

Investigating the Role of the Church in Conflict Transformation on Political Governance in Malawi (Case Study: The Presbyterian Church in Malawi)

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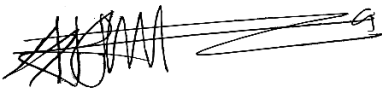
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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.

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Dr. HermannMvula

DEDICATION

To my wife Prisca, parents Mr and MrsChigalu, my sons Kondwani and Immanuel, and daughter, Vanessa Loga. May God shower you with unending blessings for teaching me that even the largest tasks can be accomplished if done one step at a time. To my wife Prisca, you are indeed such a mentor who spent sleepless nights typing this material and sponsoring my education. To my children, I say may the good Lord bless you all for the discipline observed when I was writing this material. In a special way, I sincerely thank my true friend and co-minister in the Lord Jesus Christ, pastor Joseph Andsen for your prayers, encouragement and time taken to minister on my behalf when time was not on my side during examination and research period.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CCAP.....	Church of Central African Presbyterian
CCJP.....	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CFC.....	Calvary Family Church
CI.....	Catholic Institute
COMESA.....	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DPP.....	Democratic Progressive Party
EBCOM.....	Evangelical Bible College of Malawi
FGD.....	Focus Group Discussion
HRDC.....	Human Rights Defenders Coalition
KANU.....	Kenyan African National Union
MCP.....	Malawi Congress Party
MEC.....	Malawi Electoral Commission
MP.....	Member of Parliament
PAC.....	Public Affairs Committee
RC.....	Roman Catholic
T/A.....	Traditional Authority
UDF.....	United Democratic Front
UN.....	United Nations
UNDP.....	United Nations Development Program
UTM.....	United Transformation Movement
ZEC.....	Zambezi Evangelical Church

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research does not attempt to provide a definitive answer to the extremely difficult questions of whether the church has a role to play in the issues concerning political governance of a country and social conflict. Instead, it reflects on the interpretive lenses and languages that we use for dealing with these questions. It is also a modest attempt at providing some intellectual tools for grappling with the multifaceted concept of religion in contexts of conflict and peace building in the political arena.

I seek to examine and analyze the position of the church in conflict resolution in political governance using relevant literature that focuses on conflict resolution.

In Malawi, there is currently no existing literature making special emphasis on how government, politicians and the church may bring forth peace in times of civil and political unrest.

The aim is to identify features of religion as well as interpretive trends put forward by scholars that share an interest in similar questions but come from diverse disciplinary fields. I hope that this work will not only make an academic contribution, but it will also address the real issues and pressing concerns that face many policy makers and the general public. This is very important since there are two schools of thought on the position of the church in conflict resolution on political governance. The first school of thought is that, churches should not comment on political issues and should be detached from state functions. On the other hand, some argue that the church has a role to play and comment on political issues.¹ But as we will see in this material, religion and Christianity are an important tool in bringing peace in relation by averting conflicts.

But in this endeavor, caution must be exercised when the church should set its limit on the political affairs. The church in all angles and directions must not lose focus and direction on the great commission assigned to it by Jesus Christ. It must be seen preaching peace and reconciling the conflicting parties. It must ensure that it directs the will of God on the people.

A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Malawi is commonly known as the warm heart of Africa and is a landlocked country situated in the Southern part of Africa. It stretches from the Northern part which borders Tanzania through the Southern part making boundaries with Mozambique and Zambia on the other part eastern and western parts respectively. The country has an estimated population of 17.5 million people according to the 2018 census. In 1964, the country got its independence from Britain. Blantyre and Livingstonia Synods in the southern and northern regions respectively made great achievements to bring independence in the country.² The church has been in the fore front to influence political development and the Malawian society has been influenced by missionaries in mid 1870s.³ Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda helped in the destruction of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. He took over leadership from Orton Chirwa the founder of the party and became the first leader of the African Nyasaland Congress which later changed to Malawi Congress Party (MCP). Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda ruled the country for thirty (30) years until 1994 when the country received a new dawn for democracy. In May 1993, there was a referendum when the country experienced a majority of people flocking to the polling station to vote to change from the one-party political system to multiparty.

¹Gama B, *The Role of the church in Politics in Malawi*, AcadSA, page 113-115.

²Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Kachere Series, Page 13.

³Andrew C Ross *ibid*

For more than two and a half decades, the country has been in a multiparty political system. The first leader to be elected during the multiparty system was Bakili Elson Muluzi under the United Democratic Front (UDF). Dr. Muluzi ruled the country from 1994 to 2004 when Malawians opted for a new leader to replace him since he had completed his two (2) consecutive terms required by the constitution of the Republic of Malawi.

Although Muluzi had several allegations ranging from corruption to abuse of office, there was an improvement in areas of human rights in the country. Several human rights organizations were formed such as the Malawi Human Rights Commission established by the constitution of the republic of Malawi.

During his reign, the nation faced many things which were attributed to as a result of bad governance, such as poor economic conditions, insecurity and killings of people in day light without fear of being arrested, massive corruption and no respect for the rule of law. Political power was overriding the rule of law and the nation was likely to have a dictator. The party tried to amend its constitution hence giving more power to the chairperson of the party than the head of state if the president is elected from the UDF ticket.⁴

In 2004, there was massive victory when the country voted for yet another leader perceived to be a statesman in the person of Dr. Binguwa Mutharika. Mutharika from a Lhomwe tribe of the Southern part of Malawi contested for presidency on UDF ticket. Other contestants in the presidential race were Honorable John Tembo, Gwanda Chakuwamba, Brown Mpinganjira and Justice Malewezi. Few months of his victory and election into office as president, Mutharika made a public announcement at a public rally stating his departure from UDF to form his own political party. He was liked by many due to his political agenda on national development as well as his exposure in working with international organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank and COMESA. His experience and expertise in economics, earned more trust from the people of Malawi. He engineered the country and repositioned it during his first tenure of office. Developmentally and economically, his first term, the country was elevated to another level as evidenced by the magnificent infrastructures being erected, and a revolution in the economic system. The country was happy with policies that his government put in place.⁵ There was massive improvement in developmental activities of the nation. Malawi University of Science and Technology in Thyolo district was constructed under his reign. New Parliament Buildings, Bingu International Conference Center and the magnificent soccer stadium in Lilongwe are among such great things that the Binguwa Mutharika regime constructed before his death in 2012. In Blantyre, he also made the MasaukoChipembere Highway by extending it to the dual carriageway thus mitigating traffic congestion.

Things began to change for worse during Mutharika's second tenure of office. In around 2010 – 2012, he was criticized by both local and international communities for what was viewed to be bad governance and lack of respect for human rights. He was vehemently opposed by both opposition political parties, local and international stakeholders until April 2012, when he died of cardiac arrest. His term was completed by Joyce Banda who took the helm of leadership in April 2012 and at this time Malawi experienced and tested yet another leadership from a woman president.

During the two years of her presidency, the nation continued to mourn and groan from similar issues that were left by the three predecessors namely insecurity, corruption and economic hardships.

In 2014, the country continued to face yet another transition in its political journey when Professor Peter Mutharika was voted into power. Professor Mutharika was well known for his expertise and exposure to the legal and international world. He provided several lectures at international forums. He stayed in the United States of America for about forty years and Malawians had a lot of expectations that Peter Mutharika would change the country for the better. Unfortunately, during his second term as president, he met several

⁴<https://reliefweb.int/report/malawi/malawi-power-struggle-threatens-hungry-poor>

⁵<http://www.ndr.mw:8080/xmlui/handle/123456789/539>

challenges and provoked opposition. He was accused of mismanagement of public funds, corruption, nepotism, and incompetence in handling matters of national importance and this caused him to lose public trust as a national leader. He openly attacked his political opponents in public podiums hence steering hate and conflict.⁶

After his re-election into office as president on 21st May 2019, the country experienced a period of political tension whereby the opposition continued to question his legitimacy as leader. Mutharika's election into the office of the head of state brought about political turmoil which existed for some period of time until June 2020 when Rev. Dr Lazarus Chakwera defeated him in an election re-run sanctioned by both the high court and supreme court of appeal.

Malawi has changed six presidents, and in all these transitions, there have been political tensions due to struggle for power by the political parties and their leaders. Although tensions have been there, it is unlike in other countries where racial conflicts have seen massacres such as in Rwanda, Somalia and Mozambique only to mention a few. In Malawi, the country has been marked as one of the peaceful countries in the world. The major concern by many people was the violent conflict that took place during the power transition from professor Mutharika to Dr. Chakwera. Although, this was the case, it is understood and believed that it is in the nature of every democratic government where parties are contesting, it is regarded as healthy so long as it is peaceful and respectful.

The country has seen and observed the stand taken by the church in all the situations. There are times when the church has spoken and at times when it has remained silent. When the church takes a stand to speak, efforts have been to try to bring peace and order. Is the church really doing anything in resolving conflicts? What is the function or duty of the church to enhance peace and conflict resolution? This research assesses the role of the church in conflict resolution in regard to political governance in Malawi. Since conflict(s) emanate from differences in the interests of groups, one of it being issues concerning governance, this study seeks to discuss conflict resolution on the concept of governance from a wider perspective on both secular and Christian viewpoint. It must be borne in mind that, if the country continues to head in a pace with conflicts as it was in the 2019-2020 political situation, there is an imminent danger of the conflict to bring crisis amongst the tribes of the nation since the disagreements have created a lot of divisions along tribal and regional lines in the country.⁷

The conflicts have resulted in political leaders forming parallel political youth groups to go round castigating and oppressing political opponents.⁸ The country has experienced several murders and intimidation of people deemed to be in opposition to ruling governments. Until recently a major hiccup has been created in the country following the recent May 21, 2019 tripartite elections where two major political parties the Malawi Congress Party and United Transformation Movement have dragged the Democratic Progressive Party under Professor Mutharika to court in protest against the electoral results.⁹ This has been followed by massive protests by many people all over the country holding demonstrations in order to oust the chairperson of Malawi Electoral Commission on allegations of mismanagement of the electoral process.¹⁰ Although massive protests occurred during the twenty nineteen period, people experienced some change as to its nature and conduct. They were peaceful demonstrations as there were no cases of violence as could be seen before where political supporters were indulged in physical fighting and many people injured. Both the army and police were involved to ensure peaceful match and demonstrations by the parties' supporters.

⁶<https://www.nyasatimes.com/peter-mutharika-attacks-jb-in-lomwe-belt-rallies-malawi-road-to-2014-polls/>

⁷[https://www.google.com/search?q=tribal+divisions+created+by+political+tension+in+malawi&rlz=1C1GCEU_enMW915MW915&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=O5ffrzKCD0bY_M%](https://www.google.com/search?q=tribal+divisions+created+by+political+tension+in+malawi&rlz=1C1GCEU_enMW915MW915&tbm=isch&source=iu&ictx=1&fir=O5ffrzKCD0bY_M%20)

⁸<https://allafrica.com/stories/201907040563.html>

⁹<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/8/8/malawis-top-court-hears-presidential-election-result-challenge>

¹⁰<https://www.africanews.com/2020/02/14/malawi-protesters-demand-resignation-of-elections-boss-jane-ansah/>

The demonstrations have resulted in what can be described as the highest political tension in Malawi since attaining its independence and subsequent democracy in 1964 and 1994 respectively. A few young people and energetic future leaders have been shot dead and injured by the police as a result of political riots. The country is losing out a number of young men and women in these political conflicts as a result of the disagreements between political parties.

