

Influence of Church Leadership Conflict Management on Congregational Growth: A Case of Africa Inland Churches, Machakos Region, Kenya

Joseph Muthama Peter

Master in Organizational Leadership
School of Business and Economics
Africa International University

Supervisors

Dr. Edward Kobuthi

Senior Lecturer
Africa International University

Dr. Godfrey Mwamba

Senior Lecturer and Head of Department
Leadership and Governance
Africa International University

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ABSTRACT

The church in the world has been one of the most peaceful places intended for holistic fellowships and Christian worship of God. However, different studies conducted in the recent past have revealed that the situation has significantly changed. Churches across the globe are experiencing numerous waves of church conflicts resulting from different factors. This study was designed to explore and establish the influence of church leadership conflict management on congregational growth in AIC Church, Machakos Region. The main areas of focus were church leadership training programs, leadership potential/skills, financial management, and transfer of church leaders. The study was seeking to achieve the following specific objectives: to establish how leadership training programs, leadership abilities, finance management and transfer of Church leaders influence conflict management on congregational growth. The study intended to gather relevant and reliable information from 110 participants in 11 Churches. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 11 churches and 10 participants from each Church. The main instrument for data collection was a questionnaire and was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. This study employed both descriptive and inferential techniques of data analysis. Descriptive analysis was involved in collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data to present it in form of tables, charts, and graphs. Inferential statistics focused on meaningful conclusions based on analyzed data. The study established that to some extent, incompetent church leaders cause conflicts, conflicts arise when leaders do not listen to the members, and church leaders who misuse finances cause conflicts. In addition, most church leaders are incompetent in financial knowledge and skills and not trusted on matters of finance. The study revealed that effectively trained leaders reduce conflicts on the use of church finances and careful considerations before transfer of a church leader minimizes conflicts. Unnecessary transfer of church leaders causes conflicts and most churches do not consult members before transferring a leader. The study concluded that leadership training programs, leadership Potential/skills, financial management, and transfer of church leaders significantly affects the congregation growth among AIC Churches in the Machakos Region. Pearson Correlation Coefficients indicated that the relationship between congregational growth and conflict management is quantified by leadership training and leadership abilities at $r=0.569$, leadership training and management of church finances at $r=0.318$, leadership training and transfer of Church leaders at $r=0.293$. All of these correlation coefficients have positive values, and this indicates that increases in one variable correspond to increases in the other hence concluding that they are statistically significant. The study recommended timely and frequent church leadership training programs to improve their leadership Potential/skills, improve their financial management skills on church financial matters, and effectively consider and consult well before the transfer of church leaders.

Introduction

The church in the world has been one of the most peaceful places intended for holistic fellowships and Christian worship. It is a place where Christians demonstrate peaceful co-existence regardless of their origins and background (Odhiambo, 2020). However, because of increasing uncertainties and complexities in society and the environment at large, the church is experiencing diverse sorts of conflicts across the globe. Globalization, advanced technologies, and developed communication and information systems have contributed to many changes in almost all sectors of the world including the church as an organization (Tonder, 2008). Unfortunately, the continent of Africa has experienced many of these conflicts ranging from civil wars, hunger, poverty-related conflicts, leadership, and many more (Deng, 2005).

Churches, like any other organizations, seek to grow and expand. This growth and expansion may take different dimensions including a numerical increase in a number of members, expansion in the form of infrastructure; growth in faith, and financial growth, among others. Churches, therefore, face numerous challenges in the form of conflicts that affect its intended growth and expansion. Diverse number of church conflict have been reported in the recent past, as a result of leadership and management-related factors including, leadership training programs, financial management, leadership abilities, and transfer policies of leaders. These challenges affect the Church in different magnitudes including church splitting, members defecting to other churches, and low-levels of growth among many other consequences. Understanding the factors that cause church conflicts are critical steps to solving most of the conflicts before or without losing members.

Problem Statement

The fact that churches in the world are facing conflicts indicates positive and negative implications that need to be seriously addressed through leadership abilities to manage conflicts and employ the relevant strategies to solve conflicts in a productive manner, especially in Africa Inland Church, Machakos Region. As such, this church remains stunted in terms of congregational/numerical growth as every time there's growth, a conflict arises leading to courts instead of managing the conflicts within the Church government without involving the jurisdiction in the courts (Thiga, Pam, and Nkansah-Obrempong, 2021). If the influences are diligently identified, it will be easier to lay strategies needed to manage the conflicts in the Church in a better way that can give positive results in the Church deliberately in Africa Inland Church Machakos Region. The influence of Church conflicts and management has been identified as a common phenomenon in Africa and across the globe. The church, like any other organization encounters internal crisis (Folarin and Adedokun, 2016). Church conflicts among the Pentecostal churches have resulted in splits and disagreements, if they could be managed well, negative implications could not be experienced (Gathuki, 2015). Studies has indicated that the church has got chaos which can be managed within the Church government and give a positive result as well and attract more people to salvation.

