

Nature of conflicts in the Anglican diocese of Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Christians globally live under the expectation that the church should be different from other secular institutions. The Anglican Diocese of Nairobi has experienced recurring conflicts; disputes over leadership succession, church property and, legal battles. Different leaders within the Diocese have used different styles of leadership that has resulted into conflicts, often leading to a clash of expectations and a lack of clear-cut conflict resolution mechanisms. This study examined the nature of conflicts in the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The study was justified in three-fold: academic, policy and philosophical taking the scope into consideration. The literature was done thematically adopting the structural conflict theory. The study adopted the descriptive and evaluative research designs. The study area was the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi, Kenya. The simple random sampling was used to select the parishes and respondents from the selected parishes while purposive sampling was used to select the key informants. The sample size comprised of 256 respondents (only 238 responded). The participants included Bishop, Archdeacons, and Vicars, Curates, Parish Church Council (PCC), Mother's union (MU), Kenya Anglican Men's Association (KAMA) and youth. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect primary data. Desk top review was used to collect secondary data. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics via SPSS Version 30. Validity and Reliability of research instruments, limitations of the study, and ethical considerations were taken into consideration. The findings were presented in frequencies, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation. Qualitative data was processed via thematic and content analysis. The results showed that the most prevalent nature of conflict was disagreements over the appointment of Bishops, and church elections which had 51.7 %. The study findings would contribute to helping policymakers in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Diocese of Nairobi, in coming up with new policies or improving the existing ones to address the various conflicts that are occasioned by leadership styles. The study recommends that the Anglican Church should periodically organize the development and training of clergy and the laity.

Keywords: Anglican Diocese of Nairobi, Anglican Church of Kenya, Church, Conflicts, Nairobi, Kenya

I. INTRODUCTION

Churches around the world have historically been among the most tranquil settings for Christian worship of God and holistic fellowships. Nonetheless, several recent investigations have shown that a substantial change in the situation has occurred. Numerous waves of church conflicts are occurring in churches all throughout the world as a result of several circumstances (Peter et al., 2024). The church like every other society encounters an internal crisis (Folarin & Adelakun, 2016). Ogunbameru (2008), defines conflict as the confrontation of powers. Conflict is a state of opposition, clash, collision, antagonism, and discord. According to Tang (2007), conflicts occur whenever people interact and work together. Scripture defines conflicts as any issue that prevents, restricts or forbids Christians from interacting or behaving in a spiritually compelling way, thereby interfering with their ability to serve God. Church conflict occurs when two or more members of the congregation engage in an aggressive struggle over beliefs, values, assumed powers, or goals they perceive as mutually exclusive (Henard, 2017). Conflicts arise when one person's viewpoint or goal is obstructed by another's differing perspective or objective (Sande, 1993 as cited in Henard, 2017). Conflict in the church dates back to the early days when believers in Corinth argued over Paul and Apollos (I Corinthians 3:4).

Globally, religious institutions have not been exempted from internal conflicts, often arising from doctrinal differences, governance disputes, and leadership struggles. Studies show that leadership approaches such as participative and transformational leadership tend to reduce conflict intensity by promoting inclusivity and dialogue, whereas autocratic leadership often exacerbates tensions (Yukl, 2013). In faith-based organizations, leaders are expected to embody moral authority, yet leadership failures can trigger divisions, as seen in various church schisms

across Europe and North America (Gifford, 2015). Thus, the nexus between leadership styles and conflict is a critical area of inquiry in both secular and religious contexts.

In Africa, leadership challenges within religious institutions often mirror broader socio-political dynamics, including ethnicity, governance deficits, and power struggles (Mbiti, 2017). Churches play a central role in social cohesion, but leadership conflicts have increasingly emerged, particularly in Anglican, Pentecostal, and Catholic institutions. Research across Sub-Saharan Africa indicates that hierarchical and centralized leadership styles frequently contribute to disputes over authority, resources, and doctrinal interpretation (Kalu, 2008). Conversely, inclusive leadership models rooted in African communal values (Ubuntu philosophy) have been associated with better conflict management outcomes (Ncube, 2010).

In East Africa, religious institutions are influential in peacebuilding and governance. However, they also experience internal conflicts linked to leadership transitions, accountability, and resource control. Within Anglican dioceses in countries like Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya, leadership disputes have occasionally led to factionalism and weakened institutional cohesion (Ward, 2006). The region's socio-cultural diversity further complicates leadership dynamics, as ethnic and political affiliations may influence leadership decisions and conflict patterns (Haynes, 2019). Studies suggest that collaborative and servant leadership styles are more effective in mitigating such conflicts within East African church contexts.

