

Practical Conflict Resolution Strategies among the Clergy in Relation to both Biblical and Traditional Cultural Beliefs

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Abstract: *Most pastors in Kenya are highly respected and consulted in many social matters. Indeed, when it comes to disputes, whether between individuals in the church, or in the community, whether groups in the church or in the larger community, pastors' opinions are sought. All participants revealed that there was correlation between their practices, biblical teachings and their traditional cultural beliefs. They stated that the Bible served as a filter through which their culture was checked. Additionally, they saw correlation in the sense that Bible and their culture were interrelated and integrated in some important ways. They also identified differences and similarities between their culture and biblical teachings. Finally, they pointed out the differences between their culture and the biblical teachings.*

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Practical Strategies, Clergy, Biblical, and Cultural Beliefs

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Conflict occurs at all levels of social context. Most pastors in Kenya are highly respected and consulted in many social matters. Indeed, when it comes to disputes, whether between individuals in the church, or in the community, whether groups in the church or in the larger community, pastors' opinions are sought. The literature gives clear evidence in church history that churches and clergy navigated conflict resolution between their members and even other disputants in the community [14], [18]. According to one African catholic bishop, this conflict resolution motif is still cherished and carried on in the 21st century. Moreover, the Bible commands believers to settle their disputes without involving judicial courts (Matt 5:25; 1 Cor 6:1-6). Earlier studies show that most of the contemporary approaches to conflict resolution have been developed in the West and exported to the non-Western world with few "modifications" [27]. [3] concurs with this position, but also observes that although non-Western conflict resolution models precede the "Western discipline of conflict resolution by centuries, yet their contributions are scarcely recognized within the discipline of conflict studies". This poses a serious affront to African understanding and practices with regard to conflict resolution, because Africans are indirectly compelled to use Western models.

The African structures and mechanisms for dealing with conflict resolution regrettably have been "discredited and marginalized by colonial authorities and missionaries as well as the post-independent governments" [26]. [26] further points out that the importation and imposition of the Western ways of conflict resolution "resulted in the emergence of incompetent elders and leaders who are open to manipulation and corruption". Moreover, [1] cautions against importation of conflict resolution theories and practices from the Americas, Europe, and Australia. He contends that "Africa must develop its own home-grown

conflict resolution" mechanisms. Precisely, the African conflict resolution mechanisms and structures had relationships at the center of the conflict resolution process. Did theological education step up to meet this need? Not really. Conversely, theological education did not make significant difference since it was clothed in the same Western garb [21]. Based on this understanding, contextualization becomes a major factor in our contemporary educational enterprise and theological education. Contextualization will serve a very important role to fill the vacuum that was created by the importation of Westernization, which subsequently led to the marginalization of African traditional cultural values.

1.2 The Statement of the Problem

Conflict takes on different dimensions and can move from constructive to destructive and from mild to violent if unchecked. The church of Christ as an institution has an ecclesiastical mandate to lead Christians in resolving their conflicts in godly ways without engaging in adversarial ways that leave disputants ripped apart. The church must be the salt and the light to the world, not only by the way she resolves conflict among her members, but also by the way she promotes peace-building in the larger community. For this to happen, theological educators and pastors must be on the cutting edge in conflict resolution and peace-building.

1.3 Objective of the Study

To establish the practical conflict resolution strategies among the Clergy in relation to both biblical and traditional cultural beliefs

2. Precedent Literature

In African culture concept of mediation and the role of a mediator/intermediary plays a significant role politically, socially, economically, and religiously [13], [15], [19], [24]. Similarly, in most African cultures, marriages are mediated

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by the parents. In case of a dispute or a crime, in most African cultures it is considered unwise for the offended to directly confront the offender. Mediation is one of the most utilized approaches for handling conflicts, not only in Kenya, but all over the world. For example, [7] affirm that mediation is instrumental in strengthening relationships, problem-solving and designed to respond to human needs. In the African traditional society, forgiveness and reconciliation focus on “restorative justice” but not “retribution or punishment”. This is because “punitive action within the context of retributive justice may effectively decrease social trust and undermine reconciliation in the medium to long term and therefore such action is ineffective as a strategy for promoting social cohesion” [20]. In nearly all African societies forgiveness and reconciliation was carried out in some significant ways.