Church conflicts are an inevitable and often necessary aspect of church life, but if they are not managed constructively, they can be damaging to church morale and vitality or even destructive to its existence. The influence of church conflict management is devastating especially on church unity, congregational growth, and infrastructure development. Pastors, church leaders, and the general congregation at large experience dramatizing occurrences coupled with shame, humiliation, and discouragements; among many other experiences depending on the nature of the conflict but if they can be resolved wisely through the leadership abilities, the Church can be a good place to be and congregational growth can be a positive song to sing in every season. Prolonged and unresolved internal/ external conflicts may lead to destroyed personal or church testimonies, lost reputations, and physical, emotional, or spiritual injuries or pain among other effects instead of feeling satisfaction and growth in the Church. Effectively resolved church conflicts can lead to healthy, strong, and united church organizations as well as an increase in income through tithes, and love offerings among other gifts.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the influence of church leadership conflict management on congregational growth in Africa Inland Church, Machakos Region.

1.4 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study were:

- i) To establish how leadership training programs influence conflict management on congregational growth.
- ii) To determine the extent in which leadership abilities influence conflict management on congregational growth.
- iii) To establish how management of church finances influence conflict management on congregational growth.
- iv) To establish how transfer policies of church leaders influence conflict management on congregational growth.

Theoretical Framework

This study was embedded in the two theories: Interest-Based relational Approach and Thomas Kilmann's Model. A theoretical framework was used as basic review of already stated theories that guides the study as road map for creating evidence of this study. In this study, the researcher explained the existing theories to support this study and demonstrate that it is grounded in well laid and

researched ideas. These theories enabled the researcher to explain vividly the problem and its relationship to conflict situations in churches around the globe and more specifically in Machakos Region Church Council.

Empirical Literature

Many studies conducted globally indicate that majority of churches have witnessed conflicts in one way or the other.

Leaders' Training Programs on Congregational Growth

In Ghana, a study was conducted by Yeboah (2020) on "The effects of pastoral leadership practices on local churches in Nkawkaw Diocese of the Methodist church. The results indicated that among the diverse pastoral leadership practices, serving and loving, visitation, and hospitality related to church growth in local growing churches. Results also indicated that an essential link exists between effective pastoral leadership practices and church growth. Churches whose ministers performed more effective practices that related to church growth such as serving and loving, visitation, and hospitality saw their churches grow, while ministers who did not perform these practices experienced decline. This study is an indicator that if church leaders are effectively trained, their churches are more likely to experience congregational growth.

In Nigeria, a study conducted by Ajayi (2010) in Christ Apostolic Church (CAC of Nigeria indicated that this Church went through a protracted conflict in 1991 due to incompetent leadership training for some of its church leaders. In that manner, they could not contain the church according to the standards needed for the Church to grow. The authorities of this church were led by Pastor J. B Orogun. He frowned against the practice of Prophet Obadare who was a highly trained leader, in this sense he used his independent Church (World Soul Winning Evangelistic Ministry) as a parasite against Christ's Apostolic Church. He curved out the members from CAC through revivals. Masamba (2013) stated that Church growth was also affected by the pastor's theological training. One notable feature from the beginning is that the Pentecostal Churches were laying in a foundation of conflicts (Gathuki, 2015).

Nyakundi (2017) conducted a study on "The influence of church leadership on membership growth: A case of Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) Kianungu District. It was revealed that the growth of church membership in Kianungu PAG church District was affected by the leadership styles adopted by pastors, leadership conflicts, and weak establishment of church programs. The researcher recommended that pastors should adopt leadership styles applicable to church organizations. This study revealed that leadership is a key pillar of church growth and development. Therefore, church leaders should be trained well before being given power and mandate of leading people.

Leadership Abilities and Congregational Growth

According to the American Center for Leadership Studies (ACLS), the term "power" has been defined as "the means by which the leader in action gains the compliance of the follower(s)," (Beasley, 1998). May (2016) on the other hand states "power is the ability to cause or prevent change." Another theorist, Oswald (2017), states "that power relates to individuals' ability to accomplish things outside or above the authority given to them in roles." Power abuse or misuse in the church may be demonstrated in various ways including Coercion, suppression, knowledge suppression, dictatorship, etc.