In Kenya, the church remains a powerful social and moral institution. The Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) has historically contributed to education, healthcare, and governance discourse. However, it has also experienced internal conflicts related to leadership succession, resource allocation, and doctrinal differences (Gifford, 2009). Leadership styles within Kenyan churches often reflect broader national governance challenges, including centralization of authority and limited participatory decision making. These dynamics have sometimes led to disputes that undermine the church's role in promoting unity and social stability. The study focuses on the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi, located in Nairobi. As one of the most prominent dioceses in the Anglican Church of Kenya, it serves a diverse urban population and plays a significant role in religious and social affairs. The Diocese has experienced leadership-related tensions, including disagreements over administrative decisions, clergy management, and governance structures. It is on the basis of this that this study intends to examine the nature of conflicts in the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

According to Tang (2007), Christians around the world believe the church to be distinct from secular establishments because it is governed by theocracy. Regardless of their differences in denominations, doctrines, and leadership styles, Christians should cohabit peacefully in the church. In the worldwide Anglican Communion, this ideal situation does not exist. Tensions and legal disputes have occasionally resulted from the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi's ongoing disputes over church property, leadership succession, and other issues (Kiiru, 2011). These conflicts are caused by a number of issues, but one important but little studied aspect is the influence of leadership styles. Conflicts have arisen as a result of the various leadership philosophies employed by the church leaders, which frequently lead to a clash of expectations and a lack of precise dispute resolution procedures. The Anglican Diocese of Nairobi has had recurrent internal disagreements related to leadership styles, despite its vital role in social development and spiritual assistance. Conflicts amongst clergy, disagreements within congregations, and difficulties in decision making processes are examples of these conflicts. The Diocese's leadership is typified by a combination of modern styles which include (transformative, servant leadership, democratic, and laissez-faire styles) and traditional styles which include (autocratic, authoritarian) approaches, which frequently result in a clash of expectations and a lack of clear conflict resolution procedures (Kiiru, 2011). For example, autocratic leadership stifles criticism and disregards different viewpoints, allowing complaints to fester and finally turn into open conflict. On the other hand, power vacuums and internal rivalry between clergy and lay leaders may result from an excessively laissez-faire leadership style (Atieno, 2019). Although leadership is supposed to promote harmony and stability, some leadership philosophies may unintentionally cause conflict, distrust, and organizational disintegration. Previous research has mostly concentrated on church expansion and societal effect, paying little attention to the precise ways in which leadership styles affect conflict dynamics in Kenyan Anglican dioceses. This disparity highlighted the necessity of investigating the nature of disputes inside the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

1.2 Research Objective

Examine the nature of conflicts in the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Structural Conflict Theory

Karl Marx's seminal work, which maintained that society is fundamentally marked by inequality and conflict resulting from the distribution of resources and power, is most frequently cited as the origin of structural conflict theory. According to Marx (Marx, 1848), social institutions, especially economic ones, produce divisions between dominant and subordinate groups, resulting in continuous disputes over access and control. This approach can be expanded beyond class to encompass hierarchies of authority in institutional settings like churches, where bishops, clergy, and laity have distinct structural positions with unequal decision-making authority. Therefore, rather than seeing conflict only as the outcome of personal conflicts, structural conflict theory offers a perspective through which to evaluate how institutional arrangements themselves create tensions. A number of academics developed and improved structural conflict theory after Marx. By highlighting bureaucracy and legitimacy in hierarchical institutions, Max Weber presented the notion that conflict is not just economic but also rooted in status and authority (Weber, 1922/1978). In a similar vein, Ralf Dahrendorf developed the theory by emphasizing authority relations and contending that power imbalances within organizations lead to conflict (Dahrendorf, 1959). Lewis Coser made a further contribution by emphasizing the useful features of conflict, arguing that it can promote institutional adaptability and increase group cohesion (Coser, 1956). When taken as a whole, these proponents increase the theory's relevance for examining church-based conflicts by extending its application to non-economic institutions like religious groups.

Correlational Conflict Theory, which states that conflicts arise from correlations between organizational, social, and interpersonal elements, serves as the foundation for this investigation. Because it allows the researcher to examine how leadership practices, communication methods, financial management, and doctrinal differences are linked to disputes within the church, the theory is appropriate for investigating conflicts in the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi. The study aims to comprehend the fundamental nature of conflicts in the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi by looking at these interactions.

This study is supported by structural conflict theory, which provides a framework for examining the relationship between institutional hierarchies and leadership styles in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Diocese of Nairobi. The church's episcopal system naturally concentrates power in the hands of bishops and senior clergy, which may lead to structural inequities in participation and decision-making. The idea holds that these disparities are conducive to conflict, especially when leadership styles perpetuate unequal power relations. For example, participatory leadership may lessen structural tensions by spreading power, whereas authoritarian leadership may exacerbate them by restricting inclusivity. As a result, the idea contributes to the explanation of conflict's presence, persistence, and trends within the diocese.

Additionally, the theory is especially helpful in analyzing how leadership styles relate to the types of conflicts found in the study. By concentrating on structural causes, the researcher can examine how leadership styles, either perpetuate or contest institutional inequities, going beyond superficial explanations. For instance, although transformational or servant leadership may promote communication and ease tensions, transactional leadership may uphold current institutions without addressing underlying complaints. The study's goals of assessing how leadership styles contribute to conflict are so strongly aligned with structural conflict theory, which offers an essential analytical tool for connecting leadership behaviour to systemic results.