Despite having a number of stakeholders in peace and conflict management, such as human rights organizations, the country is also a Christian nation which believes in God and has several faith organizations foster peaceful resolutions. The situation in Malawi on political conflicts has triggered fear in many lives to the extent that if the situation is let on the loose, the conflicts may turn into a crisis.

B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the past fifteen years, Malawi has been locked by political conflicts. There have been several political conflicts ranging from internal issues between political leaders to external political opponents.¹¹ The effects and aftermaths of these conflicts if allowed to continue may create a crisis in the country where people may be displaced due to civil unrest. The country may borrow a leaf from the Rwanda genocide in 1994 and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The country has not been involved in any civil war before. Since independence in 1964, the nation has been on the whole an orderly, peaceful and a constitutional country.

Consequently, there may be a great danger if the political conflicts currently prevailing in the country are not resolved amicably, civil unrest may ensue. This is evidenced by the several damages and loss of properties recently caused in Limbe and Nsundwe trading center where in the latter case, a police officer was killed by communities and women were also allegedly raped by police deployed to the scene to establish peace and order¹². The killing of the police officer at Nsundwe became a shocking news. It was very exceptional and unusual as police officers are rarely killed by mob violence.

The establishment of the multiparty system in 1994 did not change much on the manner of how Malawi is governed. Instead, there have been residual dictatorial elements, unconstitutional tendencies, corruption in the high corridors of power and disregard of the principle of constitutionalism in Malawi's political and governance systems are intensified.¹³ Further, the country has seen the clergy preaching about politics in such a way as to urge church members to vote for a particular presidential candidate. It is a general notion of the public that the church must be seen to be preaching peace and not dividing the people or its members.¹⁴

The issues of violence may result in economic problems which may rise due to a number of factors such as investors leaving the country, and diminished donor aid. The unrest may cause further loss and damage to life and property. In view of the consequential danger that may arise as a result of such conflicts, the focus is on whether the church has any role to play in conflict transformation. During the period of these political violence, the church and other church organizations seemed to be divided into threefold. The first group was the one that took sides with the government, followed by that took stand to rebuke and lastly the one that decided to remain silent. The silence in championing peace may be attributed to various factors such as fear, loyalty, material gain as well as siding with political parties.¹⁵

¹¹mwnation.com>Muluzi-warns-bingu (accessed on 1th January 2020), www.nyasatimes.com>bakili-muluzi-vis-a-vis-bingu-wa-mutharika (accessed on 14th January, 2020), www.voanews.com>magazine>malawis-president-warns-bakili Muluzi (accessed on 14th January, 2020).

¹²<https://www.nyasatimes.com/malawi-police-sexually-abuse-nsundwe-women/>

¹³Mzee Hermann Y Mvula, *The Theory, Praxis and Pursuit of Constitutionalism in Malawi*. Kachere Series, Zomba, page 8.

¹⁴The Nation, Vol. 26 No 92 Tuesday, 7 May 201; The Daily Times, Wednesday, May 8, 2019; The Daily Times, Tuesday, September 24, 2019; The Daily Times, Thursday, September 26, 2019; The Nation, Vol. 26 No 194 Thursday, 26 September 2019; The Nation, Vol. 26 No. 197. Tuesday, 1 October 2019; The Nation, Vol. 26 No 198, Wednesday, 2 October 2019. The titles of the newspapers should be in italics, not the numbers and dates.

¹⁵Gama, B. 2010 *The Role of the Church in Politics in Malawi*, pp (23-24) (166)

C. RESEARCH RATIONALE

This study is significant because it contributes material and insights into how the church and its leadership can be engaged in conflict resolution in relation to political governance in Malawi. There has been recently, a general public outcry and criticisms on the church for the long silence it has taken regarding the occurrence of conflicts in the country. Thereby, the study gives an insight on how the church responds to the implementation of peace in the political arena.

Since the study aims to describe qualitatively the state and posture of the church in conflict resolution in Malawi, the findings of this study will paint a vivid picture of how it stands currently and thus provide government agencies, human rights organizations and civil society in general with a way forward on the management of conflicts on future political impulses in the country.

The strategies offered in addressing the problems can be adapted to be used as a platform for procedure by people, organizations and churches for resolving conflicts in Malawi.

The study will also, at the end, provide academic material for further studies in conflict resolution mainly for the Malawian context. Additionally, the material can also offer insights for other countries in Africa.

D. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The aim of this study is to examine, strategies and postures by the church to conflict resolution in political governance in Malawi.

E. RESEARCH QUESTION

a) The Main Question

The main question of this study is summed up as: Does the Church have any role to play in conflict resolutions in relation to political governance?

b) Research Objectives

- What was the actual role played by the church in bringing forth to political conflict and violence in the post-election demonstrations?
- Explain the reconciliation processes employed by the church in Malawi in post conflict period.
- What effective strategies could the church employ in the reconciliation process?
- What effect do political conflicts have on the lives of people and the nation?
- What did the church do to bring peace in the political violence?
- Why do we have political conflicts in Malawi?
- How should the church engage herself in offering the solutions to resolving the political issues in Malawi?

F. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

In 1959, the Government of Nyasaland instituted a wide spread series of arrests in order to break the power of the African Nyasaland Congress which was threatening the authority of the Protectorate Government and the Government of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Many men and women were released from imprisonment in a matter of days, but at Kanjedza Camp in the town of Limbe, a thousand men and three women were held as the hard core leadership of Congress. During this time, Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda together with Dunduzu and Yatuta Chisiza, Orton Chirwa, Masauko Chipembere, Augustine Bwanausi, David Rubadiri, Willie Chokani and other important national leaders were also briefly imprisoned in what was then Southern Rhodesia.¹⁶In 1964 Nyasaland changed its name to Malawi when it received its independence. Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda became the president of Malawi.

¹⁶Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and The Making of Modern Malawi*, Kachere Series, pp 11.

Although the country became independent in 1964, people continued to suffer from oppression under the regime of Dr. Banda. Those who appeared to be opposing his views were sent to prison or exile for fear of their life. People such as Orton Chirwa and his wife Vera were imprisoned for life on allegations of conspiracy to assassinate Dr. Banda. Kanyama Chiume fled into exile and Chakufwa Thom Chihana. The attacks that happened continued to happen under the leadership of Kamuzu Banda. Bakili Muluzi was Secretary General of Malawi Congress Party under Dr Banda and he also went into exile. Having experienced the continued oppression of the people of Malawi by the Government of Dr. Banda, Bakili Muluzi, ChakufwaChihana and Aleke Banda formed a political grouping in exile with an intention to oust Dr. Banda. They made several broadcasts on Channel Africa and BBC radios and the international community was made alert of the imminent change Malawi was to receive in the political circle to emancipate the citizenry.

In 1994 a new dawn was born when the country transitioned to multiparty and democracy. Since 2004, the country did not see a real change as those brutal and illegal acts of oppression practiced by the previous regimes continued to happen. There have been political conflicts originating from political parties as a result of dissenting views in their interests.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Introduction

There are numerous research studies on the topic assessing the role of the church in conflict resolution in relation to political governance across the globe. However, in Malawi it seems there are few studies on the topic. This chapter provides relevant literature to the study.

a) Conflict Defined

John Burton, in his book *Conflict; Practices in Management, Settlement and Resolution* observes that Conflict resolution is a study that transcends separate compartments of knowledge known as disciplines and seeks to take holistic view of human conflictual behavior without being politically unrealistic or in a sense of superficial.¹⁷ He explains that conflicts are inevitable.

Burton argues that conflicts are inevitable, there must be a way on how best the conflict can be handled to avoid it being violent. The process of arbitration is of significance in conflict resolution. This helps to dig out the root cause of the disagreement between the conflicting parties and gives room for tolerance and forgiveness. Some people or groups of people or organizations even political parties have special people who they can listen to when they speak. Some parties in the arbitration process could be their previous or current mentors whom they give their respect to.

However, although conflicts may be inevitable, they can be avoided and if avoided in the early stages, violence and consequential losses due to violence are exterminated at earlier stage. The book is relevant to the study in that it provides a proper definition of conflict and agrees with some scholars on their sentiments on conflicts. However, John Burton does not dwell much on the roles of the church in conflict management and governance but provides the general conflicts that happen in the individuals of a society. The author also does not show how the church can resolve the conflicts in the church.

Van de, E in his book titled “*Conflict on conflict handling*” has a different view on the explicit definition of conflict in that he says that conflict is where two individuals, an individual and a group, parties feel that the other party is thwarting or irritating. He acknowledges the difficulties in attempting a comprehensive, handy definition of conflict. Nevertheless he suggests a cogent explanation: conflict is a relationship between parties who disagree over matters they value and who perceive that their power to attain that which they value is threatened by the other parties’ values, goals, perceptions, behavior and / degree of power.¹⁸ The book is important to the study in that it focuses on the definition that is more practical, comprehensive in broader in handling conflicts.

b) Conflict Resolution

Katz Henderson in his book titled ‘*The Pastoral Ministry and Conflict Resolution*’ defines conflict resolution as a process of managing a conflict and negotiating solution.¹⁹ He understands this as a working model with two key elements, conflict management and negotiation. Conflict management is a communication process for changing the negative emotional states in a conflict to emotional states that allow working out a solution to the conflict. The book focuses on the process that one should follow when resolving conflicts. For instance, it points out negotiation as one of the processes of resolving the disputing parties.

¹⁷ Burton Jw. And Dukes Conflict: Practices IN Management, Settlement and Resolution, New York: St, Martins Press, 2000, p.20 Author first name followed by surname. Titles in italics

¹⁸ Van de, E, Conflict on conflict handling. In P,J D Drenth, Etal. Handboek-En Organisatiepsychologie. Van Loghum Aslaterus.

¹⁹ Katz Henderson, *The Pastoral Ministry and Conflict Resolution*

This information is relevant to the study in that it gives important ways and strategies which the church may employ to resolve conflicts in the political realm.

John Brown Okwii in his doctoral studies on *Biblical Theology of conflict Resolutions* points out that conflicts start in the heart. He says that if we fail to address the heart in a conflict then any solution will fall short of true reconciliation.²⁰ He asserts that the heart's central role in conflict is vividly described in James 4: 1-3. This stipulates that what causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you, you want something but you don't get it. You kill and covet but you cannot have what you want. He describes the root cause of destructive conflict. Conflicts arise when there are unmet desires in our hearts. When we are free we cannot be satisfied unless we have something we want or think we need, the desire turns into a demand. If someone fails to meet that desire, we condemn him in our hearts and quarrel and fight to get our way. He concludes by saying that conflict arises when desires grow into demands and we judge and punish those who get in our way. Okwii's work is important to this study in that it biblically provides special knowledge on the origin of conflict and how the conflict can be resolved spiritually. It discusses how conflicts may be dealt with using both spiritual and secular approach by having dig deep into the interests of the parties and knowing their differences. It is of common fact that man is made up of body, soul and mind. The book gives an opening to know which one is the source of the conflict. The church as a key player in conflict resolution may have the diversity to use this material to achieve the goal of bringing peace and fairness hence avoiding violence.

