

Types of Conflicts that Require Management by Pastoral Counseling in the Mainstream and Pentecostal Churches in Nakuru County of Kenya

Christine Julie Nabwire (Kibabii University), Micah Chepchieng, Aggrey Sindabi (Egerton University),
Risper Wepukhulu (Kibabii University)

Abstract: *The study assessed the types of conflicts that require Pastoral Counseling in the Mainstream and Pentecostal churches of Nakuru County of Kenya. The study adopted an ex post facto research design and it targeted all the Mainstream and Pentecostal churches of Nakuru County. Simple random sampling was used to select 4 churches; 2 Mainstream and 2 Pentecostal. The congregants were chosen from the selected churches. A sample of 364 church members was selected through stratified sampling procedure. The data was processed and analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences windows 20.0. The study revealed that there were a number of conflicts experienced by congregants in the Mainstream and Pentecostal churches that require professional Pastoral Counseling. Objective of the Study: To establish the types of conflicts that require management through Pastoral Counseling in the Mainstream and Pentecostal churches in Nakuru County of Kenya.*

Keywords: Pastoral Counseling, Conflict Management Mainstream, Pentecostal churches

1. Introduction

In every church setting, conflict is inevitable. Krejcar, (2010) itemizes three categories of conflicts that can be found in churches. These are: *Interpersonal conflicts*. These are conflicts on personal grounds for instance, conflicts between church Members, staff and leadership. According to Krejcar, (2010) interpersonal conflicts characterize about ninety percent of all the church conflicts. These conflicts could start on small issues for instance; the choice of who will lead worship in a service and this may escalate into a negative confrontation that may require Pastoral Counseling intervention. *Interpersonal conflicts* take on various forms like gossip, slander, legalism, power controls, false teachings, to mention but a few. Richard, (2010) observes that if the church has a good professional Pastoral Counseling system to handle conflicts, then the conflict need not escalate to the point of violent confrontation. Birch (2008), states that interpersonal conflict is a thorny issue in the church since it is fuelled by tribal and cultural prejudices. Kenya has forty two tribes as such, there is bound to rise up conflicts on tribal lines about which member from which tribe should head which department in the church.

Intrapersonal conflicts are yet another form of conflicts experienced in the Mainstream and Pentecostal churches; these are conflicts that result from self desires versus what God desires of an individual congregant. It mostly emerges as result of a personality trait that is contrary to what God desires of an individual who feels duty bound to change and grow spiritually; but is unable, for instance the new life in Christ versus the old ways of sin. When the old rewards of sin are attractive and beneficial to an individual, the sinful wrongs persist and the individual experiences intra-personal conflicts; as to whether to abandon the sinful beneficial nature and adopt the relatively sacrificial lifestyle of church doctrine for instance, a commercial sexworker or a drug dealer. This causes an emotional turmoil in the affected congregant. Intra personal conflicts are usually within an

individual's own hearts and minds and it may not be known to others., Munene & Karumo (2000) states that conflict within a person occurs when personal goals have positive and negative aspects and as a result, competing and conflicting goals arise when a drive or motive is blocked before the goals are reached; this leads to frustrations and anxiety occurring in such an individual. Therefore the person starts erecting psychological barriers and tends to react with defense mechanisms such as withdrawal behaviors, aggression, excesses in drinking or drug abuse.

Marital conflict is yet another type of conflict in the church. Birch, (2008) states that while marriage was intended to be a closed and the most rewarding of all human relationships, it also provides the most sensitive setting in which conflicts can develop. In marriages a church member encounters in-law issues, finances personality differences, to mention but a few. All these challenges end up on the counseling table of the Pastoral Counselor who is expected to give guidance and a possible solution to the conflicting couple. However, it should also be noted that marriage can also provide a classroom for both the congregants and priests to understand conflict in general.

Through marital conflicts a Pastoral Counselor can also observe the similarities between marital and other types of conflicts and be able to come up with a strategy for effective management of conflict. Most conflicts in marriage are triggered by, infidelity, financial management and communication breakdown.