Marian (2017) in South Africa conducted a study to determine what constitutes the abuse of power by leaders in Christian organizations and how it can be addressed, especially in a multicultural context. The cultures considered in the empirical research is English-speaking Canadians, Germans (from what was formerly West Germany), and white South Africans. In this research, the abuse of power, the aspects that define abusive leaders and the victims, and the effects of the abuse of power on the leaders, victims and organizations were discussed. The literature and the responses from the research participants clearly confirmed the existence of abusive leadership in Christian organizations.

The findings revealed that "Addressing the abuse of power in Christian organizations, specifically in a multicultural context is challenging. Leaders must be prepared to learn about and understand the cultures represented in the team. They also have a responsibility to challenge their team members to reflect on their cultural characteristics, to have healthy discussions and to form an organizational third culture that profits from the potential that each team member can contribute.

Another study conducted in South Africa by Pali (2018) revealed that "The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Orange Free State (DRCA OFS) has, for over a decade, experienced growing internal conflicts within its leadership in the various structures of the church. Some of these conflicts have culminated in physical violence and litigation." The study revealed several factors influencing congregational conflicts including: Leadership training, use of power and authority, church order and management, theological identity, fear of change, introduction of new programs in the congregation, and exposed sin. Others emanated from a misunderstanding among leaders whenever the question of control was involved.

Gathuki (2015) conducted a study in Kiri-ini Christian Church International (CCI). The findings indicated that the struggle for leadership positions contributed so much to the conflicts that were witnessed in the church. He established, "The senior Pastor, felt that his position and authority were being threatened by his deputy. The deputy was known to question the Senior Pastor frequently over different issues. The Senior Pastor reacted to this threat by stripping off all power and authority which was enjoyed by the deputy as his principal assistant. He also sacked the entire Church Council thus going against the CCI administrative policy which has vested the Church Council led by the pastor with authority to manage the affairs of the local church."

Financial Management and Congregational Growth

Wilfred (2011) conducted a study in California, (USA). He noted that Pentecostalism has experienced a variety of Church conflicts, divisions, and controversies for a long time due to lack of transparency and mishandling of Church finances, and this has hampered its growth both numerically and spiritually, leaving the Church in despair and the number of memberships reduced greatly.

A study conducted in Zimbabwe by Chatira and Mwenje (2017), on “The development of management skills for effective church management in pastoral preparation programs in Zimbabwe,” revealed critical aspects of management of church resources and administration skills in general. The paper focused on the development of management skills for effective church management in pastoral preparation programs in Zimbabwe, and underscores the need for the use of secular principles and practices in church management. It identifies the management challenges faced by the pastors, explores the extent to which management skills are being developed in pastoral preparation programs, and looks into alternative management practices which could be adopted into the Church for ministry effectiveness.

The research instruments used were self-administered questionnaires distributed to a sample of fifty-three Evangelical and Pentecostal Pastors in Harare whose churches are registered with the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) and/or the Zimbabwe Council of Evangelical Pentecostal Churches (ZCEPC); and six face-to-face interviews held with three seminary deans and three senior pastors for churches which do in-house training.

The study established that pastors are currently facing management challenges because the course content of the pastoral preparation programs is more skewed toward the spiritual aspects of ministry. Recommendations were thus made to the effect that pastoral preparation programs should consider collaborating with business schools and business persons to assist in the amendment of their course content to ensure that proper management skills are developed in the pastors by the introduction of management studies alongside theological studies. Some of the suggested management aspects are strategic planning and implementation, financial management and internal control systems, and organizational development and design.

Transfer Policy of Church Leaders and Congregational Growth

Various examples can be given for churches that have undergone church conflict. For instance, the Church of God Mission under Archbishop Benson Idahosa experienced a leadership conflict immediately after his demise (Awojobi, 2011). This was after the ordination of his wife, Margaret Idahosa, as his successor even after several protests. Due to this kind of leadership transfer, some pastors and bishops under this ministry started their own churches because they were not contented with the choice of being led by a woman. Another study was done by Awojobi (2011), in the year 2010, a case was in the federal High Court, Lagos as two pastors Olusheyeye and Akintola were fighting to succeed Pastor E. H. Olusheyeye as head of Christ Apostolic Church Worldwide. This study indicated that church leadership transfers can turn into conflicts in case the transitions are not handled with care. Church leaders should therefore ensure smooth transitions in cases where pastors are being transferred to another region to minimize decline in congregational growth.

In Kenya, a study was conducted by Dudley & Zingery, (2012) and the findings showed that disagreements appear in significantly different aspects of congregational life. Money, its use, and abuse (42%), was a close second to the most frequently reported area of conflict, which was agreeing upon and enforcing accepted norms of behavior among members (44%). The style of worship, designed to bring members together in the unity of faith, was an area of conflict for more than two of every five congregations (41%), while the organizational questions of leadership style (40%) and decision-making (39%) appeared almost equally troubling. Most church leaders disagree due to church money management and control.