Structural conflict theory has been criticized in a number of ways despite its advantages. Critics contend that it frequently places too much emphasis on conflict at the expense of cooperation and consensus, both of which are crucial components of social organizations (Parsons, 1951). Furthermore, the theory has been critiqued for economic determinism, especially in its traditional Marxist version, which might not adequately account for the complexity of contemporary organizations like churches where interpersonal, cultural, and spiritual variables are important. Additionally, some academics argue that the theory undervalues individual agency by emphasizing structural limitations too much while ignoring leaders' and members' ability to act independently of these institutions. Moreover, structural conflict theory may not adequately account for the positive and constructive dimensions of conflict within religious institutions. While scholars like Coser attempted to address this limitation, critics still argue that the theory can present a somewhat pessimistic view of institutional life. In the context of the Anglican Church of Kenya, conflicts may also arise from theological convictions, personal values, and spiritual commitments that are not purely structural in nature. Therefore, while the theory is highly valuable for analyzing power dynamics and institutional inequalities, it should be applied alongside complementary perspectives to provide a more holistic understanding of leadership and conflict in the Diocese of Nairobi.

2.2 Empirical Review

All over the world, the Church is expected to be one cohesive and peaceful union of Christians leading a fully holistic life on the way to heaven. Therefore, the peaceful co-existence of all Christians regardless of their origins and background is a core value of the Church. This calls for total peace, which is only achievable in the absence of all types of conflicts (Rubin, 2006). Major changes and continued turbulence in the religious, social, political, technological, and economic environments from local to global level, are continuously creating an uncertain and complex environment in which organizations have to operate. This is predominantly fuelled by rapid advances in the information and communications technology sector, globalization has become both a cause and a consequence of sustained change (Van Tonder, 2008), which, by all accounts, appears to be increasing in magnitude and pace (Nikolaou, et al., 2004). Increasing uncertainty and complexity in the operating environment of organizations provide fertile ground for the onset of conflict in the workplace.

The Anglican Communion has not been spared either. The Anglican Church is a product of conflict-based subdivisions and has also experienced complex conflicts that have led to further split or subdivisions. Conflict in any organisation, including church institutions is inevitable. If well managed, conflict can have a lot of benefits, but if not well managed, it can increase in intensity to the extent of making the organisation dysfunctional. The 19th century saw a major crisis within the Anglican Communion over the morality of human slavery. This was particularly acute in the U.S.A., Canada, and England. The practice had been supported by many Anglicans and Christians of other denominations for centuries. In line with this, “the Anglican Communion was able to survive the slavery debate without a schism over slavery” (Cross, 2005). After the Reformation, the protestant Churches underwent sub-divisions partially occasioned by leadership notwithstanding both resource and non-resource conflicts. One of the main products of these conflict-based sub-divisions and transformations is “the Anglican Church of England which separated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1538 (Cross, 2005), and eventually spread into Kenya by the Church Mission Society (CMS) from the year 1884.

Kisitu (2002) asserts that on 10th August 1993, a group of Basina Christians physically assaulted Archbishop Dry Yana Booth of the Anglican Province of the Church of Uganda. Booth had gone to Christ's Cathedral Bugembe, the centre for religious work in Busoga Diocese, to help resolve the conflict (commonly referred to as the Busoga Crisis) that affected the diocese. He refused to enter the cathedral, arguing that he could not enter without the invitation or consent of Bishop Cyprian Bamwoze, the Bishop of Busoga, whom some Christians had rejected. He offered to speak to the Christians outside the cathedral grounds. The group rejected this offer, leading to a scuffle in which some Christians assaulted him and tried unsuccessfully to drag him into the cathedral. With much difficulty, Okoth and his driver (who was also assaulted) entered their car and sped away both from the cathedral grounds and from the stones thrown at them. Nineteen days later Bamwoze was also subjected to a similar assault at Waitambogwe Parish Church, where he had gone on a pastoral visit. A group of Christians attacked him, broke his staff and spectacles, damaged his car, and tried unsuccessfully to undress him. This attack would have been more devastating, if Bamwoze had not been rescued by his supporters and armed police escorts. This assault and that on Okoth, mentioned above, contributed greatly towards this crisis becoming the most disastrous conflict in Busoga Diocese, and arguably in the Church of Uganda. However, it was not the first conflict to occur in the diocese which has been affected earlier by many conflicts. A dispute from 1974 to 1976 between Bamwoze and some Christians of Christ's Cathedral Parish, Bugembe, following his closure of their school without consulting properly with them. Secondly a row in 1982 between Bamwoze and some members of the Mothers' Union as a result of his appointing as chairperson, Mrs Alice Muloki, who, though being a person of high standing in Busoga, was not an active member of the union. Third, a crisis that affected Busoga Diocese from 1984 to 1988, following the rejection of the petition of Christians in Iganga and Namutumba archdeaconries asking to be removed from Busoga Diocese and formed into a separate diocese of Iganga. Fourthly, a revolt of Christians in Walukuba Parish in December 1989 protesting against the decision of Bamwoze to replace their Vicar, Rev Nathan Lubaale, with Rev Fredrick Kibedi Nswemu, who, like some other people, Bamwoze had ordained in a manner contrary to the ordination procedure of the Church of Uganda. Lastly, a crisis in St James' Parish, Jinja in 1991 as a result of Bamwoze's refusal to remove Canon John Kalimungabo Bagenda, whom some Christians had rejected (Kisitu, 2002). From the above scenario, the nature of the conflicts presented were conflicts that were leadership-related in the sense that if both parties had used amicable leadership styles conflict would have been managed.

