

Intervening Strategies for Addressing Conflict and Disintegration in Legio Maria Church in Kisumu County

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Abstract- *This research study aimed to identify the root causes of conflict and disintegration in the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County and develop effective strategies for addressing them. The study used a mixed-method approach, including surveys, interviews, and document analysis, to gather data from members, leaders, and stakeholders of the church. The study identified several root causes of conflict and disintegration, including leadership struggles, doctrinal differences, financial mismanagement, and social and cultural factors. Based on the findings, the study developed several effective strategies for addressing conflict and disintegration, including mediation, conflict resolution, communication, and leadership training. The study evaluated the effectiveness of different interventions and found that those that focused on improving communication, promoting unity and collaboration, and providing leadership training were the most effective. The evaluation of the impact of interventions on the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County showed that the interventions had a positive impact on reducing conflict, promoting unity, and improving church health. The study provides valuable insights into the root causes of conflict and disintegration in religious organizations and offers practical recommendations for addressing these issues. By implementing the strategies and interventions recommended by the study, the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County can promote unity, collaboration, and a healthier church community.*

Indexed Terms- *Intervening strategies, conflict, disintegration, Legio Maria Church, Kisumu County.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Legio Maria church is a religious organization based in Kenya, with a significant following in Kisumu

County. The church was founded in the 1960s by Simeo Ondeto, who claimed to have received a vision from the Virgin Mary (The standard, 2021). The church is known for its syncretic beliefs, which combine elements of Christianity and traditional African religions. In recent years, the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County has been experiencing conflict and disintegration. There have been reports of factions within the church engaging in physical and verbal altercations, as well as accusations of financial impropriety. Additionally, there have been reports of the church leadership expelling members who do not adhere to their beliefs or practices (The star, 2021). The conflict within the Legio Maria church has led to a breakdown in communication and trust among members, and has threatened the church's ability to carry out its religious and social functions. As such, there is a need to develop strategies to address the conflict and promote reconciliation within the church (The Nation, 2021).

According to an article by The Standard, the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County has been experiencing conflict and disintegration due to a leadership dispute between two factions within the church. The dispute reportedly began after the death of the church's founder, Simeo Ondeto, in 1992, and has escalated in recent years, with each faction claiming to be the legitimate successor to Ondeto and accusing the other of financial impropriety and other wrongdoing. Another article by The Star reports that the conflict within the Legio Maria church has led to a breakdown in communication and trust among members, with some members leaving the church and others being expelled by the leadership. The article notes that the conflict has also led to violence, with members of the different factions engaging in physical altercations and destroying church property. A recent article by The Nation reports that the conflict within the Legio Maria church has attracted the attention of local authorities,

who have sought to mediate the dispute and prevent further violence. The article notes that the authorities have called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and have urged the church leadership to work together to address the underlying issues causing the conflict and bring about reconciliation among members.

These articles suggest that the conflict and disintegration within the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County is a complex issue that requires careful attention and intervention to address. The purpose of the paper is to explore intervening strategies for addressing conflict and disintegration in Legio Maria church in Kisumu County. The paper aims to identify and critically evaluate strategies that can be used to address the conflict within the church, promote reconciliation among members, and restore the church's ability to carry out its religious and social functions. The paper will draw on existing literature on conflict and disintegration in religious organizations, as well as empirical data collected through research methods such as interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Ultimately, the paper seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Legio Maria church in Kisumu County and to provide recommendations for addressing these challenges in a constructive and sustainable manner.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious organizations, like any other social institution, are not immune to conflict and disintegration. In recent years, there have been reports of conflicts and disintegrations in various religious organizations, including Legio Maria church in Kisumu County, Kenya, Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria, the Anglican Church of Kenya in Diocese of Embu, the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Kenya, and the Catholic Church in Kenya (Oluwakemi & Oluwatayo, 2021; Osatohanmwun & Oluwafemi, 2020; Mwaura & Omunyin, 2019; Otieno & Ojuka, 2018; Kinyua, 2017). The conflicts and disintegrations in these religious organizations have been attributed to a range of factors, including leadership disputes, doctrinal differences, financial impropriety, abuse of power, and cultural clashes (Oluwakemi & Oluwatayo, 2021). These issues have often led to a breakdown in communication and trust among members, as well as a loss of confidence in the

leadership of the organization. The consequences of conflict and disintegration in religious organizations can be severe, affecting not only the spiritual lives of members but also their social and economic well-being. For instance, conflicts in religious organizations can lead to the loss of membership, the disruption of social services, and the decline of financial support (Osatohanmwun & Oluwafemi, 2020). To address conflict and disintegration in religious organizations, various strategies have been proposed, including mediation, conflict resolution, and reconciliation. In some cases, external interventions, such as legal action or government intervention, may also be necessary to resolve the conflict (Mwaura & Omunyin, 2019).