Substantive conflicts are yet another type of Conflict that is basically based on ideological differences as witnessed in the early church. Birch (2008), itemizes various types of substantive conflicts that are experienced in the church and these are; Executive conflicts that occur among the top hierarchy of a church. This could be due to; strife over vision, strife over doctrine, strife over limited resources, strife over position and privileges, and this includes inter and intra departmental conflicts. Similarly, Ansah (2006) asserts

that pride, ambition, greed, intolerance and over spiritualization of the biblical teachings is the leading cause of conflict in Pentecostal churches.

The church has put in place measures to manage conflict and these include; accepting others as they are, this is further emphasized by Chukwuocha (2009) who affirms that although people may be different and difficult, it's God's prerogative to judge them, not man therefore, church members must be assisted to endeavor to receive other brothers and sisters as they are. According to Birch (2008), the church leadership should involve all members of the congregation in the church activities because when people feel marginalized, they resort to negative reactions towards church activities. He further states that the church leadership should watch out for the talebearers in the church who exploit the weaknesses of other members of the church to promote conflict. The church members are also encouraged ; to reconcile as soon as a conflict arises, respect order, submit to one another, forebear one another, maintain open communication, avoid pride and selfishness, control the tongue and focus on oneness of the church.(Chukwuocha, 2009) This can only be done through Pastoral Counseling by Pastors who undergo training to get psychological counseling skills.

Based on this literature, it's easy to conclude that both Mainstream churches experience more of substantive conflicts while their Pentecostal counterparts experience more of inter and intra personal conflicts. However that will be proven through these research findings.

2. Results and Discussions

The type of conflicts that were experienced by the church members were determined by requesting the respondents if they had experienced a given type of conflict, the respondents were required to give yes or no responses to the statement. The percentage and frequency of conflicts were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of types of Conflicts Experienced by congregants by church category

Type of conflicts	Church Category				Total	
	Mainstream		Pentecostal		F	%
	F	%	F	%		
Interpersonal	147	77.4	125	71.8	272	74.7
Intrapersonal	127	66.8	111	63.8	238	65.4
Ideological/doctrinal	84	44.2	82	47.1	166	45.6
Health	97	51.1	107	61.5	204	56.0
Financial	94	49.5	112	64.4	206	56.6
Cultural	104	54.7	84	48.3	188	51.6

n=364

key; f = frequency , % = percentage.

The majority of the church members (74.7 %) experienced interpersonal conflicts, while 65.4 % experienced intrapersonal conflicts, 45.6 % moral conflicts, 56 % health conflicts, 56.6 % financial conflicts, and 51.6 % experienced cultural conflicts. These findings concur with Ansah (2006), who states that most of the conflicts in the church are interpersonal conflicts which are a reflection of the

emotional state of an individual. It should be noted that there are many issues that wound Christians and trigger pain in their hearts; for instance, Talitwala (2008), states that; disappointment whether due to a broken relationship, lack of trust or betrayal will wound Christians. She emphasizes that such hurt can be expressed as anger against others. And this expression of anger either through displacement of emotions or through passive – aggressive behavior or projection of emotions to other congregants will definitely lead to conflict ; this expression of anger can be manifested through; jealousy, pride, angry outbursts, envy, sedition, ambition, greed and over spiritualization of issues. While, Birch and Oginde, (2008) quips that life would be simple if it wasn't for other people, it is imperative that, other people are not an option in life; and as such, the daily interactions with other church members are fertile grounds for conflicts of one kind or another within the church settings. Intra- personal conflicts are a vital aspect of conflicts management in the church as Crabb, (2007), noted that the most difficult intra-personal conflicts develop when a Christian is faced with a situation which requires him or her to weigh their personal moral and spiritual convictions against the realities of demands from society or from those in authority. In this case a believer is faced with a dilemma as to whether to obey God or Man. Most respondents in the focus group discussions confessed that they had devised a survival tactic, a double standard of giving to Caesar what is Caesar's while maintaining their Christian faith for instance giving and taking bribes to get favors done for them. Some confessed of being plagued by guilt conscience afterward but then to them that is life