In African traditional societies, reconciliation was marked with some kind of rituals and symbols. To this end, [5] argues, “When an agreement is eventually reached, the good news is shared with groups and communities concerned. The agreement is then affirmed as a social contract in a ritual way, which differs from society to society”. Successful conflict resolution or conflict transformation is midwife via good listening skills. Listening is the most effective and fundamental tool in conflict resolution [12]. Conflict mediation and negotiation requires that the mediator or arbitrator be an active listener [18]. Empathic listening or active listening does not mean that the people’s helper is in agreement or supports the speaker, but it is used for the purpose of establishing a deeper understanding and clarifying of issues shared by the speaker [14], [18], [26].

The fundamental theological concepts which inform the way Christians engage the ministry of conflict resolution includes the understanding of the image of God, the effects of sin, the role of Christ in the redemption process, and the role of the church as salt and light to the world in resolving conflicts. [2] provides four levels on which reconciliation should be done. Arguing from a theological perspective, [2] believes that authentic reconciliation ought to include reconciliation with God, reconciliation with self, reconciliation with neighbors and human nature, and reconciliation with nature [2]. However, it is important to underscore that “reconciliation with God and neighbor was a primary concern in the nascent Christian community” [6].

Reconciliation plays a special role in God’s Kingdom as noted by [22]. Both scholars point out that Jesus implied that one cannot pretend to have a healthy relationship with God while ignoring the horizontal relationship with their brothers and sisters. One of them commended, “reconciliation in the kingdom community is so important that it has priority over worship” [22]. Jesus indicated that broken relationship among his people was so critical that it affected the worshipper’s relationship with God. Commending on Matt 5:23, [22] indicate that it made sense for the worshipper to leave his or her offering at the altar until they reconciled with their fellow human beings. Scholars are in agreement that there are significant differences between Western worldviews and non-Western worldviews [25], [27]. These worldviews fall under the following categories: “collectivistic” and “individualistic” [25], or “Western

Worldview and non-Western Worldview” [27]. In both worldviews, both forgiveness and reconciliation are practiced differently. In individualistic cultures, the “goal of forgiveness would be personal wellbeing for the one who forgives.” On the other hand the goal for the collectivistic culture suggests that “forgiveness will prioritize restoring social harmony and well-being above personal benefits” [25]. In the individualistic worldview the focus is on the self while in the collectivistic worldview, the emphasis is on the community. Despite the differences in worldviews, the Bible commands Christians to forgive and be reconciled to each other (Matt 6:12, 5; 24). Forgiveness and reconciliation lay the foundation for Christian faith.

The Church of Christ “has a profound message of forgiveness and reconciliation for a world suffering from many conflicts and divisions” [6]. God through Christ initiated the ministry of reconciling the world to himself, which in return he commissioned his followers to carry on (2 Cor 5:18-19b). Christians are therefore, God’s ambassadors through whom the continuity of reconciliation ministry is done (2 Cor 5:20). One major reason why the Church has to engage in conflict resolution is because sin is the root cause of conflict (Jas 4:1). Consequently, conflict creates division and disharmony in any given community even among Christians.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research was set in the context of the Africa Inland Church Nairobi- Kenya, and focused on selected pastors who were currently serving in the city of Nairobi. A qualitative, descriptive research design was used because, as suggested by [4], it yields “a detailed, thick description; inquiry in-depth; direct quotations capturing people’s personal perspectives and experiences”. Additionally, qualitative research methods give the researcher an opportunity to interview participants in their own contexts, observe them, experience their feelings, and knowledge [23]. [23] Further observes that observation in qualitative research allows the researcher the opportunity to observe “people’s activities, behaviors, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experience”.