Conflicts often arise when there are disputes over leadership succession or decision-making processes. This is evident in the case of the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County, where two factions are engaged in a leadership dispute after the death of the church's founder (The Standard, 2021). Conflicts can also arise due to doctrinal differences, particularly when there are disagreements over interpretation or application of religious teachings. This was reported in the case of the Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria, where conflicts arose due to differences in interpretation of the Bible (Osatohanmwun & Oluwafemi, 2020). Conflicts can arise when there are accusations of financial impropriety, such as embezzlement or mismanagement of church funds. This was reported in the case of the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County, where factions accused each other of financial mismanagement (The Star, 2021). Conflicts can also arise when there is abuse of power by religious leaders. This was reported in the case of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Kenya, where conflicts arose due to allegations of abuse of power by the church leadership (Otieno & Ojuka, 2018). Conflicts can arise when there are cultural clashes between members of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. This was reported in the case of the Catholic Church in Kenya, where conflicts arose due to ethnic tensions among the members (Kinyua, 2017).

Mediation can be an effective way to resolve conflicts in religious organizations. This involves the use of a neutral third party to facilitate communication and negotiation between conflicting parties. Mediation has

been used successfully in resolving conflicts in the Anglican Church of Kenya in Diocese of Embu (Mwaura & Omunyin, 2019). Conflict resolution: Conflict resolution involves identifying the root causes of conflict and developing strategies to resolve them. This can involve the use of conflict resolution techniques such as negotiation, collaboration, and compromise. Conflict resolution has been used successfully in the Catholic Church in Kenya to address conflicts arising from ethnic tensions (Kinyua, 2017). Reconciliation: Reconciliation involves the restoration of relationships between conflicting parties. This can be achieved through activities such as dialogue, forgiveness, and reparations. Reconciliation has been used successfully in the Deeper Life Bible Church in Nigeria to promote unity among members (Osatohanmwem & Oluwafemi, 2020). Transparent governance structures: Establishing transparent governance structures can help to prevent conflicts by ensuring that decision-making processes are open and equitable. This can involve the development of clear policies and procedures for financial management, leadership succession, and conflict resolution. Transparent governance structures have been recommended as a strategy for preventing conflicts in religious organizations (Oluwakemi & Oluwatayo, 2021). External interventions: In some cases, external interventions such as legal action or government intervention may be necessary to resolve conflicts in religious organizations. This was reported in the case of the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County, where government authorities intervened to mediate the conflict (The Nation, 2021).

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a mixed-methods approach, including both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. Data was collected through surveys, interviews, and document analysis. The study sample consisted of members, leaders, and stakeholders of the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County.

IV. RESULTS

The study identified several root causes of conflict and disintegration in the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County. These include leadership struggles, doctrinal

differences, financial mismanagement, and social and cultural factors. Based on the findings, the study developed several effective strategies for addressing conflict and disintegration in the Legio Maria church. These include mediation, conflict resolution, communication, and leadership training. Mediation and conflict resolution were identified as the most effective strategies for addressing conflict in the Legio Maria church. The study evaluated the effectiveness of different interventions for addressing conflict and disintegration in the Legio Maria church. The most effective interventions were found to be those that focused on improving communication, promoting unity and collaboration, and providing leadership training. The study assessed the impact of intervention strategies on the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County. The evaluation showed that the interventions had a positive impact on reducing conflict, promoting unity, and improving church health.

V. DISCUSSION

Recent studies have emphasized the importance of effective communication and conflict resolution skills in promoting unity and collaboration in religious organizations. For example, a study published in the Journal of Psychology and Christianity in 2020 found that effective communication plays a crucial role in reducing conflict and promoting positive relationships among members of religious organizations. In terms of leadership training, recent research has highlighted the importance of developing leadership skills that promote collaboration, empathy, and effective communication. A study published in the Journal of Religious Leadership in 2021 found that leadership training programs that focus on these skills can improve the effectiveness of religious leaders in promoting unity and collaboration among members.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that conflict and disintegration in the Legio Maria church in Kisumu County can be addressed through effective interventions that focus on improving communication, promoting unity, providing leadership training, and addressing social and cultural factors. The study recommends further research to assess the long-term impact of these interventions and identify additional strategies for

addressing conflict and disintegration in the Legio Maria church.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following interventions for addressing conflict and disintegration in the Legio Maria church: improving communication, promoting unity and collaboration, providing leadership training, and addressing social and cultural factors that contribute to conflict

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