Marcus Henning in his studies titled *Evaluation of conflict resolution questionnaire* observes the approach to the conflict resolution process. He suggests the eight essential steps to conflict resolution. First is creating an effective atmosphere, classifying perceptions, focusing on individual and shared needs, building shared positive power and looking to the future and learning from the past, generating options, developing doables and making mutual benefits agreements. The book is relevant to the study in that it provides relevant steps that can be used in resolving conflicts. Henning's material lays the foundation stage and strategic steps in dealing with conflicts. For one to achieve a goal, it is of significant to know what action to take in order to reach the intended goal. It is stated that, failure to plan is planning to fail. Thus the book is important since it provides for planning purposes of conflict resolution instead of doing things randomly and unplanned.

Wiethoff observes that in contrast, power creates empowerment and trust between participants thus strengthening the notion of conflict partnership.²¹ Positive power involves developing a positive self-image and awareness and being able to apply positive communication skills to the resolution process. Positive power also involves recognition of the influence by each conflict participant of their level of power over each other.

The book although rarely touching on the main areas of conflict resolution process, or the significance of resolving conflicts, it is still important in this study for its emphasis on the need to apply positive and effective skills in conflict resolution processes. Communication is a key area for mutual understanding and agreement and in conflict resolution, this is very important for the participants in the conflict to heed what is being communicated and to be achieved.

²⁰ John Brown Okwii, *Biblical Theology of conflict Resolution*, Sifat Global Leaders Class, Jos, Nigeria, 2008, P. 2

²¹ Wiethoff Lewicki, Trust development and trust repair in M. Deusch and PT Coleman Eds The handbook of conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice, San Francisco: Jossey-Bas Publishers, 2000, P.64

c) Conflict and Sin

Nurenberger K Tooke J. and Domerias, W, in their book titled *Conflict and Quest for Justice* observe that the ‘root of conflicts is the instinct of all living organisms to survive both as species and individuals, and to develop their full potential.’²² In this book they view conflict as being neither positive nor negative ‘good’ ‘or’, but neutral. People live in separation from God and from themselves and therefore are often in destructive relationship with one another. It would seem thus that there is some link between conflict and sin. Attention therefore needs to be given to an understanding of this relationship before further problems relating to conflict may be dealt with. Turning now to the experience of conflict, pastoral counselors ask questions themselves saying Christians must ask themselves if conflict per se is a result of man’s sinful conditions or it is the consequences of the basic limitations of being human. This book is relevant to this study for it provides a comparison that, conflict is a result of humanity living separately from God and from themselves. Since God is peace and God is love, mostly people who fear God and observe His commandments may stay away from initiating conflicts.

On the other hand, one may reason to say, why do people fight and envy one another in a church yet they are not in separation with the Creator? The world has witnessed disjunctions in the church where members have created parallel branches with intent to fight a particular group within the church appearing to be their dissents.

Further, the book is also important in that it suggests that, the reason for conflict is that people may want to realize their full potential and power. Out of the notion to become powerful, they decide to take against the other party and if the other person or group is not submissive, a conflict arises.

d) The church as Neutral Party

De Bono, in his book titled, *Conflicts: A better Way to Resolve them*, suggests that there are several reasons why an organization such as the church take a neutral position in political conflict.²³ The book reflects on issues of neutrality or non-alignment when taking sides in conflict. It also provides for a better position to take when resolving conflicts. For instance, one should be in neutral position. It emphasizes that the church should take a neutral position. He further points out that neutral position indicates that the church may be close enough to a conflict situation to play a part but for various reasons chooses not to do so. This is known as passive neutrality which means that the church turns a blind eye to the conflict and concerns itself with spiritual work. In this case the church excludes itself from involvement because it believes its calling is spiritual and not political.

The book is relevant to the study in that it provides another school of thought on the notion of conflict resolution by the church. It provides room to observe the effective side of the church when it decides to take part in the reconciliation process of bringing peace and on the other hand when it takes the contrary side. It also provides reasons to authenticate its real mission on earth. In a conflict, many evil things happen. People kill one another, people envy and people steal. One may think, should a church standing close to these things really remain silent instead of preaching peace? The Bible urges us to rebuke with love when we see a brother sinning so that his soul is served.

Balcom A, in his book titled *Third Way Theology of conflict and other writings on Nonviolence* maintains that the church proclaims a transcendent gospel which preserves it from ideologies that entrap political movements.²⁴ In the same ideological neutrality, an argument has been raised that the church’s involvement in political conflict is likely to create division within the church body. Alternatively, it places the church in an invidious position in regard to its witness to the world. The

²²Nurenberger, K Tooke J. and Domerias, W. *Conflict and quest for justice*. Pietermaritzburg: Encounter Publications, 2013, p.66.

²³ De Bono, *Conflicts: A better Way to Resolve Them, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1996, p. 89*

²⁴Balcomb A. *Third Way Theology of conflict and other writings on Non violence* Maryknoll, 2001, p78.

church needs to demonstrate a model of unity and to lead by example. Therefore, to become implicated in political conflict with its concomitant divisions and struggle would be counterproductive or least weaken its authority to witness to the gospel of Christ.

Mediation neutrality is a final role the church has to take. This rationale is based on the assumption that mediation in political conflict implies that the church cannot be aligned to one party and at the same time be available as a mediator. The belief here is that the mediator must be unbiased and neutral.

The book is relevant to this study since it provides a distinction where the church is actively involved in political activities and where the church is a mediator in a conflict. It also articulates the qualities and characteristics of a true mediator that a mediator should be unbiased and at the same time should not be aligned to one party. The book outlines the mission of the church as to proclaim the gospel.

Neuhaus, R.J. Confession, in her article “*Conflict and community*”²⁵ reflects on cases where the church takes side during political conflict. In which she takes part in the political activities of the society. She further reflects on the alternatives by the church to have a neutral role in political conflict as understood as active, partisan efforts to induce social change. That is to say, he maintained that churches should not only be proposing social and political change, but also that they should organize and act to bring about the proffered transformation. This approach is commonly subsumed under theological category of the prophetic mission of the church.²⁶ Nevertheless under extreme conditions when normal political action is made impossible by such interventions as unjust laws, the banning of political organizations and the suspension or restricting of democratic oppositions, the church has a position to take up the cause of helpless and victim of injustice. Even in normal political conflict the exponents of this view believe that Christian faith has a very clear political function and message which calls people to liberating action.

The book is important in this study as it stipulates the role of the church regarding its mission for the gospel, bringing social change, transformation of the societies and highlights special circumstances which if they come to the extreme the church has a role to protect the marginalized. In view of the social change and transformation, we observe that according to the book, the church has little to offer in conflict resolution. The decision and solution to side with the oppressed may be viewed as passive conflict resolution which may as well be viewed as unilateral and biased.

e) Governance

In a paper called, *Creative learning on What is good governance?* The paper defines governance as the exercise of power or authority by political leaders for the well – being of their country’s citizens or subjects.²⁷ It is the complex process whereby some sectors of the society wield power, and enact and promulgate public policies which directly affect human and Institutional Interactions, and economic and social development. The power exercised by the participating sectors of the society is always for the common good, as it is essential for demanding respect and cooperation from the citizens. As such, a great deal of governance is the proper and effective utilization of the resources²⁸.

²⁵Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Marching Suspended and Stoned: Christian Women in Malawi*, in Kenneth Ross (ed.), *God, People and Power in Malawi. Democratization in Theological Perspective*. Blantyre: CLAIM- Kachere, 1996 pp PAGES HERE 198- 217. See also *African Feminist Theologians*: Kanyoro, MA (2002), KanyoroMA(2001), P.,

²⁶Neuhaus, R.J. Confession, *Conflict and community*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000, p90.

²⁷Creative learning ‘*What is good governance?*’ *Creative learning*. Retrieved from [http:// creative learning.org/quality-resources/governance](http://creativelearning.org/quality-resources/governance)

²⁸(tamayaosbc.wordpress.com>2014/08/21>what-is-gov... accessed on 15th June, 2020)

This paper is of significance to the study in that it describes the power and authority vested in political leaders which power must be exercised cautiously towards the subordinates for their wellbeing. It also entails the functions of that power which should be used for making policies which affect the citizenry in a direct way.

However, if power and authority are not properly applied towards the people in a country, it can result into conflict. Therefore, the paper gives an insight that there is a link between good governance and conflict where power is concerned. Good governance focuses more on rule of law, transparency, accountability, responsiveness, equity and inclusiveness.²⁹

In a paper by UNDP titled, “*Reconceptualizing Governance*,” Discussion Paper, ‘governance’ is defined as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage a nation’s affairs. It is the complex mechanism, processes, relationships and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations and mediate their differences”³⁰ In this framework, the state is the only one of the institutions through which authority is exercised. The civil society organizations play an important role in helping citizens articulate their interests and exercise their rights. Government’s role is not only to exercise political governance but to interact effectively with the private sector and civil society organizations in achieving public goals and objectives.

This paper is important to the study as it tries to demonstrate who are the players in governance. It indicates that on the one side, there is the state machinery which is vested with authority. On the other hand, there is the private sector and the civil society where the latter ensures that the rights of the former are clearly articulated and exercised. The paper also gives an insight to the effect that where people are positioned facing one another, a disagreement may ensue if one party acts contrary to the will and feelings of the other. The paper is also of material since it tries to clarify the position of the state to allow its authority to accept the citizenry to exercise their rights. If the state cannot allow this on its subjects, the conduct by the state results into bad governance which results into conflict.

Guido Bertucci in his paper titled, *Good Governance as a concept and why This Matters for development policy* observes that Rule of Law- legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially particularly the laws on human rights. The paper also points out that there must be transparency when governing the institutions. Transparency is built on free flow of information. Again it sheds more light in accountability issues on the public. This is relevant to the study as it focuses on true composition of good governance such as the Rule of Law, legal frameworks, accountability and human rights law. It gives a microscope to observe that many of the conflicts that arise in the world are a result of noncompliance with these international and domestic instruments which nations and Governments have agreed to and ratified.

Richard L. Morrill has written a very good and impressive book on leadership. In his intellectual capacity and reasoning, he has offered some ideas in his book titled, *Strategic Leadership* which describes strategic leadership as the leadership which designates the use of strategic processes in a systematic method of decision making that integrates reciprocal leadership into its concepts and practices.³¹ Strategy is not just a tool of management used by leaders who hold positions of authority. It is as well organized method of interactive leadership that clarifies purposes and priorities, mobilizes motivation and resources and sets directions of the future. This strategy is relevant in the church and organizations. He also provides comprehensive literature on strategic leadership such as leading with limited authority tactics of administration, toward contextual leadership and the reconciliation of the

²⁹ Johnston M. Political corruption: concepts and contexts. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351351305366>

³⁰ United Nations Development Program, “Reconceptualizing Governance,”

³¹ Richard L. Morrill, *Strategic Leadership, Integrating Strategy and Leadership in Colleges and Universities*, Langham. New York: Toronto, 2010, p.3

conflict of values among others. The magnificent book is very relevant to the study as it provides some solutions on how leaders should reason strategically in their decision making processes. It makes one to appreciate that since political conflicts, come as a result of bad leadership, Morill in this book suggests that, it is important for the leadership to be systematic so that the purposes and priorities are well articulated. Strategic leadership will help to avert political conflicts in a nation. It is also of paramount importance in the studying that it informs as the players of leadership such as political leaders what instruments to use when faced with challenges.