The Anglican Church in Kenya has had its share of conflicts related to leadership styles. A case in point is that of the Anglican Church of Kenya (A.C.K) St. Andrews Church in Kapenguria Diocese. According to Kakai (2023), the Leadership tussle has divided the church to the point of the church having a parallel tithing and division in the church. Some members of the congregation have denounced a section of the clergy accusing them of poor leadership. The two factions are led by the Bishop of Kapenguria, Suffragan Bishop Samson Tuliapus, and Jackson Ng'aritari. The disputes have led two A.C.K Churches in the region to hold parallel Sunday services under police surveillance. Worshippers have even been forced to pay their tithes, according to their affiliation.

Another aspect of the nature of conflict in the Anglican Church is during the transition period when a Bishop is retiring and the opportunity to elect a new Bishop is prepared. Some clergy and the laity would dispute the results an example would be the Diocese of Mombasa when Bishop Kalu was retiring and Rev. Alphonse Mwaro Baya was declared to be the winner of the contested position. Atieno (2019), in the online Daily Nation newspaper, affirms that the road to finding the successor of the longest-serving Mombasa Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK) Bishop is in limbo after a section of the clergy disputed the elections. ACK Bishop Hannington Institute of Theology and Development Studies lecturer Rev. Alphonse Mwaro Baya won the fierce battle to succeed Bishop Julius Kalu, after three rounds of voting on Saturday. Rev. Mwaro was declared the Bishop-elect when he beat the Mombasa Memorial Cathedral Provost, Rev. Festus Kiseu, and the Vicar of A.C.K St. John Church, Rev. Richard Otieno. However, a section of disgruntled clerics said they would go to court, to dispute the election and stop the Bishop elect's consecration, claiming that he was rigged in. They alleged election malpractices. In the Diocese of Mombasa, a parish by the name ACK Emmanuel Kengeleni has also experienced various conflicts, ranging from spiritual, financial and leadership conflicts. The Kengeleni church was also impacted socioeconomically by the violence. The dispute caused a decline in church attendance.

The Anglican Church of Kenya, Diocese of Nairobi has experienced conflicts about the church groups namely the women's group, men's group the youth group, and the clergy although the perception of the church being a peaceful environment case in point at ACK Emmanuel Ruaraka a parish that is in Nairobi Diocese on May 18th, 2023, whereby there was conflict between the clergy and the church treasurer because of church funds. The treasurer who happens to be a lay reader had embezzled the church funds and when confronted by the Vicar, he became defensive. The lay reader was able to incite the church against the Vicar making different church groups to be divided. The Vicar had exercised tough leadership styles that did not give room for dialogue as much as there was a problem. However, a mediation committee was formed by the office of the Bishop to look into the matter according to Nthiga (personal communication, March 16th, 2023).

Another case in point is that of ACK St. Barnabas Otiende in the year 2016, where the church choir had started to rebel against the leadership of the church in the sense that they were stating that they felt left out because their welfare had not been addressed. They boycotted singing in the church services making the Vicar suspend them. Quite a number did not take it kindly thus making the majority of them leave the church. It brought a lot of tension in the church because no one seemed to give dialogue a chance other felt the vicar's approach (leadership style), was rather harsh. This went in for a long time, until the Vicar with the church board resolved to form a new choir for the church that was going to be respectful to the church leadership, according to Ogutu (personal communication March 18th 2023). Therefore, the study sought to examine the nature of conflicts in the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi, Kenya.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Area

This research was conducted in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Diocese of Nairobi, in Nairobi County and in the eleven Archdeacons of the Diocese namely: Cathedral Archdeaconry, Dandora Archdeaconry, Embakasi Archdeaconry, Githurai Archdeaconry, Kasarani Archdeaconry, Kayole Archdeaconry, Lang'ata Archdeaconry, Pumwani Archdeaconry, Ruai Archdeaconry, Westlands Archdeaconry and Zimmerman Archdeaconry (Anglican Church of Kenya, 2022).

3.2 Research Design

This study examined the nature of conflicts in the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi, Kenya, using both descriptive and evaluative research designs. The descriptive methodology made it possible to map out current leadership styles and conflict dynamics by gathering data from a sizable sample group. In addition, the evaluation design made it possible to determine the nexus between these leadership styles and conflicts. Questionnaires and interview guides were the main tools used to gather data and capture the viewpoints of the respondents.

