, Rengger & Walker, 2006) who found out that the Anglican conflict as an example of ongoing debates about the relationship between values and rules in the international community. The findings are in **Table 1**
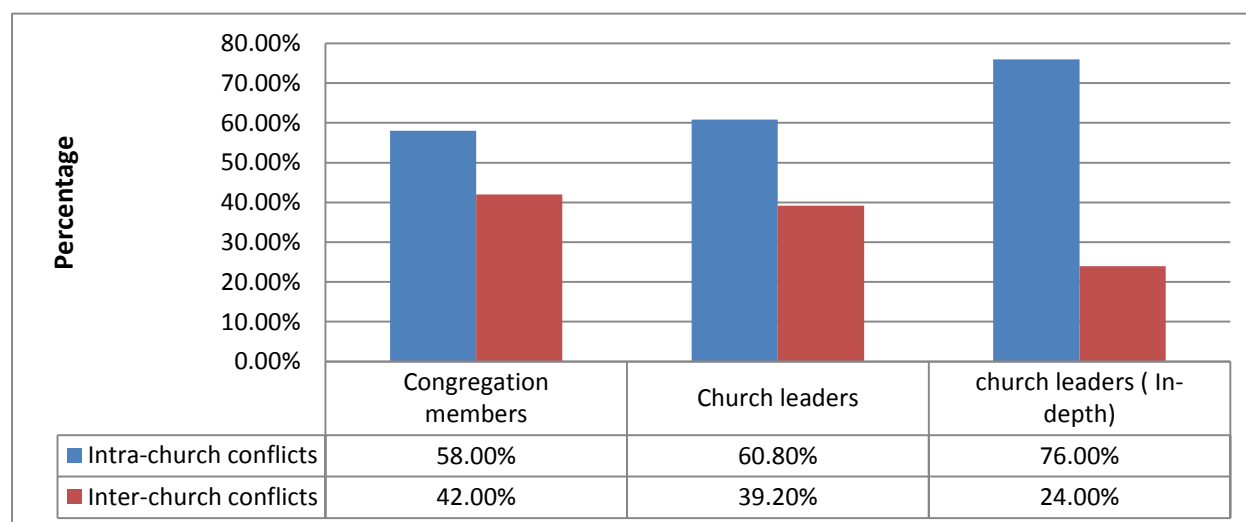
Table 1: Frequency of Conflicts in the Church

Respondents	Frequency of the Conflicts			
	Very frequent %	frequent %	Rare %	Very rare %
Church leaders	27.3	53.7	11.7	8.3
Congregation	24.9	49.3	16.9	5.3

According to the findings in Table 1, congregation members and church leaders were in agreement that in the Anglican Church conflicts are frequent. This view was well supported by 51(24.9%) and 102(49.3%) of the congregation members who agreed that conflicts were very frequent and frequent respectively. A similar trend of agreement was noted in the church leadership on the basis of 57(27.3%) and 111(53.7%) of the leaders according to whom conflicts were very frequent and frequent respectively. This finding was further strengthened by the low proportion of both congregation members and church leaders who felt that conflicts were rare in the church. This was justified by only 35(16.9%) and 17(8.3%) of the congregation members who felt that conflicts were rare and very rare respectively. The nature of the conflicts in the church was determined from both congregation members and church leaders using open ended questionnaires and in depth interview schedules. The findings are in **Table 2 and Figure 2.**

Table 2: Nature of the Conflicts in the Church

Nature of Conflict	% Congregation Members	% Church Leaders	% Church Leaders (In Depth – Interview)	
Intra-church conflicts	58.00	60.80	76.00	64.93
Inter-church conflicts	42.00	39.20	24.00	35.07
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

According to the findings a majority of the conflicts experienced in the Anglican Church are intra- church conflicts. This was supported by 126(60.80%) and 119(58.00%) of the church leaders and congregation members respectively. This finding was strengthened and confirmed by the results of in-depth interview of the church leaders according to which 20(76%) of the conflicts experienced were intra-church conflicts while only 6(24%) were inter church conflicts. Intra-church conflicts were more frequent than inter-church conflicts because members and leaders of one church had more interests in common and were therefore more prone to conflicts than members and leaders of different churches in spite of belonging to one Christian denomination. This was further explained by the fact that members and leaders of the same church interact more closely and frequently and therefore had more chances of colliding when compared to those of different churches though same denomination that was because such members interacted rarely and their interactions tended to be more distant when compared to those among members of one church. These findings were confirmed by in-depth interview which established that 20(76%) of the conflicts were intra-church while 6(24%) were inter-church.