Freeman and Stewart in their article *“Ethical Leadership: Defining the Construct* defines leadership as the art of persuading a follower to want to do the things, activities that the leader sets as goals.³² The article states that ethical leadership is a construct that appears to be ambiguous and includes various diverse elements. The ethical leadership can also be viewed in terms of healing and energizing powers of love, recognizing that leadership is a reciprocal relation with the followers. Leaders’ mission is to serve and support and his passion for leadings comes from compassion.³³ He also describes the Eight of Paul’s qualifications for an overseer has to do with the character and behavior of a leader. All of them seem to have some relationship to the person’s ability to control himself when under pressure.

Paul sees the pressure that may come from different sources as adverse circumstances, temptation, or difficult people against the leadership. He also provides the attributes of a good leader.³⁴ This is important and relevant to the study in that leadership in any sector whether in the political sphere requires to have some or all the attributes of a good leader. The book tries to open up eyes that though leaders may have the attributes required for them, some subjects and/or followers are just born difficult and this group of people may not appreciate what a leader is doing. It makes the leader to be on the alert always to be watchful on the people he is leading. It also suggests that, the presence of difficult people in leadership is likely to bring conflict since the group’s understanding of issues takes time or they may just be critical over everything. George O Folarin, in an article entitled *“Multi-dimensional Approach to crisis Management in the Church”* indicated that while *“conflict”* is generally regarded as a disagreement through which parties perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. Crisis is a higher level of conflict which is a step from breaking parties involved apart.³⁵ He points out that conflict is inevitable, *“we will come across various disagreements, misunderstandings, and distinctions with various views of moral and value stands with one another that will converge in our relationships.”*³⁶ The article also shows that conflict occurs at various times and when it does the church responds by re-examining and redefining doctrines.³⁷ It further indicates that conflict can escalate to crisis. The book is important in the study as it shows that, where two or more people are present, the people have different interests and every person will try to protect his interests. Where such interests are present, it is likely for a disagreement to rise. The book is also significant to the study in that it puts those on leadership to assess those they are leading, their needs, interests and values to avoid from breaking up thereby emanating conflicts. The book is also important as it impliedly refines leaders’ hearts to attain certain attributes as self-control, tolerance as the leader may be dealing with a diverse of people who are trying to protect their needs and interests.

³²Freeman and Stewart *“Ethical Leadership: Defining the Construct*, International Journal of Management and Information Systems-Fourth Quarter 2010, volume 14, number 5, 2006, p.32.

³³ Kouzes, J.M. and Posner B.Z., *Ethical Leaders: an essay about being in love*, journal of Business Ethics, pp479-484

³⁴(1 Timothy 3:2; 3) A part from doctrinal crisis

³⁵ George O.Folarin, *Multi-dimensional Approach to crisis Management in the Church*. In *Llorin Journal of Religious Studies*, vol.6 No.2 2019. Pp19-42

³⁶ Richard J. Krejeir, *“Cultivating Effective Biblical solutions for conflict,”* The Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of church leadership Development, (n.d.) from <http://www.churchleadership.org/pages.asp?pageid=66928>, accessed 23.3.2019, n.p.

³⁷ Edward O. Bragwell, *“The Church in Crisis,”* The Auburn Beacon,(n.d.) from <http://www.aubeacon.com/Articles2012Article-The church in crisis.html>, 29.3.2019,cf. Daniel B. Wallace,” *The Church in crisis: A postmodern Reader,”* O.BibleOrg,from<https://bible.org/article/church-crisis-postmodern reader>, accessed 29.6.2020

Again, Cerit, Y. In a book titled “The influence of servant leadership on restaurant employee engagement” The book focuses on the leadership of a good servant. He asserts that without servant leadership in the church, there can be conflicts. It describes servant leadership as the one which can be characterized by accountability and integrity.³⁸ This type of leadership is important in both the society and at work. Accountability imbeds within the value system that infuses authentic forgiveness and great support and be accountable at working place and even in the church. This book is relevant to the study as it entails the character of a good leader. A good leader must be humble in serving his subjects and opponents. The book is also important as it gives a wider view on the types of leaders required from a diverse angle ranging from a political perspective through a restraint. In the political arena, servant leadership appears to be more material and a pre requisite that every leader must possess as he deals with a wide range of people who possess different values and interests and those values must be seen not entrenched by the leadership. This book is however very important to the study and cannot be left out. Most conflicts have come due to want of servant leadership and this must be the primary purpose for every leader.

The role of the church in peacemaking and reconciliation is strengthened by the fact that the social and political crisis in the society questions radically the message of the gospel. The church’s initiatives for reconciliation were anchored on the concept that peace is the tranquility that flows from right order. When we put right order into the structures of our society, the tranquility that results in is peace. Scheper in a book titled “*Women war and Religion: An Overview*”, observes that many people, however, perceive peace as the absence of war or violence.³⁹ In this model, peace is seen as the transformation of contextual and destructive interactions into more co-operative and constructive existence.

The Church’s charisma and likewise her unique nature *vis-à-vis* reconciliation, at whatever level needs to be achieved, lies in the fact that she always goes back to that reconciliation at the source. For by reason of her essential mission, the Church feels an obligation to go to the roots of the conflict, in order to bring healing and to re-establish, so to speak, an equally original reconciliation which will be the effective principle of all true reconciliation. The book is relevant to the study in the sense that it emphasizes that the church has a great role to ensure reconciliation in conflicts.

The book gives an overview of the church’s mission which is to bring peace, hope and healing in times of conflicts. Therefore this material is very important to the study and should be used by leaders in political systems. Kerman, in a book titled *A social-psychological approach to conflict analysis and resolution*’ points out that the Church has the mission of proclaiming this reconciliation.⁴⁰ In the context of the change now taking place on the continent, the church has a role to play in reducing or eliminating all together the root causes of simmering or open conflicts and effecting true peace.

Therefore, Kerman’s book is a ‘must’ consult book on the mission of the church to mediate in conflicts. The book enables readers to enjoy the church mission where there is a looming conflict. In this democratic dispensation the world is changing and new events are unfolding every day. The church should be on the watch tower to build efforts to eliminate conflicts.

Magesa, Laurenti. In an article titled *Religious Leaders, Peacemaking and Social Change: Some Theological Perspective*, observes that, one way of effecting true peace is by becoming agents of peace-building and reconciliation.⁴¹

³⁸Cerit, Y. *The influence of servant leadership on restaurant employee engagement*. Journal of Business Ethics, 2014, pp.453-464

³⁹Scheper, E “*Women war and Religion: An Overview*”, in World Conference on Religion and Peace, 2002. P. 67

⁴⁰Kelman, H). *A social-psychological approach to conflict analysis and resolution*’, in D. Sandole, S.Byrne, ISandole-Staroste, & J. Senehi (Eds.), *Handbook of conflict analysis and resolution*2008, p. 124

⁴¹Magesa, Laurenti *Religious Leaders, Peacemaking and Social Change: Some Theological Perspective.*, 1996, p. 98

It is evident to note the characteristics and skills of a successful mediator in conflict situations, in our case, the church. He says that the church has impartiality regarding issues of dispute; it commands respect of and is acceptable to all protagonists; it has the knowledge and skill to deal out with challenging issues of conflict. The book also talks about forgiveness and reconciliation in mediation and conflict resolution. He says that in reconciliation there are diverse views as to whether forgiveness is part of reconciliation or not.

f) The Role of the Church in Conflict Resolution

Another important work, that I have gone through concerning assessing the role of the church in conflict resolution on political governance in Malawi, is a booklet entitled “*Political corruption: concepts and contexts*” by Rutledge.⁴² This article is important as it reveals that although the issues of governance had a different approach in every context, there are some factors very common in nature that still hinder the full participation of governance. Therefore, the book suggests that there are two interpretations of governance and sets forth different elements of good governance that guarantee the achievement of growth and development. This immense material by Rutledge shows the economic perspective of good governance, capacity, effectiveness and efficiency as the significant elements. The book also views the socio-political perspective as major elements of governance which include: human rights, democracy as well as a responsiveness and accountability.⁴³ The book is an ideal article which displays the forms of governance and the association between such dualistic approaches that would impact significantly on the concept of governance and management of issues.⁴⁴ This is important to this study in that it has information on approaches in dealing with issues relating to governance on a diverse approach.

At all times it is the duty of the church to express its views on the affairs of the society and in all humility to pronounce what it believes to be a Christian judgment on matters affecting the life of the people of the land. To remain silent would be a betrayal of the church’s faith in Christ as the Lord of all mankind by whom our lives individually and corporately are judged and by whom alone they can be well ordered.⁴⁵ The book is very significant to the study in that it confirms the position of the church expressing the fact that the church has not remained silent since time immemorial to speak against social injustices arising from political conduct. It also affirms the duty of the church in times of conflicts in political governance. Therefore, this book is of material importance.

Kenneth R. Ross in his book titled, *Christianity in Malawi, A Source Book*, says that, the Synod is deeply concerned at political developments which have taken place in Nyasaland since federation was instituted and the effects of these upon the people. There is no gainsaying that Federation imposed against the will of the majority has produced a deep and widespread feeling of unrest which is like a poison among the people, destroying race relations and leaving bitterness and hate where trust and love prevailed.⁴⁶ The book is of material significance. It seeks to specify the point that, Presbyterian Church has also been in the forefront to fight against injustices in this country. Throughout the history of this nation, the country has gone through various civil and political unrest and the church in all situations has taken a role to indulge itself through nonpartisan processes to bridge the gap and bring

⁴²Johnston M. *Political corruption: concepts and contexts*. Rutledge. , 2017, p6. See also <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351351305366>

⁴³ Johnston M. *Political corruption: concepts and contexts*. Rutledge. , 2017, p6. See also <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351351305366>

⁴⁴ Sarah R. The benefits of good governance to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) In South Africa: A view on top 20 and bottom 20 JSE listed companies. *Problems and perspectives in Management*, 15 (4)pp 271-279. [https://doi.org/10.211511/ppm.15\(4-1\).2017.11](https://doi.org/10.211511/ppm.15(4-1).2017.11)

⁴⁵ Kenneth R. Ross, *Christianity in Malawi, A Source Book*, ISBN 978-99960-60-88-5, p 251.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

peace between conflicting parties. This is also another achievement that the book by Ross will play throughout the study process.⁴⁷

Both the Catholic and Presbyterian churches have written on the importance of the church in taking part in resolving political conflict. In the pastoral letters “*Living Our Faith*” and “*Choosing Our Future*” respectively, they emphasize the mission of the church in proclaiming the gospel to give sound teaching and doctrine and instruct people to repent. They say that in every age and culture are called to this conversion and to respond in commitment and faith.⁴⁸ The book by Ross is a must have book and very relevant to the study. As can be viewed from the Christian perspective, the social injustices are a result of a failure to have Christ. Sin is the root cause. Only if people “repent” (*change*), their hearts, they will be able to desist from ungodly conduct which mostly is the source of most conflicts. However, this book should be included in the study.