3.3 Target Population

The Target population comprised the Bishop, Archdeacons, Clergy, congregants, and the church board members in the selected Archdeacons who are key informants because they are the policymakers in the Anglican Church goes by the initials Parish Church Council (PCC). The Bishop, Archdeacons, and clergy played a big role because leadership started with them as they were the policymakers.



3.4 Sampling techniques and sample size

A sample size of 256 was sampled using multistage sampling from the larger Anglican Diocese of Nairobi. Census sampling was used to select key informants which included the Bishop, Vicars and Curates and simple random sampling respondents were picked from the selected parishes.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected through the use of questionnaires and interviews while secondary data was collected from academic journals, written articles, books, both the print media and online media.

3.6 Methods of Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) version 25 for descriptive statistics and themes for the qualitative data. Results were presented in figures, tables and narrations.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Concerning the ethical issues of research, the researcher, maintained confidentiality at all times. Only certain authorized people conducting the survey knew the identity of the participants. The researcher accepted individual responsibility for the conduct of the research and, as far as foreseeable the consequences of the research. The researcher obtained informed consent from the subjects used in the study and ensured that all respondents participated voluntarily. The researcher prepared a sample informed consent form, to be filled and signed by those respondents who would have voluntarily agreed to participate in the research. The researcher was open and honest in that he did not manipulate the respondents or offer bribes in a monetary form. The researcher fully explained to the respondents what the research was all about so that the respondents could make an informed decision on whether to participate in the research or not.

The researcher sought a clearance letter from the Directorate of post graduate studies of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST), Directorate of postgraduate studies, to facilitate a clearance letter from the Ethical and Review Board (ERB) and a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI). A research permit and a letter from the Anglican Diocese of Nairobi Bishop, from the Ministry of Education, in Nairobi, were sought to authorize data collection from the clergy and the non-clergy members in the selected Parishes. The researcher then started the recruitment process for the Research Assistants. They were university graduates, who had done some courses on Research Methods. They had undergone training in data collection and research ethics before going into the field.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

Respondents specifically were the PCC, Mother's Union, KAMA and Youths. The respondents were presented with 7 questions related to the objectives on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). The scores obtained were used to calculate both the mean score ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (s) for each statement, as well as an overall mean score and standard deviation for all seven items. Mean scores fell within the range of 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating greater conflict intensity. The scale was designed to reflect escalating conflict levels with higher mean scores. Interpretations of mean scores were categorized as follows: 1.00 to 1.80 represented very low conflict levels, 1.0 -1.80 no conflict, 1.80 to 2.60 denoted low levels, 2.60 to 3.40 indicated moderate levels, 3.40 to 4.20 signified high levels, and mean scores from 4.20 to 5.00 were deemed very high conflict levels.

4.1.1 Nature of Conflicts in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Diocese of Nairobi

This section presents the findings related to the study's objective of examining the nature of conflicts in the Anglican Church of Kenya, Diocese of Nairobi. The study looked at leadership and governance structures, appointment of the Bishops and Church elections, disagreements over resource allocation and utilization, ethnic tensions, interpretations of Biblical teachings, traditional values and Modernity among the Congregation and application of different leadership styles as causes of conflict in Anglican Church of Kenya.

4.1.2 Leadership and Governance Structures as a Cause of Conflicts in Anglican Church of Kenya, Diocese of Nairobi

A total of 256 respondents were given questions from Likert scale options to pick from; Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Not Sure (NS), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). However, only 238 respondents returned the

filled-up forms. Majority (97) 41% of respondents agreed that disputes over leadership and governance structures often cause conflicts in the Anglican Church of Kenya. Table 1 summarizes the findings.

Table 1

Leadership and Governance Structures Cause Conflicts (N=238)

Leadership structure and conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree (SD)	12	5.00
Disagree (D)	19	8.00
Not Sure (NS)	31	13.00
Agree (A)	97	41.00
Strongly Agree (SA)	79	33.00
Total	238	100.00

The findings showed that majority (97) 41% of respondents agreed that disputes over leadership and governance structures often cause conflicts in the Anglican Church of Kenya, 79(33%) strongly agreed, 31(13%) were not sure whether the disputes were associated with leadership and governance structures, (19) 8% disagreed and 12(5%) strongly disagreed. The results indicated a strong perception among the respondents that disputes over leadership and governance are a significant cause of conflicts in the church. The responses from the key informants further confirm the finding above that;

“The appointment of bishops, local church elections, the allocation and utilization of resources, and the distribution of power within the church hierarchy usually leads to conflicts” (Buruburu curate, 3rd May, 2025).

Therefore, it is evident from the results that disputes over leadership and governance structures often lead to conflicts. The current finding is confirmed by Robbins (2018), that good governance within organizations including Churches is a necessary element which serves to establish and maintain order. As such to ensure the maintenance of order within churches as well as religious institutions and the proper utilization of resources, good Governance is a necessary component. Generally, good governance is vital for management of Church affairs which extends to the effective financial management collected through various conventional ways such as offerings and tithe. According to Rainer (2018), the extensive sources of funds for churches include partnerships with other churches, raising support, through fundraisers as well as the greater giving by a congregation through offerings and tithes.

