Understanding and its Development to Conflict and Conflict Resolution among the Clergy: Case of Africa Inland Church Nairobi

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ABSTRACT: Conflict is a global problem that is experienced by all human beings in every social context regardless of their social status. Conflict occurs at different levels including the intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-ethnic, inter-ethnic, intra-national, intra-religion, inter-religion, intra-races, inter-races, and even at international level. Conflict takes on different dimensions and can move from constructive to destructive and from mild to violent if unchecked. The church must be the salt and the light to the world, not only by the way she resolves conflict among her members, but also by the way she promotes peace-building in the larger community. For this to happen, theological educators and pastors must be on the cutting edge in conflict resolution and peace-building.Most pastors in Kenya are highly respected and consulted in many social matters. The objective of this study was to establish the understanding ofconflict and conflict resolution and its development among the clergy with a particular focus on the AIC pastors.All participants described conflict as a disagreement between two or more parties that have the potential to drive a wedge between the involved parties if unchecked. They also understood conflict as something that runs between individuals, groups, ethnicity, and even within Kenyan politics. AIC Nairobi pastors' conflict resolution experiences were informed by a number of sources. The study indicated that their conflict resolution experiences were largely informed by informal learning. This included learning by observing their parents, relatives, and the council of elders engaging conflict resolution process. The study also indicated that other pastors' experiences were informed by non-formal learning. This occurred through organized seminars and conferences. Some had experiences from their previous career prior to joining the pastoral ministry. The study also established that some of the pastors' experience was informed by formal education, as well as theological education. The study further revealed that AIC Nairobi pastors were exposed to mass media, internet, and literature, which also informed their expertise. Pastors' understanding and practices were primarily informed by the Bible. In this study, the researcher is convinced that conflict resolution education should be introduced and be taught to all levels and to all individuals.Peacemaking or conflict resolution is at the very center of the gospel and therefore a responsibility of each and every Christian.

KEY WORDS: Conflict, Conflict Resolution, Understanding, Development, Clergy

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I. INTRODUCTION
1.1 Background of the study
A serious conflict develops between the senior pastor and his elders in an urban church in Kenya. The conflict permeates the congregation and within a very short time the church is split down the middle with some supporting the pastor while others support the elders. The situation deteriorates to the point where the power differential plays out between the pastor and his elders, which consequently leads to a mass exodus of members. Both the pastor and his elders are stuck in the conflict and no one will give up their position. The pastor uses his power to intimidate the elders and even threatens to excommunicate them if they do not conform to his position. The elders experience insecurity, intimidation and at the same time a sense of responsibility to care for the flock. They report the matter to the district leadership (the employer) with a request for intervention. The district leadership is led by senior clergy in the denomination who are expected to intervene and resolve this conflict. How will the district church leadership deal with this matter? In another place, a conflict emerges between a married couple, who are committed members in an urban church in Nairobi. The marriage is a cross-cultural marriage (coming from different ethnic groups). The woman has evidence that her husband is cheating on her.In addition, the husband's family support is consistently dwindling. As a matter of family concern, she decides to

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talk it over at the family level. Feeling cornered, the husband yells at his wife and denies the allegation. He justifies his commitment to his family and also claims that he is sacrificing so much to support the family and yet is not appreciated. The family talk does not seem to bear fruit. Things move from bad to worse. He occasionally abuses her physically, emotionally and even threatens to send her away if she does not trust him. The situation becomes so unbearable that the woman secretly reports the matter to their pastor, asking for intervention. What should the pastor do?

Conflict is a global problem that is experienced by all human beings in every social context regardless of their social status. The question is raised: is theological education in Kenya tailored to equip pastors to serve effectively in such social contexts? Most pastors in Kenya are highly respected and consulted in many social matters. Indeed, when it comes to disputes, whether between individuals in the church, or in the community, whether groups in the church or in the larger community, pastors' opinions are sought. This challenges on theological educators and theological institutions to consider how they train and equip pastors to face the presenting challenges in their pastoral ministries. The literature gives clear evidence in church history that churches and clergy navigated conflict resolution between their members and even other disputants in the community [18,15]. According to one African catholic bishop, this conflict resolution motif is still cherished and carried on in the 21st century. He states that "the church-as-the family of God forms…the theological and pastoral locus for peace, reconciliation, and resolution of conflict, for she herself is the sacrament of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation" [22]. Moreover, the Bible commands believers to settle their disputes without involving judicial courts (Matt 5:25; 1 Cor 6:1-6). If the Bible encourages believers to resolve conflicts, and clergy provided conflict resolution in society in years gone by, is this still effectively part of the mission of the Africa Inland Church (AIC[1]) Nairobi Area? Given the influence of Kenyan traditional beliefs, theological underpinnings, urbanization, and Westernization, how do AIC Nairobi pastors lead their church members to resolve their conflicts in constructive ways? What informs the understanding of AIC Nairobi Area pastors with regard to conflict resolution? These questions set the stage for the study.

Earlier studies show that most of the contemporary approaches to conflict resolution have been developed in the West and exported to the non-Western world with few "modifications" [25]. [2]concurs with this position, but also observes that although non-Western conflict resolution models precede the "Western discipline of conflict resolution by centuries, yet their contributions are scarcely recognized within the discipline of conflict studies" (1997, 63–64). This poses a serious affront to African understanding and practices with regard to conflict resolution, because Africans are indirectly compelled to use Western models. [26]supports this fact and adds that "in the discipline of conflict resolution the majority of the theorists are powerfully situated within Western structures" [25]. It follows that regardless of the differences in worldviews; Western models for conflict resolution have been uncritically transferred by the Westerners and adapted by Africans. From a missiological perspective, it is also noted that the early missionaries' main goal was not only to convert the indigenous people to Christ, but also to "Western civilization." [20] refers to this as a call of "breaking and renunciation … of all African traditions" (1976, 17). This meant Africans detached themselves even from valuable cultural practices including traditional conflict resolution models. [11]concurs with [20] and further demonstrates how Westernization invaded the African conflict resolution structures. He argues that "Where religions send missionaries, conflict resolution organizations send trainers" (1996, 22). The African structures and mechanisms for dealing with conflict resolution regrettably have been "discredited and marginalized by colonial authorities and missionaries as well as the post-independent governments" [24].[24] further points out that the importation and imposition of the Western ways of conflict resolution "resulted in the emergence of incompetent elders and leaders who are open to manipulation and corruption" (132). Moreover, [1] cautions against importation of conflict resolution theories and practices from the Americas, Europe, and Australia. He contends that "Africa must develop its own home-grown conflict resolution" mechanisms (2008, 74). Why should Africans develop and rely on their own conflict resolution mechanisms and not the Western? [1]answers this question by stating