Augustine C. Musopole further writes in his book, about the threats the democracy which among them is the failure by political parties to do democratic talk, lack of respect for the constitution, failure to understand and respect the separation of powers vis-aviz the State, Judiciary and Legislature.⁴⁹ Surely, this is an important article in the study since it outlines most underlying factors that constitute good governance. Most political conflicts emanate from the failure by political leaders to exercise and adhere to clear constitutional mandates hence igniting anger from their opponents and civil society.

Also, Johnston M. in his article entitled “*Political corruption: concepts and contexts*,” described the role of the church in political governance. He continues to say that the church faces a lot of challenges in resolving governance issues in a country where there are many political parties. According to him, Governance of the country sometimes becomes weak whenever there are is political conflict. This wonderful book cannot be left out in this research as it is very relevant. It encourages the church to take a role in order to improve its participation on governance issues using its leadership as a church. The book suggests that the church should not just sit and wait for conflicts to reach at its climax. The church should be encouraged to mediate in political conflicts of a country.

According to the literature covered in the present study, all scholars writing from a theological perspective do include forgiveness in the process of reconciliation. Reconciliation is part of an overarching forgiveness, reconciliation in this case referring to restored relations in behavior and forgiveness to a deeper transformation based on God having forgiven mankind and that we can extend forgiveness to others. He further states that, within the framework of reconciliation, “forgiveness is at the heart of reconciliation”.

The book is important and relevant to the topic as it emphasizes the stand to be taken by the church in times of conflicts. It also puts clear main elements to be considered during conflict resolution such as forgiveness and reconciliation. The book gives reference to the origin of reconciliation as God Himself who has forgiven mankind and we too can forgive one another. It is also important as it makes it clear that the church has special skills to be a mediator and resolve conflicts.

B. Conflict Resolution and Conflict Transformation

The approach of conflict management as proposed by Lederach shows an alternative to the conventional perspective of conflict resolution and conflict transformation. Conflict resolution implies the goal of ending undesired conflicts in a relatively short timeframe, focusing on the content of conflict as something that is disputed and which gives rise to conflict in the first place. Conflict transformation, however, professes the goal of transforming the conflict into something desired in a longer timeframe, focusing not only on the content of the conflict but more importantly on the context and relationship between the actors involved.

⁴⁷Ibid, 38.

⁴⁸Augustine C. Musopole, “A Theological Vision for Malawi,” *Religion in Malawi*, 6(1996), 3-11

Therefore, compared with the conflict resolution perspective, the crucial innovations of the conflict transformation approach include, therefore, adding to the goal of solving undesired disputes a more important one of building something desired, shifting the focus from issue of the conflict onto contextual relationship that underlies the conflict, and expanding the relatively short period of time to deal with the conflict into a longer timeframe.⁵⁰ Intractable conflicts cannot be resolved unless the underlying causes are addressed. This can be done in a number of ways, but must occur on two levels. First, it is important to address the substantive issues that give rise to conflict in the first place, such as unbalanced distributions of wealth and power (as existed in Rwanda or Northern Ireland). The second task, which is normally harder to tackle, is that of diffusing the fear, hatred, and other negative emotions that make a conflict intractable and all too often deadly.⁵¹ Efforts to forge national reconciliation, such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, are therefore extremely important in creating a successful, enduring peace processes.

C. Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a long-term process that covers all activities intended to promote peace and overcome violence. As a result, it is plausible to note that the overall aim of peace building is to prevent violent outbreaks of conflicts or to make sustainable transformation of violent conflicts into peaceful action. Thus, conflicts can be dealt in a constructive and peaceful manner.

According to Wirmark, managing ethnic conflicts is elusive because interest groups sometimes want to benefit from the same conflicts they want to manage. She cites the example of Kenya's political establishment, which during the ethnic clashes of 1992 and 1997 exhibited partisanship in solving the clashes. As stated earlier, political affiliation is one of the causes of ethnic conflicts.⁵² Thus, Wirmark's assertion is probably true. Indeed in 1992 and 1997, there was the General Election that overly used ethnic blocs. It was noted that ethnic conflicts occurred in areas perceived to oppose the then ruling party, Kenya African National Union (KANU). In such scenario, management of ethnic conflict by the government of the day was unjustifiable due to its lack of neutrality. It is with this apparent lack of neutrality by the government that religious groups and churches come in to consolidate peace and to support structures that tend to support peace.

Reconciliation after conflicts informs structural actions to identify and support structures which would tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse in conflict.⁵³ He further notes that reconciliation implies building structures for peace in all phases of a conflict, not merely after the violent phase has been replaced by a fragile peace. Structures that contribute to strengthening and solidifying peace can be institutions that offer forms for peaceful conflict resolution or that prevent violence, such as church institutions.

Overview of Scheper on *women, war and religion*, highlights prevention of violent conflicts by underlining need to explore newer approaches. Further, he notes that peaceful solutions to violent conflicts need to be sought especially those that deal with communities at different levels. Maina in her study on ethnicity among the communities of Nakuru district discusses various strategies of managing ethnic

⁵⁰Gopin, M. 'World Religion as a Source of Conflict and Conflict Transformation in International Relations', A paper presented. (2001. P.90

⁵¹Lederach, J. P Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. Washington D.C. US Institute of Peace, 1997 p171

⁵²Wirmark, Bo . Government-NGO Relations in Preventing Violence, Transforming Conflict and Building Peace. Report from a Conference in Mariefred, Sweden, September 4-6. Peace Team Forum.1997, p65

⁵³Boutros-Ghali, Boutros "An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping,17 June 1992, (A/47/277-S/24111), 1992. p21

conflicts. These include channeling of power to methods that attract unity such as one party state; reallocation of resources to the less disadvantaged; enforcement of laws that call for co-existence into various communities and use of a national language policy and common ideology. Maina seems to think about ethnic conflicts from the national scale, hence her strategies of one party state. She fails to realize that ethnic conflicts start at the grassroots where people interact in their daily chores. She further proposes reallocation of resources to less disadvantaged but he does not suggest the reallocation process.

All these are geared towards attaining equality, but equality without peaceful coexistence will rarely stand. Generally, the works under study in this section offered insights in to the research by identifying and discussing some of the methods that are used in reconciliation. However, the works have not evaluated critically the roles of the churches in reconciliation which is the main task of this research.

D. The Role of Church in Reconciliation

Though reconciliation may require different efforts to deal with grievances and injustices in the past, it is very much forward-looking in nature. As argued above, reconciliation also aims at achieving desired purposes in the future such as promoting human rights, fostering democracy, and building the rule of law. Even the definition of reconciliation as restoring the right relationship between people should not be (mis)interpreted as going backward to a pre-conflict situation.⁵⁴ Instead, restoration in this reconciliation context can be understood as restoring some transcendental, Platonist concept of justice and right relationship. To reconcile in this sense means to build relationships based on certain norms. This understanding is also a particularly distinctive feature of religious conception of reconciliation. This forward-looking nature of reconciliation well complements the transformation component in the conflict transformation framework.

Reconciliation may become a desired goal in its own merit in divided societies. It may also represent a pragmatic way to deal with profound changes involving past injustices in order to achieve some other desired purposes such as building peace, nurturing democracy, promoting human rights, and delivering justice, among others.⁵⁵ Thanks to the great currency that reconciliation has gained recently, there is already a very rich literature on different efforts for reconciliation. They mainly involve truth acknowledgment, reparations, retributive justice, apology, and forgiveness. No single form of reconciliation effort is perfect or satisfactory to all circumstances and parties involved. Sometimes hard choices have to be made in deciding whether one form is preferable to another, depending on the specific and temporal circumstance of each conflict and society.

Like the conception of change in the conflict transformation perspective, reconciliation can be present and necessarily prescriptive at all personal, relational, structural, and cultural levels. At the personal level, for example, repentance and apology from perpetrators have psychological effects and discourse impacts on the self-perception, thus shaping the identities, of both victims and perpetrators. Apology also serves to build the unity between victims and perpetrators, a change desired in the relational dimension of conflict transformation. At the structural and cultural dimensions, other efforts for reconciliation such as restitution in the forms of negotiated discourse and constructed narrative could contribute to building new cultural mechanism that can handle conflicts.

In sum, the concept of reconciliation can fit into the framework of conflict transformation and has great potential to complement practices for transformational strategies.⁵⁶The role of the church in peacemaking

⁵⁴Doyle, M. W and Sambanis, N. *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations*. Princeton University Press.2006. p67

⁵⁵Lederach, J. P (1997). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington D.C. US Institute of Peace, p87

⁵⁶Zartman, I. *Ripe for Resolution*. New York: Oxford University Press 2009. P.122

and reconciliation is strengthened by the fact that the social and political crisis in the society questions radically the message of the gospel. Peace is the tranquility that flows from right order.⁵⁷ When we put right order into the structures of our society, the tranquility that results is peace. Many people, however, perceive peace as the absence of war or violence. In reconciliation efforts by the church, peace is seen as the transformation of contextual and destructive interactions into more co-operative and constructive existence.

The Church's charisma and likewise her unique nature vis-à-vis reconciliation, at whatever level it needs to be achieved, lies in the fact that she always goes back to that reconciliation at the source. For by reason of her essential mission, the Church feels an obligation to go to the roots of the conflict, in order to bring healing and to re-establish, so to speak, an equally original reconciliation which will be the effective principle of all true reconciliation. Therefore, the Church has the mission of proclaiming this reconciliation.⁵⁸

The community level of reconciliation is first and foremost characterized by the massive numbers of people it is composed of. The actors are the population of the country; however, as no project can reach everyone, the methods attempt to involve leaders for the community who then in turn spread knowledge to their communities or villages. A strong process of reconciliation at the community level will be a difficult threat to belligerent leaders: experiencing constructive relationships with former enemies with the sufferings of the past in mind – the peace of the present will be too precious to waste on further war. To use the principle of Lederach's peace building: this is the 'bottom-up' approach to reconciliation. By strengthening and empowering the local actors for peace, the foundations are laid for national reconciliation. In all societies there are capacities for peace. However, due to the acute nature of conflict that overwhelms.⁵⁹

In the context of the change now taking place on the continent, the church has a role to play in reducing or eliminating all together the root causes of simmering or open conflicts and effecting true peace. One way of effecting true peace is by becoming agents of reconciliation.⁶⁰ It is therefore prudent to enumerate the characteristics and skills of a successful mediator in conflict situations, in our case, the church.⁶¹ Indeed the church has impartiality regarding issues of dispute; it commands respect of and is acceptable to all protagonists; it has the knowledge and skill to deal out with challenging issues of conflict. These characteristics inform the study in its pursuit of structuring the complementary approach.

Magesa equates peace with conflict transformation and resolution. He maintains that peace is achieved only when the root causes of the differences of conflicting relationships are explored and resolved. He defines reconciliation as "the act by which people who have been apart and split off from one another begin to stroll or match together again".⁶² He equates reconciliation with conflict resolution, but in his view, reconciliation has dimensions and more profound implications, because it makes an individual to transcend the ethnic affiliation and embrace the sense of love, which unites all people.