The other conflicts that come up during Focus Group Discussions was the way church members who were in active employment went about their duties. Some respondents were still struggling with lack of character, such as corruption, lateness in the name of attending morning glory, and others were exaggerating the enjoyment of the Christian fellowship and spending too much of their time at church and were paying less attention to their jobs and businesses, this was clearly brought out in one of the Pentecostal churches whose programmes were crowded with numerous crusades and tight church programs. The congregants pointed out that failure to attend these crusades and church services was viewed by the church leadership as an indicator of lack of commitment to the church and a sign of backsliding. Those who attended all crusades and church meetings that is; morning glory, lunch hour meetings and evening devotion that went on to late in the night received praise and were awarded church positions. However, as at the time of research, some congregants had been laid off at their places of work due to redundancy, interestingly the affected members were coerced by the church leadership in to viewing it as persecution and war against their church. It is also an indicator that the said congregants were struggling with self-esteem issues that led them to desperately desire to fulfill the inner void of feeling needed and appreciated which apparently they lacked from their significant others and apparently their work places. Such congregants can be in danger of falling victims of misuse and manipulation by church leaders.

Because of lack of proper time management, it was observed through Focus Group Discussions that some businesses had been brought down and this actually brought reproach to the very faith they prophesied, as most of the correspondents disclosed that people didn't trust them with money, good jobs (due to absenteeism) and timely delivery of services.

Noted through Focus Group Discussions was also the fact that sometimes a Christian's uprightness in the workplace was bringing them hatred, envy and persecution by fellow co-workers who felt that the Christian's uprightness was a threat and betrayal to their conduct, but with proper guidance from a trained professional pastoral counselor, such a church member could be aided to develop confidence to remain firm in their convictions and make a decision to walk uprightly.

A correspondent from one of the Pentecostal churches during Focus Group Discussions confidently boasted of how they were encouraged to stop attending community meetings because alcoholic drinks were served and ungodly words were uttered when disagreements arose. There is a grave danger of such congregants losing touch with the real world. The whole purpose of the Christian faith is to encourage and challenge people to improve their lives; the more Christians do not seek genuine opportunities to interact positively with non-Christians, the more their religious impact on the larger society remains only a dream.

There were also findings from the Focus Group Discussion, in one of the Pentecost churches that most correspondents were actually struggling with suppressed anger because of the feelings that some of their conflicts had not been handled fairly. This anger the respondents confessed they used threatening prophesies that gave them power to control and hit at their opponents. The respondents were gratified by power, intimidation, the ability to manipulate the entire church management and create an emotional distance from other congregants. These traits are not rewarding at all and they can easily threaten the cohesion of the church; as Carter (2007) states that anger can be a lifestyle of choice and anyone who lives a life of anger is persistently working to do so at the cost of his own peace of mind. Some female correspondents had an extension of a family history of violence that caused them to dislike men. Some other characteristics that emerged during Focus Group Discussions were of those correspondents who held so firmly to their religious convictions that they couldn't help but condemn someone who disagreed with them. The mainstream and Pentecostal church members were equally affected by the different type of conflicts. The differences between the two church groupings were small. From these findings

Numbers of Conflicts Experienced by Church Members

The number of conflicts experienced by individual church members was important to the study, in that this would determine the need for the utilization of Pastoral Counseling in the Management of conflicts. It is also an indicator of the level of effectiveness in Management of the conflicts in the church by Pastors through Counseling. The number of conflicts experienced by the individual members was

determined by adding all the number of conflicts the individual member reported to have gone through and counseled by the Pastor. The frequency distribution and the descriptive statistics of the number of conflicts experienced by the church members is given in Table 14.

Table 2: Number of conflicts experienced by the church members

<i>Number</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
1.00	47	12.9
2.00	50	13.7
3.00	143	39.3
4.00	91	25.0
5.00	33	9.1
Total	364	100.0

The average number of conflicts experienced by the church members was 2.98 ± 0.064 with median and mode of 3 conflicts. The maximum number of conflicts was 5 and the minimum was one. These conflicts were; interpersonal, intrapersonal, marital, health, finance and cultural conflicts.