Though not all Church conflicts are influenced by pastors, some are caused by Church members respectively. (Moenga, 2013). A study was conducted in Kenya by Kapanga et al. (2010) on the topic “Can Church Conflict Inhibit Moral Development and Christian Formation? The findings of this study revealed that “conflicts had enormous effects on the church and society both spiritually and socioeconomically. As an opportunity, the conflict became a source of church growth, expansion, and Christian maturity whereas on the other hand, it became associated with retarded development, rivalry, strained relations, and negative publicity.” The researcher recommended that church leaders be trained on conflict resolution and that churches ought to provide avenues and structures of proactive conflict resolution mechanism in order to remain the beckon of moral development and Christian formation in the society.”

Another study was conducted in Kenya by Thiga, Pam, and Nkansah-Obrempong (2021) on “The Effect of Church Conflict on the Growth of Pentecostal Churches in Kenya: A Case Study of Selected Churches in Nairobi.” The findings revealed that “there were conflicts in all the churches selected under their study in Nairobi County.” Also, “The study established that there were top leadership wrangles at the national level seeking to control the church. There were also local church leadership wrangles pitting pastors and other leaders and conflict among other leaders within the church. The study established that conflict negatively affected the growth of the church as the churches lost members to other churches around,” (Thiga, Pam, and Nkansah-Obrempong, (2021). These are just but few examples of current empirical studies carried out on the state of the modern church concerning the subject of “Church conflict”.

According to Gathuki (2015) and Kamau (1994), the church conflict among Pentecostal churches in Kenya has been caused by unwise leaders who exercise their authority in a diabolic means and this has made the Church to split, hence it has resulted in the loss of its

members to other Churches or some simply left the faith and have gone back to the lives they used to live before they were born-again (Gathuki, 2015).

Research Methodology

The research design in this study focused on different aspects including the location of participants, target population, instruments for data collection, methods of data collection, and data analysis procedures. This study targeted 94 Churches located in the Machakos Region. The study gathered relevant and reliable information from 110 participants in 11 Churches. Selected participants of all gender, age, and status were sampled to ensure reliable data was obtained for analysis. First, the researcher used simple random sampling technique to select church leaders and members who represented the entire population of Machakos Region. To effectively carry out this exercise, the researcher obtained a list of all the 94 churches in the region. Due to the expense of cost and time, the researcher calculated 10% of all the churches and obtained 10.6 rounded up to 11 churches as a representative population: $10/94 \times 100 = 10.6$. To obtain 11 churches, the researcher assigned numbers randomly to all ninety-four churches. The researcher randomly selected every 10th church to make eleven (11). Based on the formulation above, the researcher obtained the number of participants in each church. To get the total number of participants, the researcher looked for a number which when multiplied by 11 gave a figure equal to or closer to 100. To find the number, the researchers divided 100 by 11 to get 9.0 as follows: $100/11 = 9.0$. The researcher multiplied 9 by 11 to get 99 participants. $11 \times 9 = 99$. Therefore, each church presented 9 participants for the study. For equal representation, the researcher divided 9 by two groups so that each group presents 4.5 rounded to 5 participants. That means 5 church leaders and 5 congregation members in 11 Churches, $11 \times 10 = 110$ participants.

This study employed a descriptive survey design. The study used questionnaires as the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was most useful in this study because the researcher was enabled to select from highly structured to unstructured (Cohen, Laurence, and Morrison, 2000). The filled questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software program. The study applied both descriptive and inferential techniques of data analysis. Descriptive analysis was involved in collecting, interpreting, and analyzing data to present it in form of tables, charts, and graphs. Inferential statistics focused on meaningful conclusions based on analyzed data. It examined the relationship between different variables and made predictions for the entire population. The questionnaire was preferred because the researcher did not want to be biased or interfere with the process of answering the questions. Descriptive and inferential statistics techniques were used for data analysis. Quantitative approach is the most suitable approach for generalizations of the study findings because it involves a large number of participants and the collection of numeric data.

Study Findings

The study established how the quality of leadership training influences congregational growth as stated in objective 1. To achieve the stated objective, the study answered research question 1 which stated "How does church leader's training program influence conflict management on congregational growth? Participants "Strongly agreed" that church leaders' training reduces conflict; trained church leaders handle conflict cases with confidence; poorly trained leaders lack confidence in handling conflicts; that means leaders who are not well trained in church leadership must be trained to reduce church conflicts, thus face the conflict cases with boldness. The study revealed that church leader's training can reduce conflicts in the congregation. Church leaders training was critical component in establishing whether trained leaders had more knowledge in solving church conflicts effectively as compared to ineffectively trained leaders.