⁵⁷Sindole, J. "Conflict Resolution: A Unique U. S. Role for the 21st Century" in *Electronic Journal, US Foreign Policy Agenda: Preventive Diplomacy*. Vol. 1 No. 19, 2010. P234

⁵⁸Lederach, John Paul, *Building Peace—Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: US Institute for Peace. 1997. p109

Lederach, John Paul (1997). *Building Peace—Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: US Institute for Peace, 1997.P98

⁵⁹Okullu, H. *Quest for Justice: An Autobiography of Bishop John Okullu*. Kisumu: Kenya: Shalaji Publishers.2007. P117.

⁶⁰Magesa, Laurenti. (1996). *Religious Leaders, Peacemaking and Social Change: Some Theological Perspective., In Peacemaking and Democratization in Africa; Theoretical Perspectives and Church Initiatives*. Assefa, H. & G. Wachira (eds), Nairobi: EAEP, 1996.p90.

E. Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed a historical overview of reconciliation and the church's role. According to the chapter the way of appreciating the efficacy of African indigenous methods of reconciliation is by incorporating them in the process of reconciliation. The chapter that follows is Chapter Three which presents the theoretical framework to the existing body of knowledge in the area of church in promoting reconciliation in 2019-2020 post-election violence in Malawi gathered by the study instruments.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Given the complex nature of Malawian conflict, it is significant to analyze from several or different theoretical perspectives in order to attain an understanding that can be obtained by applying a combination of the following theoretical framework that are presented in this study such as the emerging psycho-social analytical framework, functionalism and international humanitarian approach. Theologically, the principles of reconciliation and forgiveness are critical in a process of conflict resolution. In a conflict, the parties in a dispute are trying to restore an old broken relationship which has been shattered by the parties' differences, ambitions, attitudes and goals. Jesus Christ the origin of peace and reconciliation teaches us to forgive. Reconciliation seeks to establish a positive and sustainable peace between people involved in armed conflict.

This study is guided by the theories of conflict transformation. At the very least, the foundations of a theory of conflict transformation have now been laid. Nevertheless, it is also true that a wide variety of theoretical approaches are in use among different schools of thought and in the field. These theories reflect both differing paradigms and different types of intervenors (state and non-state, internal and external). Different authors, practitioners use basic concepts and terms in inconsistent ways. In particular, it is not clear whether the term conflict transformation is intended to describe the field broadly, and thus be synonymous with conflict management and conflict resolution, or whether conflict transformation instead characterized by distinct elements that can be differentiated from the other two approaches.⁶³ Conflict transformation theorists argue that contemporary conflicts require more than the reframing of positions and the identification of win-win outcomes. The very structure of parties and relationships may be embedded in a pattern of conflictual relationships that extend beyond the particular site of conflict.⁶⁴ Conflict management theorists see violent conflicts as an ineradicable consequence of differences of values and interests within and between communities. The propensity to violence arises from existing institutions and historical relationships, as well as from the established distribution of power. Resolving such conflicts is viewed as unrealistic: the best that can be done is to manage and contain them, and occasionally to reach a historic compromise in which violence may be laid aside and normal politics resumed. Conflict management is the art of appropriate intervention to achieve political settlements, particularly by those powerful actors having the power and resources to bring pressure on the conflicting parties in order to induce them to settle.⁶⁵ On the other hand, conflict resolution theorists reject the view of political power conflict notion. They argue that in communal and identity conflicts, people cannot compromise on their fundamental needs. They further argue that, it is possible to *transcend* conflicts if parties can be helped to explore, analyze, question and reframe their positions and interests. They argue also that conflict resolution makes emphasis on intervention taken by skilled but powerless third parties working unofficially with the parties to foster new thinking and new relationships. It seeks to explore on the grassroots for the conflict and identifies creative solutions that the parties may have missed in their commitment to entrenched positions. Where the concept of reconciliation is understood as that specific process that takes place along approaches of conflict resolution.

⁶³Hugh Miall, Conflict transformation: A Multi-Dimensional Task, pp2-3.

⁶⁴Hugh *Ibid*

⁶⁵Hug *Ibid*

John Paul Lederach in a book titled *Building Peace—Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* asserts that reconciliation is a condition that goes beyond the conflict. However, the approach adopted in this study focuses on reconciliation as the last challenge to reach in order to sort out a conflict⁶⁶. The book argues that as long as you have people previously confronted not reconciled, the conflict is still there and violence is likely to flourish anytime. Liberal peace theory thus underscores that reconciliation is fundamental in conflictive contexts in order to get people living together in long term peace.⁶⁷ This Liberal peace theory shows the relevance of reconciliation by dealing with the conflict cycle from the structural causes of the struggle to its resolution and the assurance of a peaceful living together. According to Lederach, peace theory best explains the role of the church in building relationships through phases.⁶⁸

Conflict management is the positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence. Rather

The first phase of the cycle is known as conflict prevention, and it copes with structural and cultural violence and attempts not to allow those to turn into direct violence. Usually, a trigger (be it political, social, economic or military) is the last and most tangible cause for violence to erupt. Once violence breaks out, academics introduce into conflict Management or peacemaking, efforts that basically seek to end violence and minimize its consequences. A ceasefire and/or a peace agreement end with direct violence. At this point, experts of peace studies face post conflict situations, seeking first to consolidate a non-violent state by disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating soldiers in society, which is also known as peacekeeping or peace-enforcing process⁶⁹. This phase takes the society to a state of negative peace, which consists of a state where the eruption of violence will hardly happen but the previously confronted communities has not yet resolved the structural causes of the conflict. From liberal peace theory, the church, during the 2008-2013 post conflict periods, initiated the process of reconciliation from a comprehensive search of the probable cause of conflict. This is geared towards unearthing unbiased probable cause of the conflict.⁷⁰ Enquiry disregards ethnic, political or social affiliation because its ultimate end is to get the truth of the matter⁷¹. From liberal peace theory, the church plays a leading role towards facilitating reconciliation by picking submission and confession which is applicable to peoples within the conflict⁷². These entail a sincere contrite acceptance of the mistakes done and readiness to accept forgiveness. The basic tenet that informs this process is the truth about his or her involvement in the conflicts. Truth entails the involved parties or ethnic communities disclosing all mistakes and heinous acts done⁷³. Reconciliation entails bridging the gap between the warring communities by capitalizing on the commonalities that act as the connectors.⁷⁴

⁶⁶Lederach, John Paul). *Building Peace—Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: US Institute for Peace, 1999. p145

⁶⁷Yamano T. & Deininger K. (2005). *Land Conflicts in Kenya: Causes, Impacts, and Resolutions*. FASID Discussion Paper 2005-12-002

⁶⁸Lederach, John Paul *Building Peace—Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: US Institute for Peace, 1997. p45

⁶⁹Tajfel, H. *Human groups and social categories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. p59

⁷⁰Brown, S.: Donor responses to the 2008 Kenyan crisis: Finally getting it right? In: *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, July 2009

⁷¹ Assefa, H. Peace and Reconciliation as a paradigm: A Philosophy of Peace and its implications for Conflict, Governance and Economic Growth in Africa, in *Peacemaking and Democratization in Africa; theoretical perspectives and church initiatives*: Nairobi: EAEP., 1996 p110

⁷²Kobia, Samuel, *Healing the World: Working Together with Religion in Global Society* Chicago: International Council of Christians and Jews 2005...p.162

⁷³ Nation Reporter Did Church Leaders Fail Kenyans? *Daily Nation*, 3. (January 28th 2008).

⁷⁴Ntabona, Adrien. "Towards a Balanced Modernization of Traditional Institutions for Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts in Africa: Drawing Lessons from Bashingantahe Institution". In *A Seminar Report, Traditional Institutions for Conflict Resolution and Promotion of Peace in the Great Lakes and the Horn of African Regions.*, Nairobi: Life Peace Institute: 2001.p69

The success of reconciliation depends, at least in part, on assisting antagonists to put their pasts of violence and estrangement behind them. Reconciliation is currently applied on a variety of levels, from small encounter groups, to high profile truth commissions to Presidential apologies for past wrongs.

Liberal peace theory succinctly suits the study of how the church addressed the question of reconciliation in Malawi's 2019 post conflict period. The theory underscores the question whether such conflict should be regarded as something rational, constructive, and socially functional or something irrational, pathological, and socially dysfunctional. The church, during the 2019-20 post-election period, utilized non-violent ways of resolving ethnic conflicts. The Catholic Church, through the episcopal conference under the leadership of Rt. Bishop Thomas Msunsa, made it clear that violence is evil and should be shunned at all cost.⁷⁵ This promoted dialogue as the way of reconciling warring parties. Such parties would come together and reach consensus favorable to both sides⁷⁶. Moreover, the church in the Malawi 2019-20 and 2012 post conflict period widely employed complementary approach that involves different methods which target diverse aspects of human life to achieve a long lasting solution. The socio-religio-cultural aspects of human being are treated and given the necessary attention that had been excluded from the previous attempts to bring peace.⁷⁷

With reference to the views of liberal peace theory, community reconciliation processes are greatly complicated if the victims have been exposed to the trauma and other horrific incidents or situations of war. In many conflicts, innocent community members suffer from forced displacement, destruction of property, extreme poverty, sickness, displacement, genocide, mass murder, and separation from family.

On the other hand, Malawi did not experience such horrific and dangerous situations in the post conflict elections of 2019-20. Although this was the case, it should not be tolerated for the country to reach to that extent. Indeed people experienced shootings of some civilians, police officer killed and allegations of rape at Nsundwe by police officers deemed to have been on duty to keep peace and order. If such situations were left uncontrolled, the situation would result into a crisis. Comparatively, it is evident in other societies in conflict; civilians are used in asymmetrical warfare to act as human shields to hinder the attacks of the other side.

The liberal peace theory diverges further on whether reconciliation is an end or a means, an outcome or a process; whether it is politically neutral or unavoidably ideological, and the extent to which it is conservative or transformative in orientation. The theory explores conflict resolution with the intention of highlighting both the innovative, and essentially hopeful, dimensions of reconciliation and it is more contested and controversial aspects. The liberal peace theory reinforces the argument that conflict engenders interaction at a level more intense than that of competition. Although, conflict, competition, and cooperation are inherently interdependent, conflict occurs when competing groups' goals, objectives, needs or values clash and aggression, although not necessarily violence is a result.

⁷⁵ Thomas Nsusa, *PAC, Conference paper*, Mangochi, Diocese, 23. .4.2020.

⁷⁶Did Church Leaders Fail Kenyans? *Sunday Nation*, (Nairobi), `28th January, 2008.

⁷⁷Abu-Nimer, M (ed *Reconciliation, Justice and Coexistence: Theory and Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press,, 2011.p89

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction

This dissertation aims at assessing the role of the church in conflict resolution on political governance in Malawi within the discipline of missiology of the church. The study therefore will adopt a process of doing 'theology' by creating a dialogue between theological theory and practice.