4.1.3 Appointment of the Bishops and Church elections in Anglican Church of Kenya

The results garnered from the Likert scale from the question ‘Disagreements over the appointment of Bishops and church elections may cause conflicts in the Anglican Church of Kenya’. Table 2 summarizes the findings.

Table 2

The Appointment of Bishops and Church Elections Lead to Conflicts (N=238)

Leadership structure and conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree (SD)	11	4.60
Disagree (D)	16	6.70
Not Sure (NS)	23	9.70
Agree (A)	65	27.30
Strongly Agree (SA)	123	51.70
Total	238	100.00

The study showed that more than half of the respondents 51.7% strongly agreed that disagreements over the appointment of Bishops, and church elections as the nature of conflicts followed by 27.3% agreed with the statement, 9.7% were not sure about it, 6.7% disagreed and 4.6% strongly disagreed with statement. The qualitative data further supports the quantitative findings. One key respondent who is a Bishop said that;

“Church conflicts mainly come from elections of church leadership. Some members do not accept the results from the elections; therefore, they cause conflicts. In other places the appointment of Bishops also leads to conflicts. When your candidate fails to become a bishop then wrangles might begin within the diocese amongst the clergy” (Interview at Bishop’s office, 3rd May, 2025).

This finding was confirmed by the previous literature of Ngobilo (2010), that some of the Anglican Dioceses in Kenya experiences conflict especially during bishopric elections where those who lost elections always cried for malpractice. For example, there was uproar in the Dioceses of Kajiado (1993), Bondo (1999) and Bungoma (2009)

from losers. In Bungoma, the loser in bishopric elections defected and formed a splinter church called “Anglo Church of Kenya”. The defectors cited poor leadership and corruption as reasons for their departure (Ngobilo, 2010).

According to Etemesi (2004), the Anglican Dioceses in Kenya have had divisive conflicts for along a time where by late Archbishop Olang was hauled out of office in 1980 because of leadership wrangles. It was claimed that he was in office illegally because he had attained the mandatory retirement age but to the amazement of many, the person who was chosen to act in his place was his age mate. There was also a battle for Katakwa Diocese due to religious freedom. The Iteso community had no intention of seceding from Nambale Diocese, but they were prompted to do so because of the mistreatment of Katakwa clergy by Nambale Diocese (Olita, 2012).

They were incensed by the fact the Bishops of Maseno and Nambale could come to Katakwa Diocese and give their sermons in Kiluhya. This fueled the urge to de-link and form a diocese for the Iteso. The height of their struggle was between 1986 and 1991 when they went on hunger strike and camped at the All-Saints Cathedral, Nairobi, forcing the then ACK Archbishop, the late Manasses Kuria, to appoint two commissions to sort out the problem. After a long struggle, the Diocese of Katakwa was finally carved out of the Diocese of Nambale in 1991 (Olita, 2012).

4.1.4 Disagreements over resource allocation and utilization in Anglican Church of Kenya

The results garnered from the Likert scale from the question ‘the study to examine how the disagreement over the allocation and utilization of resources can cause conflicts in the Anglican Church of Kenya. The findings are presented in the Figure 1.

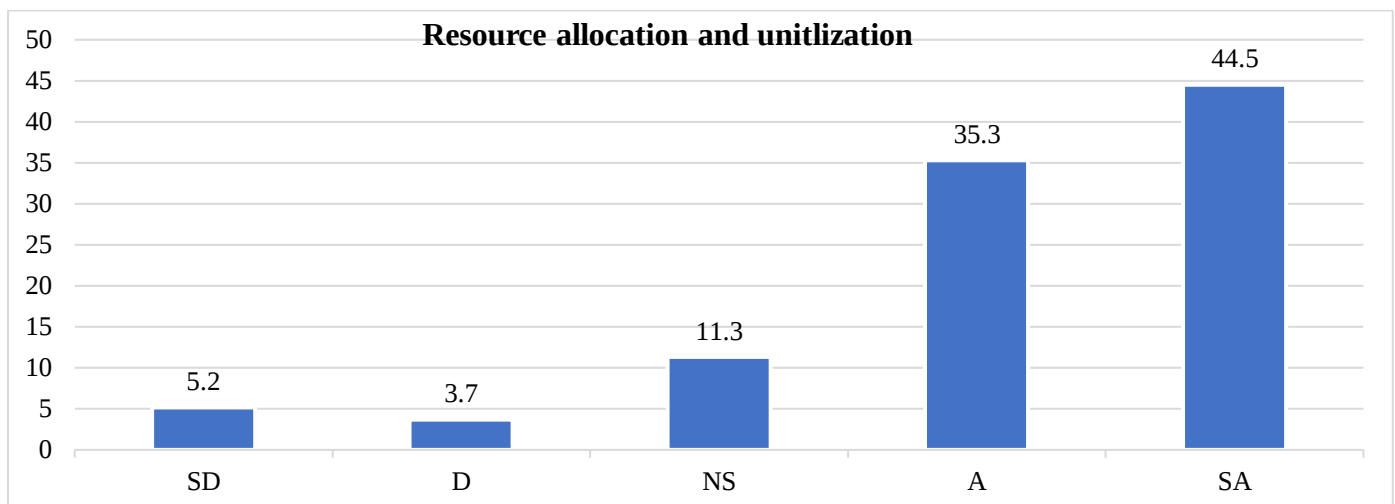


Figure 1

Disagreements over Resource Allocation and Utilization (N=238)