It was established that the majority of participants 'strongly agreed' that church leader's training reduces conflict at 61.3% while 28% 'agreed'. The findings established that with effective church leaders training, cases of church conflicts can be reduced and conflicts in the church can be well managed by the well-trained church leaders than the untrained leaders. The study established whether trained church leaders handle conflict cases with confidence. It was established that 92 (89%) of respondents 'strongly agreed' that trained church leaders handle conflict cases with confidence. However, only 3% of respondents strongly disagree that trained church leaders handle conflict cases with confidence. Thus, participants strongly believe that once their leaders are effectively trained, they can handle conflict cases in their churches with confidence, unlike when they are not trained thus influence congregational growth.

The study established whether church conflicts arise due to poor leadership. It was revealed that majority of participants strongly agreed that church conflicts arise due to poor leadership at 51%, while 28% agree. The findings established that most church conflicts arise as a result of poor or ineffective leadership. That means church leaders must be well trained in order to avoid poor leadership in managing conflict and offer quality leadership which can positively affect the congregational growth.

The study examined whether poorly trained leaders lack confidence in handling church conflicts. The information given enabled the researcher to determine whether poorly trained leaders lack confidence in handling and managing emerging conflict cases. It was established that 52% of participants strongly agreed that poorly trained church leaders lack confidence in handling church conflicts, while 32% agreed. Based on the study findings, it was established that poorly trained church leaders lack confidence in handling conflicts effectively. That means that the leaders should be properly trained by qualified leaders or institutions to enhance their confidence when handling church conflicts.

Misuse of power in Conflict Management affects Congregational growth.

The study sought to determine the extent in which misuse of power in conflict management affects congregational growth. Misuse of power by church leaders was observed as a critical aspect that influences conflict management. It was established that majority of participants 'strongly agreed' and 'agreed' respectively that incompetent leaders cause church conflicts. This was indicated by the values 5 and 4.50 which represented "Strongly agree and agree" respectively on Likert scale. However, it was not established strongly in the variable that stated 'Church members feel their leaders have excessive power'. Participants remained neutral/undecided on whether 'church leaders feel proud of their positions'. Participants strongly agreed that 'Conflicts arise when leaders do not listen to the members, that means, church leaders must change and give ear to their congregants when they want to be heard. This was indicated by values 4 and 5 which indicated 'strongly agree and agree' respectively. The key variables included: Incompetent leaders cause church conflicts, church leaders have excessive power, church leaders are too proud of their leadership positions, church leaders don't listen to their members, and church leaders demanding too much respect and attention.

The study established that 50 (50%) of participants strongly agreed that incompetent leaders influence church conflicts while 31 (31%) agreed over the same. Thus, the study established that incompetent leaders are more likely to cause conflicts. That means the church leaders should be well-trained especially in conflict management to be competent in their positions of leadership so as to manage church conflicts effectively. The study established that relatively a small number of participants strongly agree that church members feel their leaders have excessive powers.

The study established whether church conflicts arise as a result of leaders not listening to their members during major decision-making situations. Determining whether church leaders in AIC churches intentionally and actively involved churches in making major decisions such as transfer of church leaders, finance management, training of leaders, among other variables was crucial. The study established that 47% of respondents strongly agreed that conflicts arise in churches when leaders do not listen to their members. Over 30% of respondents agreed on the same sediment. This may result from poor leadership skills and lack of training in church leadership.

Misappropriation of church finances on Conflict Management affects congregational growth.

The study sought to establish whether misappropriation of church finances is an influence of conflict which affects congregational growth positively. Participants 'strongly agreed that 'Church leaders who misuse finances cause conflicts' at a high value of 5 which indicates 'strongly agree'. The key variables examined under this component include Church leaders who misuse church finances and resources, incompetent leaders in financial skills and knowledge, church leaders who cannot be trusted on finance matters, trained church leaders, and church leaders who spend funds without a budget. The study established that the misappropriation of church finances on conflict management affects congregational growth. All in all, a good percentage agreed that the church leaders misappropriate church finances, and this may be due to the incompetence of financial managers.

Misuse of church finances is a critical concept that affects most churches. Churches that have leaders who misuse finances most likely cause conflict. Participants 'strongly agreed' at 72 (69%), while 22% agreed. The findings therefore strongly established that church leaders who misuse church resources and more specifically finances cause a lot of conflicts in the church. Therefore, if church finances can be managed well, the church conflicts caused by the same can definitely be reduced to the lowest percentage. Maybe due to a lack of financial skills or even personal interests, finances get mismanaged thus causing conflicts that force divisions in the church whereby the growth of the church is deterred.