All over Africa people have deeply-rooted cultural commitments, and in the many of the conflicts in Africa this cultural heritage may form a decisive role. When the disputing parties, their supporters and elders concerned engage in dialogue on an issue, it is usually relationships that receive prime attention. The relationships of the past are reviewed, the tense relationships of the present conflict are investigated, and the settlement is sought that would improve future relationships. (2008, 74)

Precisely, the African conflict resolution mechanisms and structures had relationships at the center of the conflict resolution process. Did theological education step up to meet this need? Not really. Conversely, theological education did not make significant difference since it was clothed in the same Western garb [20]. Based on this understanding, contextualization becomes a major factor in our contemporary educational enterprise and theological education. Contextualization will serve a very important role to fill the vacuum that was created by the importation of Westernization, which subsequently led to the marginalization of African traditional cultural

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[1] Africa Inland Church hereafter referred to as AIC.

values. There is little study done on this particular concern in the context of the Kenyan church. Therefore this study has the potential of providing Kenyan theological educators and pastors with new insights and tools for dealing with conflict within their cultural context. Precedent literature also confirms that there is minimal African scholarship on conflict resolution [25,7, 8,14,19]. Indeed, Deutsch, one of the primary conflict resolution theorists, confirms that conflict resolution as a field of study is relatively young and is going through many changes [4]. The research will contribute particularly to African scholarship and also to the larger body of literature in this field.

1.2 Statement of the Problem
        Conflict is a universal phenomenon that every human being experiences in life. It occurs at different levels including the intra-personal, inter-personal, intra-ethnic, inter-ethnic, intra-national, intra-religion, inter-religion, intra-races, inter-races, and even at international level [18,3,5,1]. Conflict takes on different dimensions and can move from constructive to destructive and from mild to violent if unchecked. The church of Christ as an institution has an ecclesiastical mandate to lead Christians in resolving their conflicts in godly ways without engaging in adversarial ways that leave disputants ripped apart. The church must be the salt and the light to the world, not only by the way she resolves conflict among her members, but also by the way she promotes peace-building in the larger community. For this to happen, theological educators and pastors must be on the cutting edge in conflict resolution and peace-building.

1.3 Objective of Study
The objective of this study was to establish the development of understanding to conflict and conflict resolution among the clergy with a particular focus on the AIC pastors

II. METHODOLOGY
        The research was set in the context of the Africa Inland Church Nairobi- Kenya, and focused on selected pastors who were currently serving in the city of Nairobi. The rationale for choosing AIC pastors serving in Nairobi is because these pastors come from different cultural ethnic groups with different experiences that carried a potential of enriching the research. The researcher also assumed that most of these pastors grew up in the rural context, and moved to Nairobi, which is a metropolitan city. For that reason, the researcher assumed that such a population had a broad spectrum of experiences in handling conflict. Moreover, the researcher wondered if people living in Nairobi were in some ways distanced from traditional mechanisms of resolving conflicts and wondered if perhaps pastors were filling in this vacuum. The researcher's desire was to select "information-rich-cases" [16], and AIC Nairobi pastors were the best study focus group for the research. A purposeful sampling was used to get the best representation of the population. A "purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" [17]. A total of seventeen pastors participated in the actual research. To access the sample population, the researcher used what researchers call "snowball or chain of sampling" [6].

III. STUDY FINDINGS
3.1 Understanding of Conflict and Conflict Resolution among the AIC Nairobi Pastors
3.1.1 Conceptual Understanding of Conflict
        All the research participants except two understood conflict as a kind of disagreement or difference in opinion between two or more parties. For example, AICNP5 illustratively understood conflict as:
        A difference in opinion and of course, could be basically the way you look at things, the way I look at things… you may not agree depending on the glasses that you wear. If you wear green glasses for example, maybe the images that you will see will be green colored. If, I wear blue glasses the images I will see will be blue colored. And therefore blue and green may not agree…. The way you look at things may differ and therefore that may start some kind of disagreement what I would now call conflict.
        Not only did they understand conflict as some form of disagreement, but they alsodescribed it as a cause for people not to live together harmoniously. For example, AICNP10 defined conflict as any form of interruption that "tends to interfere with the harmony and living in peace with one another." Four participants described conflict as a misunderstanding on an issue between different parties (AICNP1, AICNP2, AICNP6, AICNP12 and AICNP17). However, AICNP8 defined conflict in terms of people's attempt to achieve some goals that are totally asymmetrical. He said that conflict occurs whenever the involved parties have "different views… or interests that are totally "direct opposite" to each other. Fighting over certain goals, as suggested by AICNP8, plays a key role in this study because it also supports what conflict resolution theorists say. For example, [10] observes that "in conflict situations, goals can be defined as desirable future conditions that originally motivate the partisans to contest with each other" (2008, 24). Four participants understood conflict as the divergence and convergence of personal interests (AICNP2, AICNP10, 14 and AICNP17). For example, one

of the participants reported that in pastoral ministry, a conflict normally occurs when pastors and elders have "different interests" in a particular thing. On the other hand, AICNP2 and AICNP14 believed that conflict also comes as a result of competing interests. For example, one participant said, "if someone has an interest in a particular thing and another person expresses interest on the same" (AICNP2). This us of the idea of "interests" finds its support in the literature as pointed out by [10] who argues that "contradictory interests may be generated by competitive social situations that involve a high win-lose component" (2008, 26).Some of the participants moved from a general understanding of conflict to thinking of some kind of specific conflict. For example, AICNP3, AICNP12, and AICNP13 looked at it from socio-political dimension with reference to Kenyan post-election violence of December 2007. Asked for an example to illustrate what conflict looks like, AICNP3 said; "I think one of the examples I can give is about the 2007 general elections, where we had conflict after elections after the counting of the votes…. Conflict between the two political parties; PNU and ODM that brought some kind of intense situation to most people." However, his counterpart, AICNP13, looked at conflict from a socio-cultural dimension, which is characterized by both multiculturalism and ethnocentrism.