Figure 2: Most common type of church conflicts

An assessments of the frequency to which churches experienced intra- church conflicts had the results in the Table 3, Figure 3 and 4

Table 3: Church leader members' responses on the frequency of intra-church conflicts

Respondents	Intra-Church Conflicts	Frequency					Total
Church Leaders		Very frequent %	Frequent %	Never %	Rare %	Very rare %	%
	Marital conflicts	27.3	39.7	3.3	23.0	6.7	100
	Leadership conflicts	41.6	35.9	2.9	11.5	8.1	100
	Financial conflicts	39.8	34.4	5.7	13.9	6.2	100
	Spiritual conflicts	32.1	26.3	12.9	22.0	6.7	100
	Ideological doctrinal conflicts	34.9	30.2	9.1	13.4	12.4	100

	Marital conflicts	Leadership conflicts	Financial conflicts	Spiritual conflicts	Ideological/ Doctrinal conflicts
Very frequent	27.3	41.6	39.7	32.1	34.9
Frequent	39.7	35.9	34.4	26.3	30.1
Never	3.3	2.9	5.7	12.9	9.1
Rare	23	11.5	13.9	22	13.4
Very rare	6.7	8.1	6.2	6.7	12.4
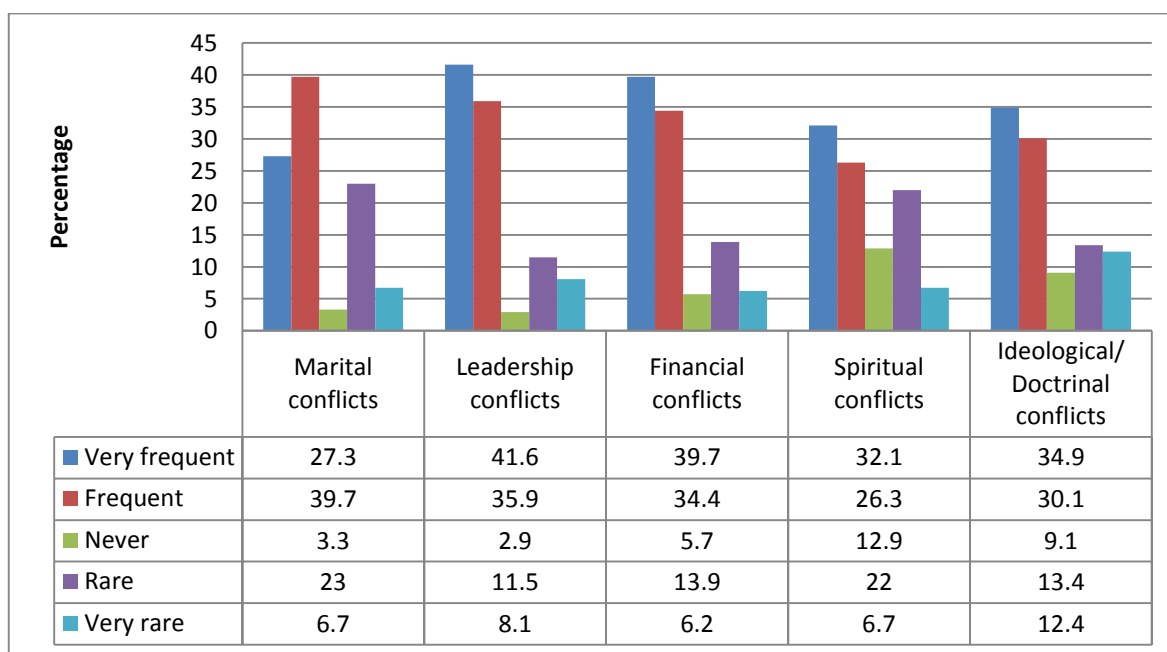
Figure 3: Church leaders' responses on the frequency of intra-church conflicts