3.2 Population

The population for the study was Africa Inland Church (AIC) Nairobi pastors serving in the Nairobi area at the time the study was conducted. The rationale for choosing AIC pastors serving in Nairobi is because these pastors come from different cultural ethnic groups with different experiences that carried a potential of enriching the research. The researcher’s desire was to select “information-rich-cases” [16], and AIC Nairobi pastors were the best study focus group for the research. Africa Inland Church in Nairobi area has a population of more than one hundred pastors. The findings of this study can only be generalized within this selected population and with care to a broader population. That is to guard what [9] call “population validity”.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure

A purposeful sampling was used to get the best representation of the population. A "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" [17]. Given that AIC Nairobi area has a population of over one hundred pastors, the researcher selected twenty of them to participate in the research. Out of the twenty pastors, three of them were asked to participate in the field testing exercise. A total of seventeen pastors participated in the actual research. To access the sample population, the researcher used what researchers call "snowball or chain of sampling" [9]. Snowballing refers to a process whereby the researcher utilizes well situated people to recommend potential participants. Participants in this study came from different ethnic groups in Kenya. The research was delimited to the Africa Inland Church (AIC) Nairobi pastors who were serving in a full time capacity at the time the research was conducted. Although there were other pastors such as youth pastors, Christian Education pastors, part time pastors, and student pastors, their understanding and practices were not sought because that was beyond the scope of the research. Additionally, Nairobi as a metropolitan city hosts many different denominations; the perspectives of the pastors of those other denominations were not sought in this research. Also, the views of the Africa Inland Church pastors serving outside the Nairobi Area were not sought in this study. The study focused only on AIC Nairobi Area pastors serving in a fulltime capacity. AIC Nairobi Area covers all the Africa Inland churches within the geographical administrative boundaries of the city of Nairobi.

3.4 Gathering of the Data

The research process was primarily facilitated through ethnographic interviews. The interview format was "semi-structured," which included some structured questions with further probing through open-ended questions to clarify and elicit additional information [10]. With the participants' permission, each interview was tape recorded and at the same time, the researcher gathered field notes that were recorded with sensitivity to the feelings, emotions, and body language of the participants. More importantly, the researcher employed an *emic* perspective position in the process. In research, the *emic* perspective refers to the "participants' perceptions and understanding of their social reality" [9]. The researcher led in discussions that prompted and allowed participants to share their own stories. Researchers admit that such discussions are very important in qualitative research because the best data often comes by allowing participants to share their stories [8].

3.5 Data Analysis

In addition to tape recording interviews, each interview was translated (where necessary), transcribed, coded, and stored for analysis. After each interview was completed, the researcher took time to make observer comments and also made sure the data were well stored. Also, for triangulation purposes, the researcher interviewed the presiding bishop, who in his capacity as the pastor of pastors is assumed to

have broad experience in resolving conflicts. It is important, to note that the presiding bishop's input is not included in the sample population but in the field notes. He is not among the seventeen participants in the study. Even though seventeen pastors were interviewed, one of them lacked sufficient information and was disregarded. He did not answer questions adequately and was too vague. The researcher did both coding and the analysis of the collected data, searching for themes and patterns within the data that shed light on the research concern.

4. Research Findings

Through the interview questions the researcher elicited information from the research participants and the following themes emerged from the data: traditional cultural beliefs and pastors' conflict resolution practices, the tension between pastors' conflict resolution practices and their traditional cultures, the correlation between pastors' practices and biblical teaching, similarities between the biblical teachings and the pastors' practice, and finally, the differences between pastors' conflict resolution practices and the biblical teachings.

4.1 Traditional Cultural Beliefs and Pastors' Conflict Resolution Practices

All the participants except AICNP12 expressed that their traditional culture positively influenced their conflict resolution practices. However, AICNP12 described how adversely he was influenced by his traditional culture. In his own words he said; "Somehow because of the many tribes we were brought up with the understanding that this community behaves this way and this community behaves this way. These are our enemies and things like that..." The rest of the research participants discussed how their cultures positively informed their conflict resolution practices. Another participant contended that traditional cultural foundation is very critical in conflict resolution and cannot be isolated from every day-today living.