For example here in Kenya, differences from the fact that we come from different ethnic backgrounds and then there are those stereo types about certain tribes and how they do things. Then those things cause attitudes concerning different people from different areas. Then all over a sudden a conflict can arise. But it is not only about tribes, it is about tribes even in the church; an opinion about a certain elder, who is coming from a certain tribe, or attitude about a certain group in the church. So the few conflict that I mentioned in the church are basically, when some people think other people are against them. (AICNP13)

The research participants used the following words and phrases to express their understanding of conflict; difference in expressing views, interests in achieving same goals, anything that stops one from achieving their goals, misunderstanding, disagreement, different opinions, different perspectives, difference in interests, failing to sail in the same boat, difference in opinion, difference in points of view, difference in preference, friction of some sort, inability to agree to agree, failure to live harmoniously, difference in visions, collision, clash, a problem, difference in worldviews, difference in thinking, and fight.

3.1.2 Conceptual Understanding of Conflict Resolution
All participants described conflict resolution as a process in which conflict is addressed. Some were more meticulous whereas others were quite brief. For example, AICNP10 described conflict resolution as a situation "where a difference has been identified, appreciated, and settled. [It is] the settlement of differences." This participant was consistent with his understanding of conflict which he defined as a difference in opinion or disagreement. He further explained that conflict resolution is evidenced once the settlement of differences is attained. "From my pastoral experience of course, the signs are there because the signs are what we see…. Signs could be people were not greeting, but now they are greeting. They never used to talk and now they are talking. And in areas like marriage circles, where the husband and the wife were not living together and now they are reunited again and things like that." AICNP15 tersely described conflict resolution as an event through which "existing conflict" is resolved. Another participant said; "Conflict resolution is where you resolve differences, which have brought conflicts. Or you try to provide a solution, whereby once you provide the solution then there will be a smooth running or there will be eradication of those issues which have brought the conflict. So, it is the resolution" (AICNP4). Again this participant indicated some degree of consistency with his definition and understanding of conflict. He defined conflict as a situation where "people are not agreeing together [because] there are differences." In his elaborate example he narrated:

For example…the other day there were some conflicts even between churches. Even in our church; even before I got in our AIC church there were a lot of conflicts between leaders. And that in fact, made the church almost split that is our local congregation [here]…because the three leaders that were there by then were not agreeing with some of the members on the way the leaders were [presenting] themselves. So, that brought a lot of conflicts between the two groups and in a way of resolutions, we had different meetings negotiating together; negotiations…whereby we would talk to try to bring these two groups together. (AICNP4)

Four of the participants (AICNP4, AICNP17, AICNP13, and AICNP14) talked about some specific methods that are predominantly used to settle differences in their context, which include negotiation and mediation. With regard to negotiation one of them defined it as process "whereby two people or two groups or parties who do not agree together meet and talk…. So [it] is whereby two parties at least come together, they talk and discuss with the aim of reaching an agreement…of course there must be someone there to [mediate]. There must be someone who is neutral and not supporting either side" (AICNP4). The concept of mediation and negotiation was further discussed by another participant who said; "My culture, I am a *Kamba* of course, and from what I know is that people especially the *wazee* (the elderly) would bring the people who are in conflict together. The elders were very neutral, and would listen to each side and try to actually settle the differences" (AICNP17). Another participant stated that with regard to negotiation, disputants should deal with conflict on their own; however, a third party should be invited in case they are stuck. He vehemently added that "they can

resolve it by themselves or invite a third party if they don't agree…" (AICNP14).

Whereas the majority of the participants understood conflict resolution as a positive way of settling differences or conflict, several participants agreed with the positive part but also brought in something unique. For both AICNP8 and AICNP16, conflict resolution is a process and does not necessarily mean a solution is found. For AICNP16, conflict resolution could be either positive or negative. "May be negative; it is not a must that it is positive [a solution is found]. It may be negative, but it solves the problem." He cited an example of choirs fighting over a guitar. He said you can resolve such a conflict by "cutting the guitar or selling it." He admitted that conflict resolution is an attempt to resolve a conflict, which "does not necessarily mean a solution is found per se. It may mean that people can agree to disagree, that is also conflict resolution" (AICNP16). He further added that whether the warring parties "agree or disagree, conflict resolution according to me, is to accept that there is a conflict, but accept also that life needs to go on…. We either do away with the conflict or learn to keep on working while conflict exists so that life goes on. It may be solved or not." The view that conflict resolution does not necessarily mean that a solution is found was supported by AICNP8 with reference to Jesus' teachings. "If your brother has sinned against you…we ought to go to them; speak to them the two of us; try and resolve that; if, it works out that is done; if it doesn't, we ask other friends, finally to the church. To the extent of considering them like heathens, which spells out a possibility here that it is possible to resolve conflict…it is also possible that conflict may not be resolved." He further indicated that even the expulsion of the unrepentant person resolves the conflict in context. These research participants made a very peculiar contribution that is quite rare in the literature because most of the literature talks about conflict resolution in a positive sense. However, it is a position that is founded in Jesus' teachings in Matt. 18: 15-17, and also in Paul's teachings as recorded in 1 Cor. 5 concerning the unrepentant believer.