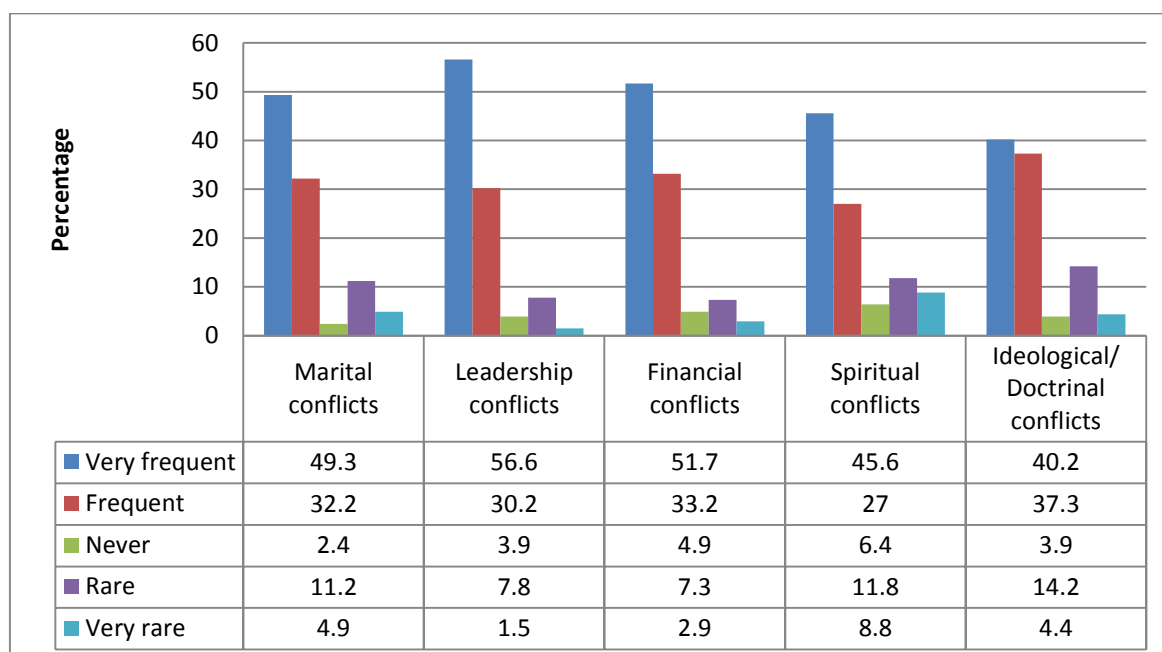|	Marital conflicts	Leadership conflicts	Financial conflicts	Spiritual conflicts	Ideological/ Doctrinal conflicts
■ Very frequent	49.3	56.6	51.7	45.6	40.2
■ Frequent	32.2	30.2	33.2	27	37.3
■ Never	2.4	3.9	4.9	6.4	3.9
■ Rare	11.2	7.8	7.3	11.8	14.2
■ Very rare	4.9	1.5	2.9	8.8	4.4

Figure 4: Congregation members' responses on the frequency of intra-church conflicts

An assessment of the intra-church conflicts was carried out on the basis of a frequency indicator index. The frequency indicator index was developed as yardstick to measure the commonness of each of the intra-church frequencies. This was determined by summation of the proportions of the respondents that agreed that a specific intra-church conflict was very frequent and that of those who agreed that it was frequent. An analysis of the findings using this yardstick gave the results in Table 4

Table 4: Status of the Intra-Church Conflicts

Intra- church conflict	Frequency index		
	Leaders	Congregation	Average
Leadership conflicts	77.5	86.6	82.05
Financial conflicts	74.1	84.9	79.50
Marital conflicts	67	81.5	76.25
Ideological conflicts	87.5	65.0	71.25
Spiritual conflicts	58	72.6	65.3
Average	72.82	78.12	