The study established that trained leaders reduce conflicts on the use of church finances. The aspect of training church leaders on finance knowledge and skills was critical. Effectively trained church leaders most likely handle finances with care and without misappropriation. It was revealed that 45% of respondents 'strongly agree' that effectively trained leaders reduce conflicts on the use of church finances. Only 7% strongly disagreed while 33% agreed. The study strongly established that effectively trained leaders especially on financial matters can reduce conflicts. This means that training has a positive impact to the church and congregational growth because trained leaders are seen as competent and able to solve conflicts; because they have the knowledge in the areas they are elected or appointed to lead thus reducing church conflicts.

Transfer of church leaders from one church branch to another affects congregational growth

The study established whether transferring church leaders from one church to another influences church conflicts which affect congregational growth. Church leadership transfers often happen in AIC churches from time to time.

It was established that participants strongly agreed that 'Careful consideration before a church leader is transferred can minimize church conflict.' The study also revealed that participants 'strongly agree' that 'most churches do not consult members before transferring a leader. This is intended to ensure good leadership is transferred to all churches in the area. The aspect of transferring church leaders from one church to another was therefore examined in this study to establish whether it causes conflicts. The study

established that 28% of participants remained neutral on whether the transfer of church leaders was the cause of conflicts. However, 23% disagreed, 20% strongly disagreed, while only 18% agreed. The findings indicated that most churches have not been affected by the transfer of church leaders and their effect on congregational growth.

The study established that most churches do not consult members before transferring a leader. The aspect of including church members in the transfer of their leaders or new incoming leaders was a critical aspect. Do churches effectively involve their members in the process of leader's transfer? It was revealed that nearly half of the participants (48%) 'Strongly agreed' that most churches do not consult members before transferring a leader, while 28% agreed on the same. This indicates a case that can insinuate conflicts between church leadership and members. Perhaps, it means that when church leaders who are loved by the congregants get transferred, the members complain. For the above reason, conflicts arise which may make the church members to be divided. They may even change to different congregations/churches to avoid conflict, and those who remain may trigger the conflict in the church, thus affecting congregational growth.

Inferential Statistics

The statistics were used to measure relationships between the study variables of Leadership training, Leadership abilities, Management of church finances, and Transfer of Church policies as the affect the Congregational growth. Table 4.32 presents the study model summary.

Table 4.32: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.883 ^a	.779	.311	.933

a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership training, Leadership abilities, Management of church finances, Transfer of Church leaders.

From the study, the R² with the value of 0.779 measured the extent of variability of congregation growth as predicted by Leadership training, Leadership abilities, Management of church finances, and Transfer of Church leaders. The study value presented a high effect of independent variables on the dependent. The R squared value means that a 77.9% variance in the dependent variable (congregation growth) is attributed to the changes in independent variables (Leadership training, Leadership abilities, Management of church finances, Transfer of Church leaders). Table 4.33 presents the ANOVA analysis.

Table 4.33: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	42.020	4	10.505	12.078	.000 ^b
	Residual	81.757	101	.870		
	Total	123.778	105			

a. Dependent Variable: Congregational growth

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership training, Leadership abilities, Management of church finances, Transfer of Church leaders.

The study established that the F-value of 12.078 is more than the confidence level 0.05 hence rejected the null hypothesis and concluded that there is significant relationship between Congregational growth and Leadership training, Leadership abilities, Management of church finances, Transfer of Church policies in churches in Machakos region. In addition, the P-value from the study is 0.000 which is less that the confidence level of 0.05 thus rejecting the null hypothesis. This means that there is statistically significance relationship between the dependent variable (Congregational growth) and the independent variables (Leadership training, Leadership abilities, Management of church finances, and Transfer of Church leaders).

The table shows the Study Coefficients shows how Congregational growth is affected by the Leadership training, Leadership abilities, Management of church finances and Transfer of Church leaders.

Table 4.34: Correlation Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	4.010	.491		2.058	.042
	Leadership training	.633	.085	.155	1.562	.002
	Leadership abilities	.646	.087	.292	2.818	.002
	Management of church finances	.717	.103	.452	5.010	.000
	Transfer of Church leaders	.515	.086	.128	1.331	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Congregational growth

From the study, the variables' coefficients are 0.633, 0.646, 0.717 and 0.515 which results to regression model $Y=4.010+0.633X_1+0.646X_2+0.717X_3+0.515X_4$. The regression model implies that variation in independent variables (X_1), (X_2), (X_3), and (X_4), results in a variance in service delivery by a ratio of .633, 0.646, 0.717, and 0.515 respectively.

The results shows that Congregational growth is affected by leadership training at 63.3%, leadership abilities at 64.6%, management of church finances at 71.7% and transfer of Church leaders at 51.5%.