3.1.3 Biblical Understanding of Conflict

All the participants expressed their biblical understanding of conflict. However, more than a half of the participants when asked the question, "What does the Bible say about conflict?" They did not say that the Bible speaks of conflict. They went straight to what the Bible says about conflict resolution. Conversely, when asked for a specific example of conflict in the Bible, they were very articulate. In fact, they either affirmed or cited real conflict examples in the Bible both in the Old and New Testaments (AICNP9, AICNP14, AICNP3, AICNP13, AICNP12, AICNP1, AICNP15, AICNP6, and AICNP11). According to AICNP11 the "Bible acknowledges that there is conflict and also gives the way to resolve it." Four of the participants cited biblical examples (AICNP13, AICNP12, AICNP1, and AICNP15). For example, AICNP15 affirmed that the Bible speaks of conflict when he said; "We even have examples in the Bible…the issue of Moses and his sister is a very clear case. There was a conflict there. So, Moses and his sister were involved in a conflict" (AICNP15). Both AICNP1 and AICNP15 cited Paul and Barnabas from the book of Acts of the Apostles as clear examples of conflict in the Bible. AICNP13 said that "the Bible admits that there will be cases where we will not agree with each other." He further cited examples of confrontations and differences that developed between Christ, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. In the same vein AICNP12 said:

I think the best example I have is of Abraham and Lot. Yes, they had difference[s] between the two. I think the principle that Abraham applied was very important. He called his nephew and told him, 'now instead of fighting over a land, now choose which direction you want to go.' And so Lot felt he had been given the priority to choose the land he would live and raise his cattle. I think this is a biblical example I can give concerning conflict.

On the other hand, almost half of the participants did not mince their words on the question about what the Bible says about conflict (AICNP4, AICNP8, AICNP16, AICNP10, AICNP17, AICNP2, and AICNP5). For instance, both AICNP16 and AICNP4 were able to trace conflict in the Bible all the way to the first family on earth. AICNP16 replied candidly that the Bible acknowledges the presence of conflict among human beings. "Conflict is also in the Bible. You can see it in the Bible. It is like…the nature of the humankind. For example, the children of Adam—Cain and Abel, you see conflict there." In the same way AICNP4 stated that "Abel was killed by Cain because…[there was]… conflict. So, in other words the Bible addresses the issue of conflict." Unlike all other research participants, AICNP8 went a little bit deeper and demonstrated how sin affected the entire creation causing cosmic conflict. "Indeed, we live in a world which has conflicting powers. Satan is the ruler of the world, but there is another master; Jesus our savior and Lord who directs our lives. So conflict is part of life; it is part of the church; conflict is all over; it is in the family, in the government, I mean everywhere." This participant's approach was phenomenal because he started from general and went down to some specific biblical example as shown below:

For example, in Romans 7, Paul talks of what a wretched man he is because in him there is a conflict." There is what he wants to do and he finds that he cannot do that. Why can he not do that? Because there is an opposing power that is working against him, and that is power from the evil one. It is the power from his old nature, which is pushing him back to what he does not want to be doing and that is definitely conflict. (AICNP8)

One of the participants who acknowledged that the Bible is forthright about conflict said, "I think one of the things is that the Bible recognizes that there are conflicts…that people will be in conflicts from certain issues, but does say we need to live in harmony with one another" (AICNP10). In addition, this participant pointed out that Paul also talks about it [conflict] in 1 Corinthians, "yeah, he says if there is conflict between you and your brothers do not present yourselves even before a judge. Yeah, let brothers of wisdom make judgment, and so I think the Bible is not silent about conflict and differences, between persons" (AICNP5). When asked whether there are examples of conflict in the Old Testament, AICNP5 replied; "Yes, even in the Old Testament there are lots of conflict incidents… even when Aaron and Miriam were complaining about Moses as if he was the only one that God talks to and so forth; that stirred up some differences in opinion."

A unique pattern emerged among some of the participants. More than a quarter of the participants traced the cause and origin of conflict to sin or the fall of the human race. They also explained that sin caused conflict between God and the human race, which subsequently led to the demonstration of God's love. God had to send His son to be a mediator between Him (God) and the human race. In like manner, the Bible advocates that Christians demonstrate love when conflicts arise. One of the participants who subscribed to this view said:

You see the Bible says that we should love each other. And this is demonstrated by God himself because when man was a sinner, God demonstrated his love by sending his own son Jesus to come and die for us. It is just like saying that there was a conflict because man sinned against God, which was not God's original plan. Then, man and God were not in good terms. (AICNP9)

This idea was fully supported by a senior pastor and ordained minister who doubled as the assistant bishop AIC Nairobi Area. He quoted a scriptural portion that says "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And actually this sinning means that man was in conflict with God. And so because man was in conflict with God, something had to be done. The conflict had to be solved" (AICNP6). With regard to conflict, another participant stated, "I think from Genesis to Revelation this idea comes out clearly because as far as our God is concerned, we had gone astray; we have done what is not right, and I can say we were in conflict because we had disobeyed God. And we knew what to do but we chose to do the opposite" (AICNP12). This piece of data is also supported by the existing literature. For example, [23]argues that because of sin, things are not the way they are supposed to be (1995).

3.1.4 Biblical Understanding of Conflict Resolution

All participants responded forthrightly to the question of their biblical understanding of conflict resolution. Most of the participants were more comfortable in discussing their biblical understanding of conflict resolution than talking about the biblical foundation for conflict itself. All the participants indicated that conflict will always be there but Christians are encouraged to resolve it and live harmoniously. For instance, one participant said:

I see the bible tends to realize that people will be in conflicts from certain issues, but does say we need to live in harmony with one another…. It seems to me that…the Bible advocates for the fact that conflicts are there. But should not be the premises through which we conduct our lives. We need to solve them/we need to handle them…. Conflict resolution should be done in a godly way. (AICNP10)

Another participant reflecting on the question of conflict resolution said; "the Bible talks about conflict and also talks about conflict resolution…. For example, like Jesus Christ is the mediator between us and God. Of course…following the Fall of man, there was conflict between God and man; that is why Christ came to mediate and act as our mediator" (AICNP4). This participant raised the issue of methodology that Christ used in dealing with conflict between God and man, which is mediation. He also traced mediation in the Old Testament. "We see when the children of Israel left Egypt going to Canaan, they had conflict all through and you see a lot of times Moses coming to mediate for his people. And there are instances you read from the book of Exodus all the way to the book of Joshua before Moses died. He did a lot of mediations between the people of Israelites."