The majority of the members (39.3 %) experienced 3 different type of conflicts, while 25 % of the members experienced 4 different types of conflicts, 13.7 % experienced 2, 12.9 % experienced 1, and 9.1 % experienced 5 different type of conflicts. This is a clear indication that there is conflict in the church that requires effective Pastoral Counseling. The findings on the number of conflicts experienced by church members is a mirror of what is happening in the society; the societal demands and the changing social trends. Biblical counseling therefore should adopt psychological counseling as its major strategy in the promotion of spiritual and psychological maturity, and maturity involves: immediate obedience in specific church situations and long range aided character growth through psychological counseling in order to avoid dissonance. This is because, when congregants face conflicts, they become vulnerable and imbalanced emotionally, mentally and psychologically and this imbalance makes them vulnerable. The affected congregants can resort to unacceptable defense mechanism ventures that may not be acceptable within the Christian community. Such behaviors that are frowned upon in the church community include; slandering, name calling, greed, embezzling of church funds, fornication, and alcohol and drug abuse. Anger for instance can cause people to become destructive and violent or it also can cause one to take on a defeatist attitude, such as "I have left that issue in hands of God". As Chukwuocha (2009) rightly points out that, in the face of overcrowding temptation, people can feel somewhat tipsy, with their senses either dulled or heightened and their minds agitated, depressed and forgetful. These are symptoms of severe depression and such a congregant can easily develop paranoia. Emotions like this work on the minds of church members until they become "drunk" on emotion or intoxicated, and in a moment of utter misjudgment, chaos can erupt in a church organization. It is under these circumstances that congregants in the leadership positions can resort to using the weaknesses of the church organization as an excuse for them to either abdicate their church responsibilities or manipulate unsuspecting and vulnerable Christians for personal gains. These calls for a process oriented conflict management approach by the

Pastoral Counselor to enable him or her examine the changes in the psychic movements of the individual congregants facing conflicts. This can help because, what overwhelms congregants who experience inner conflicts are the assumptions that they are the only ones who are suffering like this and they go through it quietly hoping that God will help them to resolve the conflict without any effort on their part. Most church members interviewed in the Focus Group Discussion referred to it as “a wilderness experience like that of the children of Israel”. As such the people undergoing such often pack their belongings and go to reside in the church building, praying and fasting and waiting for divine intervention for as long as it takes. This is a clear case of abdication of conflict, taking on the ostrich stand of burying the head in the sand.

The inner struggles, which are intrapersonal conflicts, were brought out clearly during the Focus Group Discussions; the congregants decried lack of specialized and consistent pastoral support especially in the Pentecostal churches. There is need therefore for the congregants to be taught coping mechanisms when facing conflict situations so that they learn to stand on their own feet. They need to be empowered with psychological interventions skills in conflict management.

The congregants experienced inner struggles concerning their attitudes towards issues of self-esteem for instance, the appropriate forms of dressing and body make up *Vis a Vis* church doctrine, financial and material possessions and what Pentecost churches called gratification of the flesh; this brought an inner conflict with the psychological need self actualization according to Maslov’s hierarchy of needs. Proper code of professional dress *vis a vis* the church values, this was a major conflict as brought out during the Focus Group Discussions. However, with persistent loving Pastoral care and support by use of the cognitive dissonance theory of conflict management can be useful in ironing out the inconsistency or discrepancy between church doctrines and individual desires and societal expectations. This can be effectively achieved through supportive Pastoral care, seasoned with relevant professional psychological counseling teachings that can lead to proper attitude formation and proper adjustment of the congregant. As such, character modification can be achieved and the frequency of these inner struggles can begin to decline giving rise to a mature congregant with a balanced psychological, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

Prevalence of the Conflicts among the Church Members

The study sought to find out the different types of conflicts affecting the church members and how prevalent they were among the church members. The variable conflict prevalence among the church members was by requesting the church members to rank the occurrence of conflicts on a scale of 1 (rare) to 4 (very frequent). The frequency distribution of the ranking is given in Table 15.

Table 3: Frequency distribution of church members ranking on the prevalence of conflicts

Type of conflict	Prevalence of conflicts			
	Rarely %	Sometimes %	Often %	Very frequent %
Interpersonal	14	26	35	25
Intrapersonal	10	28	38	23
Ideological	27	33	28	11
Marital	16	23	28	33
Health	13	30	36	19
Financial	12	35	34	18

n=364 key; % = percentage

The rating of the occurrence of the different types of conflicts by the church members between often and very frequent were as follows: (i) interpersonal conflicts by 60 %, (ii) intrapersonal conflicts by 51 %, (iii) ideological conflicts by 39 %, (iv) marital conflicts by 51 %, (v) health by 55 %, (vi) financial by 52 %, and (vii) cultural (was not assessed).