4.2 The tension between Pastors' Conflict Resolution Practices and their Traditional Cultures

The interview question under this sub heading was, "What do you do in situations when your conflict resolution practice conflicts with your traditional cultural beliefs?" All the research participants held a very strong biblical view and/or the supremacy of the Bible over their traditional cultures. They contended that the Bible was above every single culture and anytime the Bible and the culture were in conflict, the Bible took the upper hand. For example, AICNP4 was very forceful in support of this position as expressed in his tone; "The Bible is my role model... And if a practice is against the Bible that means it is against what God says, and I put that one off."

4.3 Correlation between the Biblical Teachings and the Pastors Practice Regarding Conflict Resolution

The data revealed that the correlation between the research participants, the biblical teachings, and their practices with regard to conflict resolution fell under two categories. First,

the Bible served as a filter through which their practices had to go through. Second, participants felt that the biblical teachings blended well with their practices.

4.3.1 Bible as the Filter

Six research participants (AICNP1, AICNP11, AICNP9, AICNP10, AICNP12, and AICNP3) reported that the Bible was like a filter or yardstick through which they checked their practices. Another participant supported this position and posed; "I tend to make sure that my conflict resolution practice is informed by the bible because if I am informed by my culture then I have some biases" (AICNP12). Still, another participant who demonstrated some deep biblical convictions noted, "I think the Bible gives some guidelines and some principles on conflict resolution, which we need to go by. And not just our personal convictions and what our traditions/culture tells us or teaches us" (AICNP3). For another participant, the correlation between pastors' practices and their traditional culture is that they complement each other.

4.3.2 Integrated and Interrelated

Seven research participants (AICNP2, AICNP4, AICNP5, AICNP6, AICNP13, AICNP14, and AICNP16) described the correlation between their practices and their culture as interrelated and integrated in some ways. From the above assertion, AICNP4 vividly made a profound parallelism between the African culture and the biblical culture, showing how mutually they are interrelated. But for AICNP2 his practices and the biblical teachings blended together. He stated; "The correlation between the biblical teaching and my practices...I think they blend. Because...I am guided by the biblical principles, and I am guided by the word of God... as I do this conflict resolution. So basically, I use the word of God majorly." A similar position was voiced by another research participant who asserted that; "I... see a lot of harmony and agreement because...I am primarily informed by the scriptures and therefore in my practices [it] is like, I have been living the talk; I have been walking the talk; this is what the bible says and is what I practice as I lead others in conflict resolution. So, I see a lot of harmony in that" (AICNP5).

4.4 Similarities between Pastors' Conflict Resolution Practices and Biblical Teachings

All the participants reported that there were similarities between their conflict resolution practices and the biblical teachings. The following categories emerged from the data and they include; the biblical principles, forgiveness, reconciliation, contextualization, divine intervention, and conflict resolution.

4.4.1 Biblical Principles

Eleven research participants (AICNP1, AICNP2, AICNP4, AICNP6, AICNP8, AICNP9, AICNP11, AICNP12, AICNP13, AICNP14, and AICNP17) reported that there were similarities between their conflict resolution practices and biblical teachings. These were manifested in the application of the biblical principles. On the same note, another pastor supported the centrality and the role of the Bible in conflict resolution and added that, both the biblical teaching and his practices focus their loyalty to God. He

further observed that "value and loyalty" are very important components in conflict resolution because they are "integral part in making any resolution to conflict. If my loyalty is first to God, then I will resolve conflict not to please you but to please God. And if you are willing and the other party is willing to please God then, both parties will be happy" (AICNP8). But according to AICNP9, the similarities between his practices and the biblical teachings were shaped by both his training and pastoral ministry. "Well...because my training is related to bible, while my experience is also in that form; so I believe that has been my line and that is how I have tended to settle the disputes.... Even my experience is connected to the Bible; so my training and my experience are in that kind of a way" (AICNP9). Most of the participants saw a lot of similarities between their practices and the biblical practices in the sense that they used the Bible as their frame of reference.