Almost a quarter of the participants highlighted the biblical principles or methodology that Jesus prescribed for addressing conflict. For example, AICNP14 referenced the teachings of Jesus:

That is found…in Matthew chapter eighteen, where you are told if there is a problem between you and your brother, the protocol that you have to follow. The protocol is that first of all you take the initiative you go to the person on your own accord and talk it over with him. And if that has not solved it then you take another mature Christian with you to go and state the same thing to the same person again in the presence of this person as an enforcer and if that fails to bring fruit to your conflict, then you are given a third option to go to a Christian group where you attend and report it to the leaders; meaning pastors and elders so that they may pick it from that. And if that does not materialize, then the scripture tells you to treat him as someone who has never seen faith or as someone who has never accepted the Christian faith. Because he, is not playing by the rules that have been laid down by the scriptures. (AICNP14)

Commenting on the above methodology on conflict resolution, another pastor also noted the use of Jesus' approach to conflict and said; if all these stages are followed and yet the one on the wrong remains

adamant, "then in a very severe sense, then treat him as a non-believer" (AICNP5). With reference to Paul's writings in 1 Corinthians 6, this participant refuted the act of resolving conflict through the legal systems, but recommended the biblical approach, "let the brothers [sisters] of wisdom make judgment…the Bible is not silent about conflict and differences between persons." For instance Paul has mentioned some issues between Eudia and Syntyche, whereby he advised that they should be brought together at some point" (AICNP14). With regard to conflict resolution, reconciliation emerged as a sub theme.

3.1.5 The Role of Reconciliation in Conflict Resolution
Both AICNP1 and AICNP17 talked about reconciliation as one piece of conflict resolution. Referring to Galatians 6, AICNP17 stated that; "In the case of disputes the spiritual person should take the initiative to actually seek for reconciliation. So, the bible actually talks about reconciliation. Probed further on what reconciliation means with regard to conflict resolution, he said, "I would say where there is conflict people disagree and even engage in physical fight and words, so that is why you must restore the broken relationship first. Then, when the relationship is restored, now people can talk over and settle their differences. In fact, what comes out after resolving conflict is reconciliation" (AICNP17).

3.1.6 Summary of the pastors' understanding of conflict
All participants described conflict as a disagreement between two or more parties that have the potential to drive a wedge between the involved parties if unchecked. They also understood conflict as something that runs between individuals, groups, ethnicity, and even within Kenyan politics. Participants further attributed the cause of conflict to sin. In addition, they reported that it is biblically required that conflict be resolved and the estranged parties reconciled.

3.2 Development of Understanding to Conflict Resolution for AIC Nairobi Pastors'
Primarily, the researcher sought to understand how the AIC Nairobi pastors acquired knowledge, skills, and experiences that they bring to conflict resolution. The following table is a summary of what AIC Nairobi pastors reported as the source from which they acquired their conflict resolution skills.

Table 1: Sources: How AIC Nairobi Pastors Acquired Conflict Resolution Skills

Sources	Participants
Informal learning	AICNP1, AICNP2, AICNP3, AICNP4, AICNP5, AICNP6, AICNP8,AICNP9, AICNP10, AICNP11, AICNP12, AICNP13, AICNP14, AICNP15, AICNP16, AICNP17
Non formal learning	AICNP5, AICNP9, AICNP11, AICNP12, AICNP16, AICNP17
Formal learning	AICNP5, AICNP6, AICNP10, AICNP14, AICNP15, AICNP16, AICNP17
Theological and biblical	AICNP1, AICNP2, AICNP3, AICNP4, AICNP5, AICNP6, AICNP8, AICNP9, AICNP11, AICNP12, AICNP13, AICNP15, AICNP16, AICNP17
Experiences and practices	AICNP1, AICNP2, AICNP3, AICNP4, AICNP5, AICNP8, AICNP11, AICNP13, AICNP14, AICNP15, AICNP17
Books	AICNP2, AICNP3, AICNP4, AICNP8, AICNP12, AICNP14, AICNP17
Counseling	AICNP5, AICNP6, AICNP9, AICNP10, AICNP14, AICNP15, AICNP16, AICNP17
Internet /media	AICNP8, AICNP16

All the participants gave more than one source from which they acquired their expertise for conflict resolution. The data presented in table 1shows that eight categories emerged from the participants' responses. Eight out of ten had more than two participants, while two categories had a single participant each. The categories that emerged from the data include; 1) informal education, 2) non-formal education, 3) formal education, 4) biblical and theological education, 5) experience and practice, 6) reading books, 7) counseling, 8) and internet/media. All the categories represented by two or more participants will be discussed as independent subheadings, while the ones represented by a single participant will be summarized in a paragraph or so.

3.2.1 Informed by Informal Learning
Informal education or informal learning is a category of education that is typically non institutional, non-classroom oriented, or highly structured. Indeed, the learning is intentional and rests in the interest of the learner to address day to day challenges. It is basically a learner-centered kind of learning [13]. Naturally, informal learning is normally "integrated with daily routines, triggered by an internal or external jolt, not highly conscious, haphazard and influenced by chance, linked to learning of others, inductive process of reflection and action of others[13].