According to findings, leadership conflicts were the most common followed by financial conflicts, marital conflicts, ideological conflicts and spiritual conflicts respectively. This was duly supported by frequency indicator indices of 160(77.5%), 153(74.1%), 139(67%), 135(65%) and 120(58%) respectively. Leadership conflicts were most frequent in the Anglican Church majorly because leadership influences and benefits from the many resources in the church. Therefore these leadership conflicts were a reflection of stiff competition for scarce resources within the context of a developing African Nation. Within the operations of the Anglican Church, this was clearly indicated by the drastic change in lifestyle and level of comfortability indicated by access to expensive vehicles and houses beside ownership of several fat banks accounts based on suspicious but church linked income sources. The high frequency of leadership conflicts was also accounted for by the lack of appropriate leadership

policy, bureaucracy especially in matters of staff promotion. The level of leadership conflicts in the Anglican Church was further explained by the fact that church leaders easily and frequently accessed sponsorship for education for their families. This was critical concern in the present knowledge based economy where education was increasingly playing a greater role in individual and community based economic development strategies. It was also possible the procedure of preparing church members for example the training of the vicars was not effective enough and therefore created ground for leadership conflicts. Financial conflicts were the second most frequent conflicts in the Anglican Church. This confirmed the idea that most leadership conflicts were a reflection of resource conflicts and indicated that the church leadership was not having clear financial management strategies. This created a strong background for financial conflicts especially in terms of decisions concerning church offerings and funds from development partners. This was because church leaders in senior positions had been noted to own fat Bank Accounts and took their children to expensive schools at the expense of the congregation who were the majority and most of them victims of immeasurable poverty, illiteracy, famine and even diseases.

Among the five types of conflicts assessed in the study, Marital conflicts were the third most frequent with an average frequency indicator index of 157(76.25%). A higher proportion of the congregation members were in agreement that marital conflicts were frequent when compared to church leaders 168&139(81.5%>67%). This was because more of the marital conflicts were experienced among the congregation members than among the church leaders. The difference was also appointed to the fact that some of the marital conflicts experienced among the congregation were not reported to the church leaders implying that church leadership could had played a limited role in management of this nature of conflicts. On the basis of the average frequency indicator index, ideological conflicts were the fourth more frequent conflicts in the Anglican Church. According to the findings a higher percentage of the church leaders were in agreement with the fact that ideological conflicts existed in the church than the congregation 181&134(87.5% > 65%). The big difference in the proportion of church leaders and congregation members who agreed over the existence of the ideological conflicts was attributed to the fact that a higher proportion of the congregation members were innocent followers of the ideologies of the church but did not engage into evaluation of the ideologies. The findings were also attributed to the fact that ordinary congregation members were neither consulted nor involved in policy formulation processes in the church.

On the other hand the position of the church leaders' positions exposed them to where they had to evaluate the suitability of the church ideologies which could be the genesis of the ideological conflicts occasioned by difference in perception of the ideals of the church. A part from this, the church leaders were the policy makers and overseers of the policy implementation practices. This again created grounds for conflicts among leaders with conflicting views towards different policy matters and or styles of implementation of some of the policies. Among the conflicts focused in the study, the spiritual conflicts were the least frequent as indicated by average indicator index of (65.3%) with congregation members recording a higher frequency as compared to the church leaders 150&120(72.6% > 58%). This meant the manifestation of spiritual conflicts was higher among the congregation members than among the leaders. This could be product of differences in interpretation of the bible when preaching or church matters conducted by the church leaders. It could also be because some of the congregation members were not strictly sticking to the spiritual ideals as spelled out by the Anglican Church as a distinct Christian denomination. However, the fact that over a half of the church leaders agreed that spiritual conflicts existed in the church indicated the seriousness of spiritual conflicts in the Anglican Church. This was because the church lacked a clear spiritual

foundation or the church leaders had so far not agreed on what was spiritually right and wrong according to the denomination. An assessment of inter- church conflicts covered, spiritual, financial, ideological, material and human resource conflicts and gave the results in Table 5