4.4.2 Forgiveness: Similarities between Pastors' Practices and Biblical Teachings

A quarter of the participants (AICNP2, AICNP3, AICNP15, and AICNP16) reported that there were similarities between their practices and biblical teachings with reference to forgiveness. For example, one of them reported that in his practices, he seeks to assist God's people own up their sins and any wrong doings with the view to help them forgive each other "and that is biblical" (AICNP16). He further stated that "the Bible encourages forgiveness" which is compatible with his practices. Still, another participant observed that in his conflict resolution practices, forgiveness was more meaningful when the warring parties were both Christians because in the "Christian circle whereby we are using the same standard and frame of reference...we are following the same set of morality...Based on scriptural teaching, then I think you need to do the forgiveness thing. Then after that you can ask them to pray... [that is what] we call forgiveness and cleansing" (AICNP14).

This position was also supported by another participant who said with regard to conflict resolution "I don't want to say forgive and forget. But the scripture expects us that we forgive because you cannot plan to forget because; if you plan to forget you will remember" (AICNP5). While these two participants complemented each other, another research participant differed with this position. Instead he argued that the Bible teaches on forgiving and forgetting. He asserted that, "In the believer's heart, actually according to what the Bibles tells us is you resolve the conflict, forgive and forget. Then you start a new life. Not like the non-believer" (AICNP6). It occurred to the researcher that while both AICNP5 and AICNP14 were more versed with biblical teachings and its applications, the AICNP6 used and applied biblical teachings loosely. The Bible does not teach that we forgive and forget as claimed by AICNP6. The Bible teaches that we forgive each other as pointed out by AICNP5 and AICNP14 (Matt. 6:12). The discrepancy between the understanding of the biblical teachings on one side by AICNP6 and on the other side both AICNP5 and AICNP14 could possibly be accounted for by the level of their theological education. The demographic research survey revealed that AICNP6 level of education was one of the lowest, while the other two AICNP5 and AICNP14 had post graduate theological education.

Regarding forgiveness two participants brought in the issue of confession. One of them said “Sometimes they [people] need to go an extra mile and actually confess it, and even after the confession people need to own up and forgive because people cannot live on this for long. So these are some of the things that I think should be done” (AICNP2). Also, another participant supported the idea of forgiveness and confession with regard to his conflict resolution practices and the biblical teachings by observing that, “they are similar because in conflict resolution we seek to know the causes, to establish or identify the one who caused this with the view to help him. To ask for forgiveness and that is biblical. We also check the causes with the view to help the people see their sins with the view to help them confess” (AICNP16).

4.4.3 Reconciliation: Similarities between the Biblical Teachings and Pastors’ practices

According to AICNP3, there were some significant similarities between the biblical teachings and his Kikuyu culture especially the Old Testament in which reconciliation is accompanied by restitution. While AICNP3 pointed out the similarities between his culture and the Old Testament teachings as far as reconciliation is concerned, AICNP5 saw similarities in his personal practices and the biblical teachings through the lenses of his vocational calling. “I know as part of my calling; I am in Jesus reconciliation ministry. This is what Paul would say in one Corinthians that we are in partnership with Jesus. His ambassadors of course, are in [in the ministry of] reconciliation of men to God. And I think that also gives me a mandate” (AICNP5). The reconciliation ministry motif was also embraced by another research participant who said; “People are to be reconciled; they are first to be reconciled with God and to one another..., that helps me because if I have that in mind, even if you are a *Luo* and I am *Mukamba*, I will push those ones aside because at the end of the day your reconciliation affects your relationship with Christ and with one another” (AICNP10).

4.4.4 Contextualization and Conflict Resolution Practices

Seven research participants (AICNP3, AICNP4, AICNP14, AICNP15, AICNP17, AICNP2, and AICNP11) reported that there were similarities between the biblical teachings and their conflict resolution practices whose benefits could be reaped through contextualization. One of the participants saw similarities between biblical principles and his practices in the sense that his practices were “informed by what the Bible says” (AICNP4). He reported that through contextualization, he brings the biblical principles to speak into people’s culture in the “language they can understand” (AICNP4). Another research participant saw similarities between his conflict resolution practices and the biblical teachings in the sense that both his practices and the biblical teachings were geared to resolve human conflicts and promote peace. He contended, “I follow the biblical teachings where we must live in peace. We are commanded to live in peace with everyone, and that we are peacemakers as Christians. Even in the culture, we also promote peace” (AICNP15).