Correlation Analysis

The table 4.35 indicates the correlation analysis between the congregational growth predictors which are the leadership training, leadership abilities, management of church finances and transfer of church leaders.

Table 4.35: Correlation Analysis

		Leadership Training	Leadership Abilities	Management of Church Finances	Transfer of Church Leaders
Leadership Training	Pearson Correlation	1	.569**	.318**	.293**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001	.003
	N	102	102	102	98
Leadership Abilities	Pearson Correlation	.569**	1	.265**	.245*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.006	.014
	N	102	104	104	100
Management of Church Finances	Pearson Correlation	.318**	.265**	1	.318**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.006		.001
	N	102	104	105	100
Transfer of Church Leaders	Pearson Correlation	.293**	.245*	.318**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.014	.001	
	N	98	100	100	100

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between congregational growth and conflict management is quantified leadership training and leadership abilities at $r=0.569$, leadership training and Management of Church Finances at $r=0.318$, leadership training and Transfer of Church Leaders at $r=0.293$. All of these correlation coefficients have positive values, and this indicates that increases in one variable correspond to increases in the other hence concluding that they are statistically significant. Therefore, the analysis tends to reveal that Congregational growth in the present study depends on the positive influence of the church leaders' training, leadership abilities, and management of Church finances and transfer of church leaders.

Discussion of the Study Findings

Through literature review, it has been established that church conflicts do occur almost in every congregation across the globe. A survey study conducted by Christianity Today (2004) in United States of America revealed that “control issues” are the most common sources of conflicts in congregations at 85%. Other sources of conflicts reported were closely related to vision and direction issues as follows: “Control issues 85%; Vision/ Direction 64%; Leadership changes 43%; Pastor’s style 39%; Financial 33%; Theological/doctrine 23%; Cultural/social differences 22%; and other 16%.”

The findings revealed in this study are not far from the above-established findings. Issues to do with leadership, finances, leadership changes, and misuse of power have been revealed as some of the key issues causing church conflicts among many congregations. In this study, it was established that 64% of participants strongly agreed that church leaders must be effectively trained to reduce conflicts while 25% agreed. Only 2% of respondents strongly disagreed while 5% remained neutral. This study also revealed that majority of participants ‘strongly agree’ that church leader’s training reduces conflict at 60 (61.3%) while 27 (28%) ‘agreed.’

In Korea, a study was conducted on Korean American churches which had experienced conflicts with their ministers, who then either resigned or were forced to resign from the church ministry (Friedman, 1985). The church conflict dynamics had resulted in Church decline, more concretely evident in one of the recent immigrant Church congregations, due to a lack of leadership training among Church ministers. This study established that leadership training is a critical component of healthy churches.

In a study conducted by Appong-Yeboah (2020) on “The effects of pastoral leadership practices on local churches in Nkawkaw Diocese of the Methodist church. The results indicated that among the diverse pastoral leadership practices, serving and loving, visitation, and hospitality related to church growth in local churches. Results also indicated that an essential link exists between effective pastoral leadership practices and church growth. Effective pastoral leadership as pointed out in this study is a key aspect of congregational growth. This study examined some of the key effective leaders’ practices that can promote congregational growth. This study established that there’s a need for pastoral teams to be effectively trained because they are key stakeholders in church growth and they play a crucial role. This study established that 60 (58%) of respondents ‘strongly agree’ that trained church leaders handle conflict cases with confidence while 31% agree on the same. However, only 2% of respondents strongly disagree that trained church leaders handle conflict cases with confidence.

In a study conducted by Keita (2017) in Virginia (USA), on “Leadership styles and their impact on church growth. The study established that ideal church leadership styles, church leadership management, church leadership motivation, effective leadership communication, and leadership practices are some of the critical areas that affect congregational growth. In this study, it was established that 50% of participants strongly agreed that ‘Incompetent leaders cause church conflicts while 31% agreed over the same. However, only 2% of respondents strongly agreed that incompetent church leaders cause church conflicts. Only 14% of respondents were neutral/undecided as indicated in the table below. This study strongly supports the idea that once churches effectively train their leaders including pastoral teams, the challenges of administration and conflict management shall be minimal.

In a separate study conducted in Kenya by Odhiambo (2020), in Anglican Churches of Maseno North Diocese, the findings revealed that “Inter-church and intra-church conflicts were frequently experienced in the Anglican Church. The research established that “Leadership conflicts were the most common inter-church conflicts followed by financial conflicts, marital conflicts, ideological conflicts, and spiritual conflicts respectively. The findings were supported by frequency indicator indices 160(23%), 153(22%), 139(20%), 135(19%) and 120(17%) respectively. Part of the problems in the church arise when leaders do not want to listen to the voices of the members. This study established that 47% of respondents strongly agreed that conflicts arise in churches when leaders do not listen to their members. Over 30% of respondents agreed on the same sediment. However, only 6% and 12% respectively disagreed and were neutral respectively. This study advocates for the voice of people to be heard in order to minimize intra-church conflicts that are prevalent.