The findings indicated that majority (106) 44.5% strongly agreed that disagreements over the allocation and utilization of resources can cause conflicts in the Anglican Church of Kenya while (84) 35.3% agreed, (27) 11.3% were not sure that it could lead to conflicts, 12(5.2%) strongly disagreed and (9) 3.7% disagreed with statements. These results strongly suggest that conflicts over financial and material resources are a significant issue in the Anglican Church of Kenya. Resource-related disputes appear to be widely recognized as a source of tension within the church. The quantitative findings were further supported by the qualitative responses from the key informants, for instance one respondent argued that;

“Some churches are given more money than others. Some priests are also given more allowances and money than the others. The priest in charge has more resources than those curates. This usually makes people fight to gain control of more resources” (Interview with curate, at St. Barnabas Otiende, 6th May, 2025).

The current finding is confirmed by the previous literature of Chacha (2010), resource allocation leads to conflict among the church members and clergies. There are some church leaders who are unprincipled but praise-singers, who as witnessed in the recent past during their tenure, have done nothing substantial against the evils polarizing our society (Kahura, 2018). The once ardent generation of politically-conscious church leaders who were willing to stand against social injustice, autocratic, bad governance and politics of retrogression have left the scene (Chacha, 2010).

4.1.5 Ethnic Tensions as a Cause of Conflicts in in Anglican Church of Kenya

The researcher sought to whether socio-political factors, such as ethnic tensions, could cause conflicts in the Anglican Church of Kenya. The findings are presented in the Table 3.

Table 3

Socio-Political factors may cause conflict in the Anglican Church of Kenya (N=238)

Leadership structure and conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree (SD)	11	4.6
Disagree (D)	23	9.7
Not Sure (NS)	29	12.1
Agree (A)	97	40.8
Strongly Agree (SA)	78	32.8
Total	238	100.00

The finding displays that a majority (97) 40.8% agreed that socio-political factors, such as ethnic tensions during electioneering periods that led to conflicts, (78) 32.8% strongly agreed while (29) 12.1% were not sure with statements. Another (23) 9.7% disagreed with statement and (11)4.6% strongly disagreed. The quantitative findings have been supported by the qualitative responses. For instance, one respondent said that;

“Towards elections in our diocese both clergy and laity tends to align with the political party from their home area or ethnic line. This has been contributing to conflicts irrespective of the leadership position held. The Kenyan politics if not handled with care, can put church leaders in a dilemma; this has happened and continues to replicate” (Interview, Clement Githurai 44, 8th May, 2025).

In another interview it was noted that;

“In some instances when some leaders come out to challenge certain evils done by certain prominent political individuals, the pro-party members have always come out brandishing bitter words claiming that the Church is meddling in political issues or is used by state machinery to score political agendas” (Interview, St. Timothy Utawala, 11th May, 2025).

The current finding is confirmed by the previous literature of Mbaka and Mbugua, (2019), that handling such scenarios is unwieldy difficult since some members of the clergy find that they had already ‘gone into bed’ with political leaders in the past. Some of the moneys received are proceeds of corruption (Marete, 2018). Thus, they cannot remain neutral politically as the clergies should be and they also shy away from standing out firmly and openly to condemn such contributors when they engage in evil practices.

4.1.6 Interpretations of Biblical teachings as a cause of Conflict in Anglican Church of Kenya

The study sought to assess whether the interpretation of biblical teachings on topics like human sexuality and gender roles that led to conflicts among the Anglican Church members. Table 4 shows the summary of the findings.

Table 4

Interpretations of Biblical Teachings as a cause conflict in the Anglican Church of Kenya (N=238)

Leadership structure and conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree (SD)	15	7.1
Disagree (D)	51	22.7
Not Sure (NS)	41	18.5
Agree (A)	69	34.9
Strongly Agree (SA)	34	15.1
Total	238	100.00

Table 4 shows that 17(7.1%) strongly disagreed, 54(22.7%) disagreed, 44(18.5%) were not sure, 83(34.9%), agreed, 36(15.1%) strongly agreed wrong interpretation could to disagreements within the Anglican church of Kenya, Diocese of Nairobi. A good number of the respondents believe that differing interpretations of biblical teachings on these topics may indeed lead to conflicts within the church. The quantitative findings of this study are further supported by the qualitative responses. For instance, one Archdeacon opined that;

“In our churches today, we have two categories of Christians, some are conservative while others are progressive. The conservative ones see the progressive as people who don’t follow the teachings of the church. Therefore, they end up not agreeing on any concept or ideas” (Interview response, Kahawa Sukari, 11th May, 2025).