The members ranked interpersonal conflicts highly followed by intrapersonal, then health, financial, marital and finally ideological. The prevalence of the conflicts among the church groups was high. This result concurs with Ansah, (2006), who stated that conflicts in the churches come in various forms at different levels of operation. During the focus group discussions most of the congregants from Pentecostal Churches reported to have gone for counseling on health related issues. For instance, one of the Pentecostal Churches conducts miraculous healing crusades in various parts of the country; these crusades are characterized with perceived miraculous healings, as a result, most people who have been diagnosed with incurable diseases flock the church with a hope of receiving miraculous healings, (Data from Focus Group Discussions).

Financial conflict was also clearly brought during Focus Group Discussions in one of the Pentecostal church congregants. He stated church members entertain the hope that more money, fame, prestige and anything that will provide them with hope is all that matters. However, we can conclude that they will keep going but when they face a sudden blackness of no worth and no hope of attaining the desired things, a deep overwhelming despair will set in. At that point, as Chukwuocha (2009) puts it, the church members either develops suicidal thoughts, have a nervous breakdown, become psychotically withdrawn or bizarre or plunge into irrational efforts to ease the pain through alcohol and drugs. But when a pastoral counselor helps the person through professional techniques to gain and practice the truth by rational, responsible and obedient and committed living, he becomes whole, alive, vibrant and full of life again.

Comparing the prevalence of the conflicts among different church groups

The prevalence of conflicts among the members of the mainstream and Pentecostal churches was compared. The aim of the comparison was to determine whether there was a difference in the occurrence of the conflicts among the members of these two groups. The members ranking of the prevalence of the conflicts (1=rarely, 2=sometimes, 3=often, and 4 frequent) were reclassified into two categories low

(rank 1 and 2) and high (rank 3 and 4) and the Table showing the frequency distribution of the rankings among the mainstream and Pentecostal churches are given in Table 16. The differences among the mainstream and the Pentecostal churches were then tested using the independent *t* test.

Table 4: Comparison of Prevalence of Conflicts amongst Congregants in the Mainstream and Pentecostal Churches of Nakuru County

Type of conflict	Mean of prevalence of conflict (0 to 1)		t-value	Significant difference (p value)
	Mainstream	Pentecostal		
Interpersonal	0.600	0.592	0.156	ns**
Intrapersonal	0.637	0.586	0.323	ns**
Ideological	0.368	0.414	-0.885	ns**
Financial	0.505	0.540	-0.666	ns**
Health	0.495	0.632	-2.657	0.008*
Marital	0.621	0.581	0.789	ns**
Cultural	0.342	0.391	-0.962	ns**
Total	0.509	0.534	-0.856	ns**

ns** non-significant ($p \geq 0.05$); *significant ($p \leq 0.05$)

Mean comparison of the Pentecostal and mainstream churches (Table 16) revealed that there were no statistically ($p \leq 0.05$) significant differences between the means of the two churches. The members of the two church groups were affected by the different conflicts equally except for the health conflicts where the Pentecostal church members were affected more than the mainstream church members.

The conflicts related to health were found to be higher among the Pentecostal church members than the mainstream church members and the difference was found to be statistically ($p \leq 0.05$) significant. This could be due to the fact that, the Kings Outreach Church's main activity is miracles of healing so, most congregants joined the church with a hope of receiving supernatural healing from their various ailments (data from Focus Group Discussion). In other churches the congregants stated that they went for counseling on health either to be prayed for inner peace during the period of the illness also for moral and even financial, support and at times for direction from the priest.

3. Summary of findings

As noted from the findings, different kinds of conflicts seem to affect congregants from time to time. For example; marital conflicts, health, finances and Pastoral Counselling are beneficial and are openly embraced by all congregants in Mainstream and Pentecostal churches. The survival and entire running of church systems seem to be embedded in Pastoral Counselling services offered to the congregants. It is also important to note that the core objective of church attendance is to get Pastoral Counselling, care and experience tender loving care from Pastoral service providers.