In the United States of America (USA), a study was done by Wilfred (2011) in California, revealed that Pentecostalism has experienced variety of Church conflicts, divisions and controversies for a long time due to lack of transparency and mishandling of Church finances, and this has hampered its growth both numerically and spiritually, leaving the Church in despair and the number of memberships reduced greatly. Though the issues of finance management are crucial in any organization, churches are not left out too. This study established that church leaders who misuse church finances causes conflict. Participants ‘strongly agreed’ at 72 (69%), while 22% agreed. Only 6% of participants strongly disagreed while 2% remained neutral.

Most churches often transfer their leaders depending on the nature of their church structure arrangements. According to Haugk (2008), Sande (2004) and Donovan (2006), Leadership positions and Leader’s transfer is one of the major catalysts of Church conflicts and members’ mobility as people move back and forth from one church to another, they never settle as they seek spiritual satisfaction and a place to belong.

This study revealed that majority of participants (48%) strongly agreed that most churches do not consult members before transferring a leader, while 28% agreed on the same. Only 10% of respondents strongly disagreed while 9% remained neutral/undecided. The study also established that 46% of participants strongly agree that careful considerations before the transfer of a church leader can minimize conflicts, while 35% agreed on the same. However, only 10% of respondents remained neutral/undecided, 5% disagreed, while 4% strongly disagreed.

According to Gathuki (2015) and Kamau (1994), the church conflict among Pentecostal churches in Kenya has been caused by unwise leaders who exercise their authority in a diabolic means and this has made the Church to split, hence it has resulted into the loss of its members to other Churches or some simply left the faith and have gone back to the lives they used to live before they were born-again (Gathuki, 2015).

Conclusion

This study sought to effectively answer all the research questions stated in chapter 1. The findings on the Likert Scale strongly established that the influence of 'Quality of leadership training, leadership abilities, management of church finances, and transfer of church leaders' on conflict management affect congregational growth. This was indicated by all the variables tested 'strongly agreeing' and 'agreeing' on Likert scale with representations of value 5 and 4 on most of the variables.

Inferential statistics revealed that there are statistically significant relationships between the study variables of leadership training, leadership abilities, management of church finances and transfer of Church leaders as they affect the Congregational growth. From the study, the R^2 with value of 0.779 measured the extent of variability of congregation growth as predicted by the four variables. The study value presented a high effect of independent variables on the dependent variable. The R squared value meant that a 77.9% variance in the dependent variable (congregation growth) is attributed to the changes in independent variables.

The study established that the F-value of 12.078 was more than the confidence level of 0.05 hence rejected the null hypothesis and concluding that there is a significant relationship between Congregational growth and Leadership training, Leadership abilities, Management of church finances, Transfer of Church policies in churches in Machakos region. Pearson Correlation Coefficients indicated that the relationship between congregational growth and conflict management is quantified by leadership training and leadership abilities at $r=0.569$, leadership training and Management of Church Finances at $r=0.318$, leadership training and Transfer of Church Leaders at $r=0.293$. All of these correlation coefficients have positive values, and this indicates that increases in one variable correspond to increases in the other hence concluding that they are statistically significant.

Recommendations

The study recommended that to improve the competence among the church leaders, effective and timely training should be conducted among the leaders. To minimize the thought from church members that their leaders have excessive power and authority, the church members must be involved in the day-to-day activities of the church and their decision is final. These will reduce the conflict between the leaders and the church members who feel that they are neglected in church decision-making.

The study recommends that church leaders to attain basic training in financial management to avoid conflicts as a result of funds misappropriation. The training will improve the financial skills of the leaders in revenue and expenditure management. The audited accounts should be presented to church members for approval at least quarterly.

The church management in the region level should develop an accepted church leader's transfer policy which will guide the transfer of leaders from one church to the other.

Suggestion for Further Studies

Based on the research findings as discussed in this study, the following recommendations have been suggested for further research: Further research should be conducted in other denominations to establish the extent in which leadership training on conflict management influences congregational growth.

Further research should be conducted in wider regions of AIC and other denominations to establish how incompetent leaders cause church conflicts. Further research should be conducted across denominations to establish how Church leaders who misuse finances cause Church conflicts. A qualitative study should be conducted to establish factors that influenced transfer of church leaders from one church to another hence sometimes cause conflict which affects the congregational growth.

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