All the research participants indicated that they acquired their skills for conflict resolution first and foremost through informal learning which included learning from their parents, grandparents, uncles, mentors, and by observing how traditionally conflicts were settled especially by the council of elder. More than a quarter of the participants reported that they learned conflict resolution by observing their parents as well as close relatives (AICNP14, AICNP13, AICNP12, AICNP10, and AICNP9). One of the research participants meticulously expressed:

I grew up in a traditional society. I had one of my uncles who was an ex-chief with the colonial authority. I used to see him how he was handling issues as he was dealing with people that were at a government administration level when they come in the morning bring their problems to him. I used to see how he used to handle things. And then I also grew up with my father who also became the head of the entire family[2] for some period. So I used to observe how he was handling these conflict resolutions between the family members and how he used to handle them and all that. So I learned from both my uncle who was a colonial chief and also my father. (AICNP14)

Besides learning conflict resolution skills from parents and relatives, most participants reported that their conflict resolution skills were informed by observing the council of elders deal with conflicts. Research participants pointed out that one of the major mechanisms for handling conflicts was mediation by the council of elders. Commenting on the members of the council of elders, one research participant shared his knowledge about the *Akamba* council of elders. "My culture, I am a *Kamba* of course, and from what I know is that people especially the elderly [*wazee*][3] if there is an issue, the elders would bring the people who are in conflict together. The elders were very neutral and would listen to each side and try to actually settle the differences" (AICNP17). Another participant who aged over fifty, and grew up in the Western Kenya and comes from a *Luo* ethnic community asserted that:

For example if the cows or goats get to some one's *shamba*[4] and has eaten crops, the elders of the village to whom the case would be reported will be the people who will arbitrate over the issue concerning the one who is aggrieved and the one who was the cause of the aggrieve. These were people who were supposed to deal with conflict in the society and these people were actually mandated to do that…. So, whenever there is some deals you had to obey and heed to what they say. (AICNP2)

He went a step further and explained what kind of people comprised the council of elders. "These were people who were honored by the society in that position to carry out this activity" (AICNP2). Still, another pastor who hails from the Central Province of Kenya and of *Kikuyu* ethnicity expressed:

The *Kikuyus* as a result of conflict…would call the concerned people. They would go to a place where they would dialogue over the reported case and after they hearing from both the offended and the offender, they would come together….The kikuyu elders would be there listening, they were the ones to give verdict after listening the whole story of conflict and will give the solution. (AICNP3)

The council of elders was described as a traditional mechanism that dealt with conflict in most of the Kenyan communities (AICNP1, AICNP2, AICNP3, and AICNP14). These elders had some specific qualifications as noted above by AICNP2 and further supported by another pastor who noted that; "The council of elders was actually serious and they had the community at heart. They would not allow themselves be influenced and compromised by the concerned people…[but instead] they were motivated by the love for the community" (AICNP17). "You have to be an elderly man not *kijana*,[5] and respected one; had to have a command in the community. You needed to have a big family" added another participant (AICNP15). Another participant who agreed with this position asserted; "There is a saying in Kiswahili that says *Kuhishikwinginikuonamengi*[6] that is the more you have lived the more experienced you have, you are wiser then, so was usually the elderly. Rarely, would you find the young people in decision making" (AICNP8). It was not just the age that was considered for one to sit in the council of elders but the experience that one had acquired over the years and their credibility in settling disputes (AICNP4, AICNP5, AICNP8, AICNP10). One of the participants elaborated the role of the council of elders in this way:

When conflicts were reported, elders were invited from both parties because …a conflict is a difference between one person and another; or one party and another; one group and another; one community and another.

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[2] The "family head" in this context is used to refer to the African extended family whereby the head of the family holds the position and responsibility of a mediator between families within a particular clan. He would negotiate family disputes; negotiate on behalf of the extended family in dowry and marriages between their sons and daughters and other families involved.

[3]Wazee is a Kiswahili word for honorable and respected elderly men in the Kenyan society.

[4]*Shamba* is a Kiswahili word that means a farm.

[5]*Kijana*is Kiswahili word for a young person.

[6]*Kuishikwinginikuonamengi*is a Kiswahili proverbial saying which means that the longer one lives, the more experienced one becomes.

There must be two parties. So elders were called from the two parties. They sat together and listened to the stories from both sides. And then they weighed the options and they negotiated and talked through over it, time and again. So, I would say it was through the talking of the two groups, when those issues were placed on the table that finally they would agree; this is the way forward. (AICNP5).

Nine participants (AICNP4, AICNP3, AICNP5, AICNP14, AICNP15, AICNP9, AICNP10, AICNP8, and AICNP17) regretted that these traditional models that informed their experiences are being sideline and substituted by other kinds of models. For example, one of them reported:

Most of these cultural values which are very important…are eroding or have eroded away. That is why; we need to teach our young people these models, these means of conflict resolution because it is important we teach them. Because of modernization, they are throwing some of these good cultural values away and that is why I am saying and I emphasize that they need to be taught some of these values. We need to have a forum whereby some of these good practices will be taught. Such that we can have our modernization and cultural values…. We need what we call alternative rites. (AICNP4)

The data as obtained from the participants finds support in the literature. [12]provides a classic example from Africa. "For example, in African settings, particularly urban ones, people talk of the dilemma created in large part by modernization, urbanization, and West education in which significant portions of the population no longer rely on traditional ways of social organization and specifically handling conflict, on the one hand, nor do modern Western models fulfill their needs, on the other[12].

3.2.2 Informed through Non-Formal Learning

Five participants (AICNP16, AICNP11, AICNP12, AICNP9, and AICNP1) reported that they acquired their conflict resolution skills and experiences through non-formal learning. Both AICNP11 and AICNP16 have had industrial training on how to handle disputes between workers. One of them said, "I used to work with the government as a supervisor. As supervisors we were trained to handle the staff problems; conflict between staff and conflict between one department and another" (AICNP16). While AICNP16 reported of his past experience of working with the government, another participant who was working for a big private company as a senior supervisor by the time the research was conducted said; "the kind of work I am doing gives me an exposure of how to resolve conflicts through training" (AICNP11). Still, another research participant acquired his skills through conferences and seminars carried on Kenya following the post-election violence of December 2007. "There was a lot of counseling seminars and training and I was among the people who received that kind of training" (AICNP1).