Since most challenges church members conflict situations are psychological in nature, that give rise to a set of emotions that require practical and professional support from the pastoral caregivers. This call for maximum matching professional support and this would be enhanced if

a programme is designed by professional psychological Pastoral Counsellors to promote a beneficial kind of psychological supportive interactions that are geared towards meeting the church members' specific challenges.

The findings that most church members experience conflicts is an indication of the struggles of the larger society, proper mentorship programmes that cater for church members of all stages would be a welcome idea to the larger society. Effective Pastoral counselling by the use of premarital counselling programmes would help empower engaged couples prepare for surprises that comes with marriage. Therefore, forming a supportive pastoral counselling atmosphere within a church setting can help create stable families. The Pastoral Counselling team will be better placed to deal with family adjustments such as divorce, bereavement, unfaithfulness, communication breakdowns and changing trends in the society. When pertinent issues such as romance in marriage are openly discussed, conservative church members will be aided to handle issues in marriage and seek support where necessary.

4. Conclusions

The study demonstrated that both Mainstream and Pentecostal church congregants experienced seven different types of conflict that required Pastoral Counselling, these included: inter-personal, intra-personal, ideological, moral, health, financial and cultural conflicts. Most church members were affected by more than one conflict, on the average each of the church members were affected by at least three different types of conflicts. These conflicts affected the members of the Mainstream and Pentecostal churches equally and with equal severity,

5. Recommendations

These findings point to the fact that there is an urgent need for adoption of professional psychological Pastoral counseling in Managing conflicts in the Mainstream and Pentecostal Churches in Nakuru County. Similarly, anger management strategies are urgently required to support individuals struggling with unresolved anger; this can be done by incorporating into church sermons, teachings on how manage anger.

Financial constraint was noted to be major source of conflict in mainstream and Pentecostal churches. Therefore, financial management trainings needs to be incorporated into church programmes to help member manage the undue pressure and demands meted on the congregants by church leadership who seek personal gains. Also, financial management workshops need to be regularly organized to minimize financial stress that may arise from meeting family obligations. The pastoral counsellors handling conflicts emanating from finances must possess adequate professional skills so as to aid church members experiencing financial crisis. The Pastoral team can be sponsored to go undergo such trainings by the church leadership as part of the church management programmes.

It was also observed that most congregants experienced marital conflicts would have been avoided if the Pastoral

counsellors employed preventive counseling measures such as; pre-marital and marital counselling by use of family and systemic psychotherapy . It is therefore important for pastoral counsellors to be provided with basic psychological trainings on how to use of relevant psychological counselling techniques. Also, churches need pre-marital counselling modules that touch on various issues in order to prepare engaged couples for the inevitable surprises in the marriages. Pentecostal church pastors need to understand that only professional counselling psychology does offer real help to Christians who want to effectively solve personal conflicts.If both Mainstream and Pentecostal churches embrace counseling psychology in to the church doctrines, the number of conflicts in the churches will reduce and cohesion will be realized not only in the church in Nakuru Countakuruy, but the other departments in N county in itself will experience peace.

References

- [1] Ansah, E. (2006). *Conflict Management in the Ministry*. Accra: Scrolls Media House.
- [2] Bebbler, T. (2007). *The early Church divisions*. Britain: Dons Printers.
- [3] Birch, J. (2008). *Managing conflicts in the Church*. Kenya: Evangel Publishing house
- [4] Carter, L.(2007). *Getting the best of your anger before it gets the best of you*.The Pauline Publishers,Michigan.
- [5] Chukwuocha, A. C. (2009). *The war within: Christians and inner conflicts*. Word-Alive Publishers, Nairobi, Kenya
- [6] Crabb, L. (1977). *Effective biblical counselling: A model for helping, caring Christians becomes capable counsellors*. Oasis International Ltd. Printed in India.
- [7] Crabb, L. (2007). *Effective biblical counselling: A model for helping caring Christian Counsellors becomes capable counsellors*. Oasis International Ltd., Geneva.
- [8] Krejcr, R. (2010). *Types of Conflict*. USA: Bellin Press.
- [9] Munene, M. M. and Karumo, N. (2000). *Understanding Conflict Management*. Nairobi: Donda Press.
- [10] Richard, J. (2010). *Types of Church Conflict*. England: Brehn Printers.
- [11] Richard, J. (2010). *Types of church conflicts*.Brehn Printers. England publishing house.