The study uses an approach to practical theology which permits a continual interplay between theology and practice or experience of conflict and conflict resolution. The study also follows dialogical approach of Gerald Hawkes (ITSA2000). This method employs a process of theory building which involves the exercise of creative imagination and which intuitively a hypothesis. In this study the theory and experience of conflict and practice of conflict resolution interacts with theology. The hypothesis is then tested by the practice and analysis of the practice. The resultant analysis of the practice also informs the theology. As Hawkes argues, the hypothesis or theory always remains open to revision.

In order to study and assess the role of the church in conflict resolution on political governance in Malawi a case study will be used. These case studies are based on the three major political conflicts during the multiparty rule in Malawi. The description and analysis of the case studies provides a practical and theoretical basis for the study into the role of the church in socio-ecclesial and political conflict.

B. Sampling method

IGNOU states that sampling involves making decisions about which people from the population to be included in the study. A combination of convenient and purposive sampling, as well as simple random sampling will be used during the study.⁷⁸ The study will involve one case study of the presbyterian church, five political parties, 11 church leaders, five political leaders and 10 focus group discussions comprising of 20 members from each group. These samples have been purposively sampled because the study seeks to assess the role of the church in conflict resolution in relation to political governance in Malawi. Convenient and purposive sampling will be used to identify the participants. The respondents to participate in this study will be sampled through the random sampling technique where by sampling takes into account the stratification of the main population into a number of sub populations, each of which is homogeneous with respect to one or more characteristics. Respondents will be drawn through simple random sampling in order to accord each of the sampled institution's programme large class a proportional representation in the study. In simple random sampling, each unit included in the sample has a known and equal chance of being selected for study. Again, every combination of population elements is a sample possibility (Churchill et al., 2010).

C. Sample size

The sample for this study will consist of a total of 222 respondents. 11 church leaders from different churches, 5 political leaders 2 leaders from local organizations and 4 traditional leaders from two districts in the central and southern regions. This means 22 questionnaires will be administered. As for key informant interviews, at least 11 church leaders and 5 political leaders shall be sampled. In all the sampled participants, the study shall try to be gender sensitive.

⁷⁸IGNOU.G. *Research for Distance education [ES 315]. Tools for research*, India. 2009, P34.

D. Research Instruments

The study used both primary and secondary methods for data collection. Primary data was collected through questionnaires, lesson observations, face to face interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs). Questionnaires and interview guides have been described already within the section. While secondary data was collected through document analysis.

In this study, three research tools were designed, for quantitative data - a questionnaire; and for qualitative data – some sections in the questionnaire, interview guides,

a) Quantitative data instrument

The questionnaire was developed and consisted of both open and closed ended questions and it was carefully and clearly constructed for respondents or participants to easily read, understand and complete.⁷⁹ Johnson and Christensen stated that “a questionnaire is a self-reporting data collection instrument that each research participant fills out as part of a research study.”⁸⁰

The questionnaire was administered to students and was chosen as a vehicle that was used to present the questions that the researchers desire respondents to answer. Burns & Bush, indicated that it is an inexpensive way to cover a large geographical area.⁸¹ Questionnaire responses can be highly structured and easily coded and covering the answer to the specific questions and that provides data necessary to explore the area defined by the objectives.⁸²

The questionnaire was designed in a way that some questions were to be quantitative in nature. It will consist of items that were cover the research questions and respondents' demographic variables. The questions will be divided into sections according to the research questions. This will help the researchers to be focused on the topic of study so as to collect the required data. Some questions in the questionnaire will be of Likert type scale in which students will be asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for each of a series of statements. Flat or plain statements will be used and the respondents will be expected to indicate the intensity of their feelings by using agree-disagree responses in a continuum position. The scale will help in capturing the intensity of student's feelings towards the statements claim or assertion.⁸³; since quantitative data describe a phenomenon in a numerical system with the help of different scales of measurement. The experience of people will fit into standard responses to which numerical values will be attached. The data will be presented using figures and some graphs. This will help in simplifying complicated and voluminous data.

b) Qualitative data instruments

a. Interviews

In order to collect qualitative data, face to face interviews with pastors, political party leaders and local people, semi structured interviews were used. Such a method is a means for collecting rich qualitative information.⁸⁴ The semi structured interview allows participants' freedom to tell the human side of the story which may not have been captured by answering the questionnaire. It has been argued that qualitative data from such interviews is often perceived as more credible than

⁷⁹Russ-Eft, D. & Preskill, H.) *Evaluation in Organizations a Systematic Approach: A Systematic Approach to Enhancing Learning, Performance, and Change*. Basic Books, 2009, P19.

⁸⁰Creswell, J. W. *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches* (2 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003, p.120. Creswell, J. W. . *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. (3rd. ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications. 2009, 230.

⁸¹Burns, A. C., & Bush, R. F. . *Marketing Research* (6 ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc, 2010, P.56

⁸²IGNOU.G. *Research for Distance education [ES 315]. Tools for research*, India. 2009, P76.

⁸³Burns, A. C., & Bush, R. F. *Marketing Research* (6 ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc, 2010, P.89).

⁸⁴Russ-Eft, D. & Preskill, H.) *Evaluation in Organizations a Systematic Approach: A Systematic Approach to Enhancing Learning, Performance, and Change*. Basic Books, 2009, P214.

test based quantitative data.⁸⁵ During interviews follow-up questions will be asked where more clarification will be needed. The interviews will be tape recorded upon granted consent and the text will be transcribed verbatim, coded, and analysed to extract the main themes.⁸⁶ Finally, the data will be integrated into the final results of the study.

b. Focus group discussions

Ten focus group discussions were conducted with respondents and church leaders, pastors and political leaders, in which the data will complement the observed classroom practices. 10 groups of 20 leaders per group will be developed in which the members will be randomly sampled from the observed classes, which means two groups will be developed from each observed class. The focus group discussion guide will be semi structured and will basically focus on the observed classroom experiences and questionnaire scales.

c) Data analysis and Theories of Conflict Transformation

a. Qualitative Data

Qualitative data will be analysed using a thematic approach and data analysis tools will be used such as NVIVO/MAXQDA software packages. Data from the open ended questions will be analysed using inductive data analysis where by patterns, themes and categories of analysis will emerge out of the data that will be collected from participants. A simple colour coded system of highlighting will be used to code themes pre-identified in the literature as likely to emerge. A description of patterns and themes from perspective of the participants will be done with an attempt to understand and explain these patterns and themes.⁸⁷ Similarly, data from the interviews, FGD's and Observations, will be transcribed, coded and grouped in terms of major themes.

b. Quantitative Data

Quantitative data which will be collected through questionnaire items with closed ended questions will be coded and responses entered into the statistical package for the social sciences version 17.0 (SPSS). Frequency distributions will be run to facilitate discussion of the data. Tables will be used to summarise the information and percentages will be used to provide answers to research questions.

E. Reliability of the research instruments

A test-retest technique will be used to determine the reliability of the research instruments. Orodho, A.J. in her book titled *Techniques of writing Research Proposals & Reports in Education and Social sciences* observes that Test-retest technique involves administering the same instrument twice to the same group of subjects.⁸⁸ The questionnaires will first be administered to the respondents and their scores will be recorded. The same questionnaires will be administered again to the same respondents after two weeks and the scores will be recorded. Should there be changes in approach, then pretesting to a different group will be done.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p214

⁸⁶ Scandal, A. Basic Market Research, South-Western Cengage Learning, 2010, p.34.

⁸⁷ Merriam, S.B. Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education: Revised and Expanded from Case Study Research in Education. Wiley Publisher, MOE Higher Education Manual 2000

⁸⁸ Orodho, A.J. Techniques of writing Research Proposals & Reports in Education and Social sciences. Maseno: Kanezja HP enterprises, 2008, 220.

F. *Limitations of the study*

The study is limited to the role of church in conflict resolution. The second limitation is that some politicians refused to provide information for their parties. Another limitation is that some churches refused to provide information justified by their stand in the spiritual realm on the perception that a church is not to be involved in politics and lastly, the other main limitation is that this study was conducted during the COVID 19 Pandemic and key players for interviews were not available for information. However, a representation of the sampled participants will be strategically planned to provide an overview of the actual situation. The other challenge might be the time the research will be conducted.

G. *Ethical Considerations*

In line with Punch, concerns about research ethics revolve around various issues such as the issues of harm, consent, privacy and confidentiality of data that are crucial in research.⁸⁹ Punch further said that researchers must ensure the rights of privacy and welfare of the people and communities that form the focus of the study. For this reason, the participants of this study will be told clearly the objectives of the study for them to willingly give consent to participate in the study. The willingness will be expressed through signing the consent paper. Berg agrees with the issue of voluntary involvement in research studies. He says research participants should be voluntarily involved.⁹⁰ To this effect, the researchers will prepare the informed consent slips which will accompany the questionnaire and interview guides. They will be informed of their right to choose whether to participate or not. They will have their freedom to be left alone or to break off the interview or completely withdraw from the study at any time. The participants will further be assured of the confidentiality and they will remain anonymous throughout the research and report writing.

In action research, the term confidentiality is understood as an active attempt to remove from the research records any elements that might indicate the subjects' identities while anonymity means the subject remains nameless.⁹¹ The participants, therefore, will be informed very clearly about the objectives of the research, the procedures and implications of the research findings hence sampled participants' names for this study will not appear anywhere in the report.⁹² Additionally, the collected data will be safeguarded and the dissemination of the results will only focus on the main essence of the study and not the participants.

⁸⁹Punch, M. *The Politics and Ethics of Fieldwork*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 2011, p.167.

⁹⁰Berg, B. *Qualitative Research Methods for the social sciences*. USA: Allyn and Bacon, 2008, p89.

⁹¹ Ibid, p.90.

⁹²Evans, Terry and Jakupec, Victor, *Research Ethics in Open and Distance Education: Context Principles and Issues in Education Commission Report (2017 -2018)* Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2014, p.123.

CHAPTER 5

DATA DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. Introduction

This chapter examines typologies of conflict and conflict transformation, conflict in Malawi where a breakdown is given on the essence of conflict and conflict mapping as well post-election conflicts. The role of church in reconciliation as well as indicators of reconciliation has been reviewed.

B. Conflict and conflict Management

a) Conflict

Conflicts are inevitable for human societies because societies have variations. In the Moral and Political philosophy, it emerges that, human beings are essentially egoistic, that is, they toil and struggle to quench their ends. When consensus and mutuality lack, human beings and other animals tend to fight over the available chances and resources. This eventually could lead to conflict which usually turns violent as the case in Kenya in 1992, 1997 and 2007. A lot has been written about ethnicity as a source of conflict in Africa. It is suggested here that ethnicity per se, in the absence of its political influence, does not cause conflict. Lederach, John Paul in his article titled *Building Peace—Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington: US Institute for Peace observes that there is evidence to suggest that where ethnic conflict has emerged in Africa, there have always been political machinations behind it.⁹³ Inclusion of politics in ethnicity often takes place in a situation characterized by an inequitable structure of access. Such structure gives rise to the emergence of the "in group" and the "out group" or "we" and "them". When the "out group" tries to break the structure of inequality the "in group" responds by building barriers to access that ensure the continuation of its privileged position. At the center of this scenario are the elites who, feeling threatened with exclusion, begin to invoke ethnic ideology in the hope of establishing a "reliable" base of support to fight what are purely personal and/ or elite interests.