4.4.5 Conflict Resolution

As far as similarities are concerned, both AICNP11 and

AICNP8 reported that both the Bible and their conflict resolution practices were similar in the sense that both calls for conflict resolution. For example, AICNP11 reported that his culture which has greatly informed him cherished conflict resolution. “The bible does the same so we can borrow that one.” Still, another participant saw similarities between his practices and the biblical teachings in a different way. He noted; “The bible seems to advocate for conflict resolution, I advocate for the same. The bible seems to advocate for a process. So it is not a one quick thing but a process” (AICNP5).

4.5 Differences between Pastors Practices and the Biblical Teachings

Almost three quarters of the participants reported differences between their practices and the biblical teachings. On the other hand almost a quarter of the participants said there were no differences between their practices and the biblical teachings. Altogether four different categories emerged from the data and will be discussed in the following pages. They include; not really different, human disposition, traditional cultures and the Bible, and differences in conclusion.

4.5.1 Not Really Different

Five research participants (AICNP1, AICNP2, AICNP13, AICNP16, AICNP4) reported that there was no major differences between the biblical teachings and their conflict resolution practices. The interview question was, “With regard to conflict resolution, in what ways would you say your personal practices are different from the biblical teachings?” In his reply, AICNP1 reported that there were no significant differences. However, he was quick to point out that the difference occurred whenever the conflict involved a Christian and a non-Christian. In such a case, even though his practices are highly informed by the biblical principles, he would rather not quote the Bible directly. The same opinion was further expounded on by another participant who commended on the process. “The only difference is that you may not mention the scripture; you may not factor it anywhere, but still the end product is the same” (AICNP14). But for AICNP4 there was no difference between his practices and the biblical teachings simply because he disregarded anything from his culture that appeared to be incompatible with the biblical principles. Still, another research participant was more invincible in support of this position and contended that, “I don’t think they are different because the bible guides me. So, I work in line with the bible... Anything from my culture that does not contradict the Bible, I use it in conflict resolution. But where there is inconsistency, then I go back to the Bible” (AICNP16).

4.5.2 Human Dispositions

Six research participants (AICNP9, AICNP17, AICNP12, AICNP11, AICNP5, AICNP10) revealed that they experienced differences between their personal practices and biblical teachings through some inherently human dispositions such as taking sides in the conflict process, allowing corruption to the point of collapsing the process, and being judgmental. One pastor reported that these human dispositions could occasionally sneak into the conflict resolution process, hence flaw the biblical mandate. Another research participant admitted the seriousness of human

disposition and said, "Me, I admit that I am a human being, so I have my own weaknesses. And the much I would like things go the culture of the bible, there are times I have failed. And so even leading in a conflict resolution, I cannot say totally that I have succeeded because there are times my weaknesses can come over" (AICNP9). In a more specific way AICNP10 pointed out that among the main human weaknesses was the habit of being judgmental towards one of the parties.

4.5.3 Traditional Culture and the Bible

Four of the research participants (AICNP1, AICNP14, AICNP6, and AICNP15) expressed that they experienced differences between their practices and the biblical teachings whenever the Bible confronted their traditional culture. For instance, one of them believed that the Bible teaches and encourages that we resolve conflicts, whereas in some cases the culture may not want to focus on conflict resolution. This is encapsulated in his own words "The bible ... teaches that we resolve conflict. [But there are] some traditional ways that are contrary to this" (AICNP6).

4.5.4 Difference in Conclusion

Four research participants (AICNP3, AICNP8, AICNP10, and AICNP11) pointed out some differences between their practices and biblical teachings. For example, one research participant in a very unique way disclosed that the difference between the biblical teachings and his practices were found in the conclusion of the process in which his motive and goal could be just restoring peace and harmony but not to glorify God.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Conflict and conflict resolution are at the center of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The entry of sin into the human race created a serious conflict between God and the human beings. The relationship between God and the human race was broken, which subsequently led to God's redemptive plan to resolve that conflict.

The study found that all the participants had a very strong biblical foundation with regard to the place of culture and the Bible. They held the position that the Bible was the primary source that shaped and informed their worldview when it comes to resolving conflict in which there was tension between the Bible and the culture. In such a situation, they would allow the Bible speak to and inform the culture. This kind of position was a reflection and a credit to theological seminaries in which they acquired their pastoral training.