Table 5: Inter-Church Conflicts Experienced in the Church

Relative conflict indicator			
Conflict type	Church leadership	Congregation	Average
Financial	76.50	85.4	80.95
Ideological	70.40	83.5	76.95
Human Resources	73.70	78.6	76.15
Material	71.30	79.40	75.35
Spiritual	71.80	76.10	73.95

According to the findings financial conflicts were the most common inter-church conflicts followed respectively by, ideological conflicts, human resource conflicts spiritual conflicts and then Material conflicts. This was duly supported by average conflict indicator indices of (80.95%), (76.95%), (76.15%), (75.95%) and (73.95) respectively. This trend could be attributed to the fact that finance was the most critical determinant of all life activities inclusive of what are practiced in churches when compared to ideological, human resources, spiritual and Material issues in the society. The findings further indicated that a higher proportion of the congregation felt the weight of financial conflicts than the church leaders as expressed through the relative conflicts indicator indices of 176(85.4%) and 158(76.50%). This could be because finances were mainly sourced from the congregation and not church leaders who therefore failed to feel the full weight of the finance burden occasioned by the conflict. Inter-church conflicts over finances could also have originated from the administrative structure of the church. This was because some churches within the parishes were perceived as junior branches of the main or most established churches. Such churches were normally expected to contribute finances to the main church a process that eventually generated financial conflicts.

The occurrences of financial conflicts were followed by ideological conflicts. This was because presence or absence of finances was the foundation of ideological conflicts. This was because ideologies were about choices and approaches to development processes which are pre-determined by finances. The trend of the ideological conflicts was more common among congregation members than the church leaders as indicated by conflicts indicator index of 172(83.5%) and 146(70.40%) respectively. The higher level of ideological conflicts among the congregation members could be due to high number of members who joined the Anglican Church from different denominations, socio-economic and political backgrounds. The lesser level of ideological conflicts by the church leaders could be because the church leadership system could had minimized the conflicts through collaborative meetings and seminars. The ideological conflicts are closely followed by human resources conflicts. The human resources conflicts are mainly a result of competition for limited opportunities relative to education, visits to foreign countries during partnerships exchange programmes and employment opportunities because of the associated benefits. The issue of competition accounts for the higher level of this nature of conflicts among the congregation members who were more in number compared to church leaders. The lower level of resource conflicts among church leaders could also be because they were more accessible to the limited opportunities in education, employment and foreign countries partnerships exchange programmes as compared to the ordinary congregation members due to their strategic position in the church networks. Among the inter-church conflicts covered in this study, spiritual conflicts were the least common as indicated with an average indicator index of (73.95%). Spiritual conflicts are higher among congregation

members than church leaders 157&149(76.10% >71.80%). This could be because the spiritual perceptions of the church leaders had been unified through training, collaborative meetings, seminars and conferences than the congregation members who might be from different religious and traditional backgrounds.

The main finding of the study were;
- i) Intra-church and inter-church conflicts were frequently experienced in the Anglican Church.
- ii) Leadership conflicts were the most common intra-church conflicts followed by financial conflicts, marital conflicts, ideological conflicts and spiritual conflicts respectively.
- iii) The inter-church conflicts experienced in the Anglican Church were financial, ideological, human resource, Material and lastly spiritual conflicts.

CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following conclusion was made; The Anglican Church experiences more intra- church conflicts than inter-church conflicts. Among the intra-church conflicts in the Anglican Church leadership conflicts are most common followed by financial conflicts, marital conflicts, ideological conflicts and spiritual conflicts respectively. Among the inter-church conflicts experienced in the Anglican Church financial conflicts are most frequent followed by ideological, human resource conflicts, Material conflicts and spiritual conflicts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;
- i) The leadership of the Anglican Church should develop strategies that can effectively address both intra- church conflicts than inter-church conflicts.
- ii) Leaders should be aware of their leadership style. This is the heart of the matter. A leader who is lacking in self-awareness in this area is capable of causing havoc.

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