The current finding is in agreement with the previous literature Hartin (2013), the theological perspectives difference more so between conservative and progressive interpretations which can lead to constraint relationship among the faithful of Anglican Church. The finding indicates a belief in the church's ability to manage such differences peacefully or a lack of personal experience with such disputes within their parishes in addition; many Christian denominations today face challenges and debates around gender roles and sexuality.

4.1.7 Traditional values and Modernity among the Congregation as a cause of Conflict in Anglican Church of Kenya

The study sought to establish how Traditional cultural values and modernity in the congregation that led to conflicts in the Anglican Church of Kenya. Table 5 shows the summary of the findings.

Table 5

Traditional values and modernity among the Congregation as a Cause of Conflict (N=238)

Leadership structure and conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree (SD)	18	7.6
Disagree (D)	46	19.3
Not Sure (NS)	42	17.6
Agree (A)	91	38.2
Strongly Agree (SA)	49	20.6
Total	238	100.00

Table 5 shows 18(7.6%) strongly disagreed, 46(19.3%) disagreed, 42(17.6%) were not sure, 91(38.2%) agreed, 49(20.6%), strongly agreed. The mean score of 3.46 on the statement about conflicts arising from traditional cultural values and modernity indicates a moderate level of agreement among respondents. With 38.2% agreeing and 20.6% strongly agreeing, over half of the participants acknowledge that tensions between traditional customs and modern influences contribute to conflicts within the congregation.

However, the study also revealed that 7.6 strongly disagreed and 19.3 disagreed meaning that a significant minority do not view the clash between tradition and modernity as a major source of conflict. This could point that some congregations have successfully negotiated these differences or that members perceive cultural diversity as enriching rather than divisive. Furthermore, 17.6% responded not sure indicating uncertainty of the underlying cultural dynamics causing conflict. This ambiguity could be due to lack of open discussion within the church or limited exposure to generational and cultural debates. The quantitative finding is further supported by qualitative responses, for instance A bishop respondent argued that;

“The clash in the values results in conflict. Traditional values relating to gender roles and sexuality usually leads to conflict. This is because of differing perception about the human behavior and understanding. Young people today are not tolerant as before so the elders must be careful while handling them” (Interview at Bishop's office, Nairobi, 15th May, 2025).

The current finding aligns with the previous literature of Becker (2013) on the broader sociological observations that many religious communities, including those within the Anglican Church, often experience friction as cultural modernization challenges long standing traditions and practices. These cultural tensions can manifest in disagreements over worship styles, social roles, and moral expectations, often creating divisions among congregants.

4.1.8 Application of different leadership styles can cause conflict in Anglican Church of Kenya

Researcher sought to assess the respondent's perceptions on the statement; use of different leadership styles in the parishes of Anglican Diocese of Nairobi that led to conflicts. Table 6 shows the summary of the findings on the application of various leadership styles.

Table 6

Application of different leadership styles can cause conflict in Anglican Church of Kenya (N=238).

Leadership structure and conflicts	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree (SD)	17	7.1
Disagree (D)	40	16.8
Not Sure (NS)	35	14.7
Agree (A)	87	36.6
Strongly Agree (SA).	59	24.8
Total	238	100.00

The study shows that 17(7.1%) strongly disagreed, 40(16.8%) disagreed, 35(14.7%) were not sure, 87(36.6%) agreed, 59(24.8%) strongly agreed. A good number of respondents (61.4%) either agree or strongly agree that use of different leadership styles can cause conflicts in the parishes of Anglican Diocese of Nairobi while 23.9% disagree, 14.7% remained neutral indicating that significant number of respondents are reserved on the topic. This quantitative finding is further supported by the qualitative response. For instance, in an interview with a priest who is working under another priest, he argued that;

“In our Diocese here, the priest in-charge uses various leadership styles, they do not have styles as other organizations. When a priest is transferred to another parish they come with their own style of leadership. They do not consult which style was used by the other priest. This usually brings discomfort among the laity and even the priest themselves. The discomfort is very dangerous as a leading cause of the conflict” (Interview at St. Hellen’s Githurai 45, 20th May, 2025).

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The findings showed that the most leading cause of conflicts was appointment of the Bishops and Church elections with 123 (51.7 %) respondents followed by disagreements over resource allocation and utilization 106 (44.5%). A leadership and governance structure was number three cause of conflicts with 97 (41%). The fourth cause of conflicts was ethnic tensions with 97 (40.8%) followed by traditional values and Modernity among the Congregation with 91 (38.2%). The least two causes of conflict in this study were application of different leadership styles with 87 (36.3%) and interpretations of Biblical teachings with 69(34.9%).

5.2 Recommendations

The Anglican Church should endeavour to create ethical acts such as providing strategic leadership of ethics, establishing written codes of conduct, developing formal mechanisms for dealing with ethical problems, and providing training in ethics. The church should develop an online portal where members can log in and provide feedback and suggestions on how to make the church a better and conducive environment for all the stakeholders. In other words, the Anglican Church of Kenya should examine its system of doing things and amend any areas that are deemed to foster conflicts.

Declaration of Interest

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