3.2.3 Informed by Formal Education and Counseling

Four participants (AICNP5, AICNP9, AICNP10, and AICNP14) reported that part of their skills in conflict resolution came through formal schooling. For example, one of them stated; "I have also been trained in school not very much in depth about it, but of course, I have been through training from classroom point of view" (AICNP5). This view was also supported by AICNP9 and AICNP10. For example, AICNP9 reported "My…going to school has helped me. I have been empowered and I have been given principles that I need to follow. So, I would say going to school and getting education." In this regard, AICNP10 traced his skills in handling conflict back to his primary education. "You know there are things that come in education. Some stories are told in your lower primary classes and then you ask questions who did wrong? Was it good to do this? So I think exposure through education began to open my mind that there is value in living in harmony" (AICNP10). Alongside general formal education, some participants reported that they actually took specific courses on conflict in either in their undergraduate or their graduate level of education (AICNP17). AICNP17 appreciated the fact that he took counseling courses for his pastoral ministry, "I believe those courses have helped me." Another participant who holds an M Div. degree said that his competency in conflict resolution was brought about by taking a course in conflict resolution. Asked where or from whom he learned conflict resolution, he replied; "I have learned it from DrKariuki of Nairobi International School of Theology (NIST). We had a course to do with conflict management" (AICNP16).

3.2.4 Informed by Biblical and Theological Education

All the participants indicated that their conflict resolution was informed by both biblical and theological education. For example, one participant subscribing to this position stated:

God speaks especially to Christians that we are the people to bring resolution. I will start with imageries that are used by Jesus Christ; light and salt. And especially light and darkness, the bible shows clearly that those are conflicting forces and then, Jesus said, "we are the light of the world." Which means according to the intentions of God, light ought to shine constantly, which consequently mean then that we ought to be the people resolving conflicts, whenever it arises. (AICNP8)

He further reported, "through my theological training and of course, passages like the brother who has

sinned against another brother were indicated that we will face conflict and that we will deal with it" (AICNP8). In his own words, another participant reported that:

There are verses in the New Testament whereby the Bible advices people to be angry but not allow the sun to go down. There are also verses in Romans, whereby we are encouraged that when someone does you wrong that you treat them well. Also Jesus taught us that you are to love your enemies. Such things can reduce conflict; loving your enemies, accepting enemies, and prayer. (AICNP16)

Another research participant reflectively added, "I know as part of my calling I am in the reconciliation ministry [of] Jesus. This is what Paul would say in one Corinthians that we are in partnership with Jesus. His ambassadors, of course are in reconciliation of men to God. And I think that also gives me a mandate" (AICNP5).

3.2.5 Informed by Experiences and Practices
Eleven research participants (AICNP1, AICNP2, AICNP3, AICNP4, AICNP5, AICNP8, AICNP11, AICNP13, AICNP14, AICNP15, and AICNP17) reported that experience and practice were among the main sources for their competency in conflict resolution. For example, one of them said, "I have learned about this one from experience, and of course I have handled this in many occasions. I have [also] learned, technique one works in a situation like this, and repeated again and again, research has shown me that it may not work in exactly the same, but with little variations, it may work" (AICNP5). On his part AICNP15 figuratively referred to experience as a school. "The greatest school is experience because you deal with them every now and then. You wake up every day with these issues, so besides the formal training, there is experience" (AICNP15). While AICNP15 likened experience to a school, both AICNP1 and AICNP17 figuratively referred to it as a teacher. "Sometimes…people say experience is the best teacher…so I can say through experience which I have; having seen scenes with other people that one is my teacher" (AICNP1). Interestingly, the concept of a teacher was echoed by AICNP15 who said; "When you continually do this [practice] definitely, you become a good *mwalimu*[7] (teacher), (AICNP15). So, AICNP15 referred to experience as the school and practice as a teacher. However, most participants referred to experience as a teacher. For instance AICNP17 asserted that; "In addition, I use my experience. In fact, experience is a teacher because the more I settle disputes the more I sharpen my skills, because I will know what will work and what will not work."

3.2.6 Informed by Reading Literature
A half of the participants (AICNP17, AICNP14, AICNP12, AICNP8, AICNP5, AICNP3, AICNP2, and AICNP4) reported they acquired conflict resolution skills through reading literature on conflict resolution. For example, AICNP4 who is also a part time seminary professor reported that he was extensively reading and using books written by African scholars on conflict resolution in his teaching ministry:

In fact, most of the text books I use, many of them are written by Africans. For example this one; "peace; fruit of reconciliation"… has been written by one of our own; an African. And also, other books like….'unity and peace in Africa' this has been written by a catholic priest. And very important books by professor Mugambi, who is a professor here at Nairobi University. [He] has written books on unity…. So, mainly I use books written by our own theologians. (AICNP4)

Still, another research participant was motivated to read literature on conflict resolution owing to the post-election violence of December 2007. "I got some books talking about the conflict just to have a wider understanding on how to resolve it" (AICNP12).

3.2.7 Television and Internet
Two of the participants reported that their conflict resolution skills were informed by watching television programs on conflict and counseling and also surfing the internet. One of them said "I… watch counseling issues on the TV and I would say I have picked up some bits from the media" (AICNP16). Also, without getting into details AICNP8 pointed out that his conflict resolution skills were informed by surfing the internet. A study done on one particular TV program based in the US and now viewed in over 100 countries around the world, in different languages suggest that children who watch this program develop tolerance, constructive examples and help other children develop such behavior [9]. This supports the data given by AICNP16 that his conflict resolution skills were partly informed by watching TV programs with counseling sessions. The data revealed that more than half of the participants reported that they never had a course on conflict resolution either in formal course of study nor in their theological studies. For example, one participant who was exposed to ethnic conflict conflicts at his early age went to a theological college and finally landed into a pastoral ministry. Asked where he learned about conflict resolution he said, "I did not learn it from anybody. I have not been taught that subject by anybody; is only that I have read some books and also I have had time to

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[7]*Mwalimu* is a Kiswahili word for teacher.

share with some people who have had some conflicts [resolution experiences]. And then, as a result of that I have gained some experiences. I have also learned from conflict and conflict resolution" (AICNP3). Such sentiments were expressed by other research participants (AICNP13, AICNP8, AICNP2; AICNP10). For example, AICNP10 emphatically asserted that he never had a course on conflict resolution.