The study revealed that even though not all the participants had the benefit of learning conflict skills during their preparation for pastoral ministry in their respective theological seminaries, they all noted that keen listening was one of the most valuable approaches to conflict resolution. The Bible challenges Christians to be quick to listen and slow to speak (Jas 1:19) and the AIC Nairobi pastors appeared to have taken this passage into practice.

The study established that all the pastors were primarily informed by their traditional and cultural exposure. However, the study showed that these traditional mechanisms are being sidelined by the Western models. This implies that the African cultural values are slowly being substituted and unless educators put plans in place to retain the good values, the next Kenyan generation may have nothing African.

Still, the study pointed out that there was correlation between the pastors' understanding, practices and the Bible. Pastors' understanding and practices were primarily informed by the Bible. The study revealed that pastors used the Bible as a filter or lens through which their practices had to go through. Even though their culture informed their practices, all cultural aspects with regard to conflict resolution that contradicted the Bible were sifted and ignored. Subsequently, pastors integrated some cultural aspects that were compatible with biblical teachings into their practices. For that reason, pastors' practices and experiences were found to be a hybrid emerging from both the Bible and their culture. For this reason, the study revealed a lot of similarities between the biblical teachings and the pastors' practices.

The study too indicated that there were some significant differences between pastors' practices and the biblical teachings. While the Bible is free of error, pastors' practices were not. Pastors' practices were found to be subject to bias, prejudice, corruption, cooptation and other human dispositions. The study revealed that these human dispositions adversely affected pastors' practices. We concluded that for pastors to be effective in their practices, they must be aware of these weaknesses that can easily sneak in and destroy their great ministry of reconciling people with each other and with God. We recommend that if pastors caught themselves sucked into these human dispositions that they stop the process and get help from others. In other words no pastor should feel like he is the only problem solver or has monopoly in conflict resolution. Let them recognize other pastors and other people helpers as equally able to render same services. Therefore, pastors need to recognize their inabilities and make referrals as need be.

5.2 Recommendations

- 1) We strongly recommend that a study be carried on to find out why some ethnic groups are finding it hard to coexist and even serve God smoothly at church.
- 2) A study to find the feelings and what different ethnic groups think and perceive each other may be helpful because it will perhaps help the church deal with the underlying causes of tension and conflict. The study showed that this issue is so huge and astounding that it surfaces in the Christian fraternity.
- 3) Given that, Kenya is multiethnic country, a situation that makes it open to ethnic conflicts, we recommend that a further study on conflict and conflict resolution be conducted in all theological seminaries to establish whether they see it as a problem and what their response is. We also would like to recommend that since conflict and violence is affecting not only Christian, a mega study be conducted to find out whether education in Kenya is

designed to respond to ethnicity and conflict. Indeed, we would recommend that conflict resolution be introduced in all levels of education. [11] reminds us that one of the problems with education all around the world is that students are not taught how to deal with conflict. Pastors and theological educators can change this notion by seriously creating learning environment in which the masses can learn how to live harmoniously with each other. The study indicated that people learned conflict resolution through informal settings, non-formal, and formal settings. These channels are all open to pastors and theological educators to reach out and help people live in peace with each other and be at peace with God.

- 4) Another recommendation is that a study needs to be done to compare the difference between the correlation between the understanding and practices of the AIC Nairobi pastors and their counterparts in the country side. Similarly, another study that we would like to recommend be done is to compare the AIC Nairobi pastors with other pastors in Nairobi from other denominations.
- 5) One of the ways through which these values can be retained is through education in Kenyan schools and also through the church. Pastors and theological educators can play a great role in teaching that there are good things in the African culture that can be retained.
- 6) Theological seminaries in Kenya will need to challenge students who train to be pastors to think critically and also integrate other disciplines in their practices in order to be more effective in their pastoral duties especially as conflict resolution managers.
- 7) Pastors and theological educators must serious engage in addressing these African needs without jeopardizing the biblical principles

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