It is worth noting that all the participants who said they had never had a specific course on conflict resolution had bachelors' degrees and postgraduate degrees.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Conclusions

One of the conclusions we made based on this study is that a conflict resolution process was bound to fail if the disputants came to the conflict resolution table with uncooperative attitude, unforgiving spirit, and closed mind among other factors. It occurred that, it is not the expertise of the pastor or lack of it that led to a standoff, but it depended on the attitude and the response the disputants brought to the discussion table. The study also showed that there are times when the process failed because the pastor was incapable of handling certain situations. Similarly, the study indicated that a conflict resolution process did not succeed because the pastor had a lot of expertise and experience, but in addition to these things, disputants were available and willing to work together until a solution was found. Another conclusion we made from the study is that conflict resolution process was terminated on either a positive or a negative note. A conflict resolution process was terminated positively if the conflict ended (was resolved). On the other hand, a conflict resolution process ended negatively whenever the disputing parties were uncooperative and assumed a standoff position. Depending on the magnitude of the issue and the parties involved, when conflict resolution process ended positively, there was forgiveness, and reconciliation between the disputants. The conclusion in this case was crowned with some kind of celebration that included eating and drinking together. In some ethnic groups a curse was put against anyone who might ignite the fire of conflict. In addition, disputants resumed their normal life that is life prior to conflict.

Another conclusion that we made is that AIC Nairobi pastors' conflict resolution experiences were informed by a number of sources. The study indicated that their conflict resolution experiences were largely informed by informal learning. This included learning by observing their parents, relatives, and the council of elders engaging conflict resolution process. The study also indicated that other pastors' experiences were informed by non-formal learning. This occurred through organized seminars and conferences. Some had experiences from their previous career prior to joining the pastoral ministry. Another conclusion from the study is that pastors' experience was informed by formal education, as well as theological education. The study further revealed that AIC Nairobi pastors were exposed to mass media, internet, and literature, which also informed their expertise. Still, the study pointed out that there was correlation between the pastors' understanding, practices and the Bible. Pastors' understanding and practices were primarily informed by the Bible. The study revealed that pastors used the Bible as a filter or lens through which their practices had to go through. Even though their culture informed their practices, all cultural aspects with regard to conflict resolution that contradicted the Bible were sifted and ignored. Subsequently, pastors integrated some cultural aspects that were compatible with biblical teachings into their practices. For that reason, pastors' practices and experiences were found to be a hybrid emerging from both the Bible and their culture. For this reason, the study revealed a lot of similarities between the biblical teachings and the pastors' practices.

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

In this study, the researcher is convinced that conflict resolution education should be introduced and be taught to all levels and to all individuals. For, we are all created in the image and likeness of God. God is the author of peace and his will for every human being (creature) is to imitate him (the creator) by living in harmony with each other. God demonstrated this by reaching out to human beings even when they made wrong choices (Rom 5:8). Jesus is called the prince of peace (Isa 9:6). He (Jesus) in the Sermon on the Mount, he preached that, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God" (Matt 5:9). The term peacemaker also appear in Col 1:20 and indicates Christ's mediatorial work through which he reconciled the humanity through his own blood [21]. [21]calls Jesus "the supreme peacemaker." He further observes that the

"supreme peacemaking is the proclamation of the gospel" [21]. The last part of verse 9, says the peacemakers will be called children of God and that gives an eschatological dimension. That means those who have already made peace with God and help others be reconciled with God are assured of their heritage as heirs of God's eternal kingdom.

Peacemaking or conflict resolution is at the very center of the gospel and therefore a responsibility of each and every Christian. Indeed, it is the central component in the Great Commission (Matt 28), and all Christians are supposed to carry it on to all human beings. It is in such acts that Christians demonstrate their saltiness by transforming the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to be at peace with God and each other. At the same time Christians are supposed to be the light and direct out dark world (Matt 5:13-14).

4.2 Recommendations

In this study, the researcher is fully aware of the gender imbalance and recommends that another study be conducted to find the correlation between women's understanding and practices with regard to conflict and conflict resolution. There are many AIC Nairobi women who serve as pastors in some ways but cannot ascend to the position of a senior pastor or assistant pastor. This should not be construed to mean that women lack the ability to perform as their male counterparts. But it is only due to some rigid church traditions. Despite this discrimination against female ministers, there is every reason to believe that these women minsters do a lot conflict resolution and that can be verified through an in depth study like this one. In this study, it occurred to the researcher that ethnicity and national politics in Kenya potentially caused conflict. Interestingly, ethnicity played out even in the church. We therefore strongly recommend that a study be carried on to find out why some ethnic groups are finding it hard to coexist and even serve God smoothly at church. Presumably, Christ's death on the cross abolished racial, ethnicity, gender, and walls of color. Thus, creating an environment for all human beings to co-exist, serve, celebrate diversity of creation, and worship God with gladness. Paul the apostle says that Christ through his death abolished the dividing walls of hostility. He narrates how Christ brought both Jews and Gentiles to share in God's Kingdom. He said to the Christians in Ephesus:

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (Eph 2:14-18)

A study to find the feelings and what different ethnic groups think and perceive each other may be helpful because it will perhaps help the church deal with the underlying causes of tension and conflict. The study showed that this issue is so huge and astounding that it surfaces in the Christian fraternity.

Given that, Kenya is multiethnic country, a situation that makes it open to ethnic conflicts, we recommend that a further study on conflict and conflict resolution be conducted in all theological seminaries to establish whether they see it as a problem and what their response is. We also would like to recommend that since conflict and violence is affecting not only Christian, a mega study be conducted to find out whether education in Kenya is designed to respond to ethnicity and conflict. Indeed, we would recommend that conflict resolution be introduced in all levels of education. [9]reminds us that one of the problems with education all around the world is that students are not taught how to deal with conflict. Pastors and theological educators can change this notion by seriously creating learning environment in which the masses can learn how to live harmoniously with each other. The study indicated that people learned conflict resolution through informal settings, non-formal, and formal settings. These channels are all open to pastors and theological educators to reach out and help people live in peace with each other and be at peace with God. Another recommendation is that a study needs to be done to compare the difference between the correlation between the understanding and practices of the AIC Nairobi pastors and their counterparts in the country side. Similarly, another study that we would like to recommend be done is to compare the AIC Nairobi pastors with other pastors in Nairobi from other denominations.

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