Violent ethnic conflicts in Kenya have attracted enormous interest from scholars since the outbreak of ethnic clashes and the underlying causes of their outbreak. Such works include, but not limited to, Gecaga, Kahumbi and Maina. Kahumbi Newton in his article titled *Women Religious Leaders as Actors in Ethnic conflicts Management and Resolution* contends that preventing conflict from re-igniting is important as preventive action before conflict arises or become full-fledged war.⁹⁴ He adds that the goal of post-conflict building is to consolidate peace. But he fails to give out possible ways of preventing conflict from re-igniting.

Gecaga traces the various causes of ethnic clashes in Kenya. Causes include colonialism, which compressed communities into tribal cocoons through their ethnic barriers and isolation. Some ethnic groups were disposed of their land. Gecaga M.G. in his article titled "The Impact of War on Africa Women" points out that there is a created economic disparities into different regions and uneven distributions of social amenities such as schools and hospitals.⁹⁵ In addition, she argues, colonialism promoted ethnic consciousness at the expense of nationalism and patriotism. The other causes of ethnic clashes are opportunism, unfair distribution of economic resources and political power along ethnic lines Haugerud who blames colonialism as the main cause of ethnic awareness. The colonial settlement led to landlessness, creation of tribal reserves and divided society into ethnic entities as

⁹³Lederach, John Paul Building Peace—Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. Washington: US Institute for Peace, 1997.p56

⁹⁴Kahumbi, Newton Maina (2004). *Women Religious Leaders as Actors in Ethnic Conflicts Management and Resolution in Nakuru and Uasin Gishu Districts, Kenya*. Kenyatta University, Unpublished Paper. University

⁹⁵Gecaga .M.G. "The Impact of War on Africa Women" In Getui, M.N. & Ayanga .H (eds) , 2002. Pp53-59

earlier indicated. However, Adedeji, Haugerud and Gecaga in the article titled *Comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts* seem to generalize the effect of colonialism in Africa without considering countries such as Tanzania which have had no serious ethnic clashes.⁹⁶

William Ruto in his study on community relations and democratization processes among the Kalenjin communities of the Rift Valley Province, perceives the outbreak of ethnic clashes in parts of the Rift Valley in 1992 as a demonstration of the bitter ethnic relations due to the perception that Agikuyu grabbed land in Rift Valley.⁹⁷ He argues that the absence of a strong constructive interethnic social structure was a source of ethnic conflicts with ethnic biases, myths, stereotypes and misinformation aggravating ethnic differences. Ruto's argument of the absence of a strong constructive inter-ethnic social structure as the cause of ethnic conflicts underestimates the potentialities of some realities that connect humanity such as religion, belief in rites and rituals.

Rupesinghe in his book titled *Ethnicity and Power in the Contemporary World*, in his argument on ethnicity and power in the contemporary world defines ethnic conflict as cleavages between groups based on differentiations in ethnic identities. He argues that ethnic groups have prejudices and stereotypes about others. These attitudes have not normally turned to conflicts unless manipulated and organized by political leaders and elites who use stereotypes as fertile ground to cultivate support for their political and economic aspirations.

Rupesinghe brings out the issue of manipulation, which institutions such as churches can use their mobilizing force to cultivate a culture of peace and harmony among people. In Kenya, for example, political leaders have been accused of manipulating their ethnic communities to demonstrate against the government when one of their own is connected with corruption or sacked from a government position.⁹⁸

The above reviewed authors have concentrated on giving the possible causes of ethnic conflicts. The varied causes have shown the complexity of ethnic conflict. The historical injustice such as colonialism has been instrumental in disorienting social cohesion due to negativity it planted on different ethnic groups. Economic disparities have also been identified as the possible causes of ethnic conflicts.⁹⁹ Related to economic imbalances is unequal distribution of resources and assets, which actually have run through all the authors as one of the main causes of ethnic conflicts.¹⁰⁰ Cognizance of the fact that there are many causes of ethnic conflicts, the current research, therefore, holds that occurrence of ethnic conflicts is precipitated by lack of effective methods of resolving the varied root causes of ethnic conflicts. Effective methods ensure that every aspect of ethnic conflicts is treated in a special way. The current research, therefore explored the methods of reconciliation employed by the churches in Kenya with the aim of proposing an all-inclusive method.

⁹⁶ Adedeji, A *Comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts*. London: Zed Books. 1981. p98.

⁹⁷ Rutto, S. *Ethnicity as Objects of Hatred: Community Relations and Democratization Process Among the Kalenjin Communities of the Rift Valley Province in Kenya*. In Murunga, G. R. (ed) .2000. 70-107.

⁹⁸ Gopin, M. *Between Eden and Armageddon: The Future of World Religions, Violence and Peacemaking*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. P. 126

⁹⁹ Fox, J. 'Religion as an Overlooked Element of International Relations', *International Studies Review*, Vol, 2011, P. 78

¹⁰⁰ Zartman, G.). *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*. Washington DC: USIP Press, 2004, P. 234

b) The role of the church in conflict resolution in political governance

The church plays an important role in conflict resolution and political governance in Malawi and across the globe. During data collection one of the church leaders in the Livingstonia Synod in the church of CCAP in Malawi had the following views regarding the role of the church and its leaders in conflict resolution on the political governance. During interviews with one of the church leaders in the Livingstonia synod Levi Nyondo who also General Secretary on whether the church has a role to play in resolving conflicts on the governance in Malawi? He reported that, there are different strategies in resolving conflicts.

For instance, he said that, the church looks at the nature of the problem critically. Find out the masterminders to the problem in the church, call the leadership of the church and together, scrutinise the issues and their impact.¹⁰¹ He pointed out that in Malawi, the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) has a duty to call upon the parties involved in the conflict and mediate. PAC was founded in 1992 by religious community and other pressure groups in Malawi. The reason behind the formation of PAC was to enter into dialogue with Kamuzu Banda's presidential committee on dialogue in the transition period from one party to the multiparty system of Government in Malawi. Observations are that PAC as an institution has been in the forefront in resolving conflicts between government and other opposition political parties. PAC represents different churches and religious bodies in Malawi. One of the respondents reported that PAC has been there to resolve conflicts between government and political parties. The church plays a greater role in conflict resolution in a country which is politically disorganised.

Through PAC, it calls for the conflicting political leaders and conducts a round table discussion with them in an effort to resolve the conflict. He observes that the church in Malawi to some extent fuels conflicts between government and political parties as it sometimes takes part in some political activities. For instance, during the post elections demonstrations of the 2019-20 in Malawi, some church leaders more especially in the Blantyre Synod led by its General Secretary Rev. Dr Billy Gama were in the forefront preaching against opposition political parties thereby fuelling enmity between the parties instead of advocating for peace and harmony during the demonstrations. Rev. Dancain Kananji of Chigodi CCAP Church opposed to this kind of stand and preaching taken by the church. As a result, they were called to a disciplinary action and were subsequently suspended from their services. In some instances, church leaders tried to bring party leaders who had different political views and ideologies together to peace talks.¹⁰² However, despite for calling for peace talks, the parties still failed to understand each other. One of the respondents in the study indicated that most of the times since 1964 in the history of the nation, many political leaders such as heads of state do not listen to the grievances of the people.¹⁰³ It is because of this adamancy of the presidency not to pay attention to the views of other people in the political arena that brings conflicts between the political parties and the government.

In my view, the head of state is supposed to pay attention to the people who ushered him to power. It becomes very surprising that a head of state in his capacity as president chooses to follow what his mind tells him to do other than considering what the majority would want to happen. During oral interviews the researcher observed that when the church rebukes about evils that the government is doing, it becomes more surprising to see people from the state machinery giving out handouts in form of money which may consequently bribe the mind of church leaders hence making them failures to practice their role as leaders to bring reconciliation and peace.

¹⁰¹ Int. Levi Nyondo, *General Secretary for Livingstonia Synod*, 15. 4. 2020

¹⁰² Int. Rev Felix Chingota, *the chairperson of PAC*, 26.7.2020. He said that even if you bring the political parties and discuss the issue, the government side seems to be resistant not understanding the other parties.

¹⁰³ Andrew, Likoswe, *Conflict resolutions*, Kenya, 2015, p. 234.

c) The role of the church played in bringing forth the perpetrators of conflict in 2019-2020 post-election demonstrations

The church just like any other organization has the role to play in bringing forth the perpetrators of conflict during elections. However, not all churches can be involved in resolving conflict. During the just ended post-election demonstrations the church played different roles in the reconciliation process in trying to bring peace. During data collection for this study, other respondents reported that some church leaders were siding with the government in power against opposition parties.¹⁰⁴ Other respondents had to report like this “The church acted as a bridge between the perpetrators (political parties and the people).

Malawians had to connect people heart to heart so that they can understand each other at first.¹⁰⁵ However, for the church to bridge the gap created between government and opposition political parties, it is supposed through the clergy such as Bishops, Pastors and Sheikhs to bring the conflicting parties to a reconciliation table in such cases where there is an imminent crisis in the conflict and bring peace among them. A conflict becomes a crisis where opponents begin to kill each other and an act of such actions that may bring about war, genocide, rape and unnecessary murders on the subjects. In those cases the church has a major role to intervene to bring the parties together for reconciliation to avoid displacement of people in the country. The church is also supposed to advise its members to exercise their political rights responsibly. The church also invites all political players to tolerate diversities and encourage dialogue among political leaders when there are misunderstandings. The church ensured that there must be peace in the country by praying for it. Some churches fasted and prayed for peace in the country.¹⁰⁶ This is in line with Vern who pointed out that the church’s role during political conflicts is to pray for peace.¹⁰⁷ However in some churches they had mixed feelings and ideologies on the political conflicts which flared in the country between 2019 and 2020.

Further, the study established that the church mediated conflicts which arose between the political parties in Malawi. During focus group discussions, 35 participants out of 50 reported that the church was involved in the mediation process when the dethroned president Peter Mutharika together with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was in conflict with Lazarus Chakwera, president of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) now the country’s state president. The church through Public Affairs Committee (PAC) involved former president Bakili Muluzi to mediate in the conflict. However, the discussions proved to be futile when the then president Mutharika was not tolerant to the views of the opposition parties.

During the study, 222 participants took part in focus group discussions. The focus group discussions were conducted with a view to extract information and reasoning from people on the ground across Malawi on how they observed and/or perceived the church performing to bring peace during the 2019-20 political tension between political leaders and their supporters. The respondents were properly classified in accordance with their age groups. The age group was arranged in the category of 30-70 years comprising of 50 members per group in the first three categories and 72 respondents in the last category.

¹⁰⁴ Int. Rev. (*Kananji*) Chigodi CCAP, 12. 7. 2020

¹⁰⁵ Int. Rev. (*Mechumu*) 15.07.2020.

¹⁰⁶ Int. Rev. Kachipapa, *Former Nkhoma Synod General Secretary*. 13.6. 20 the church called for its members for prayers for the nation regarding the elections. Some Pentecostal and charismatic churches also fasted and prayed for the peace in the country. They prayed for the political leaders so that there must be harmony among them.

¹⁰⁷ Vern D. *Peaceful conflict Resolutions*, Abuja, 2014, p.67.

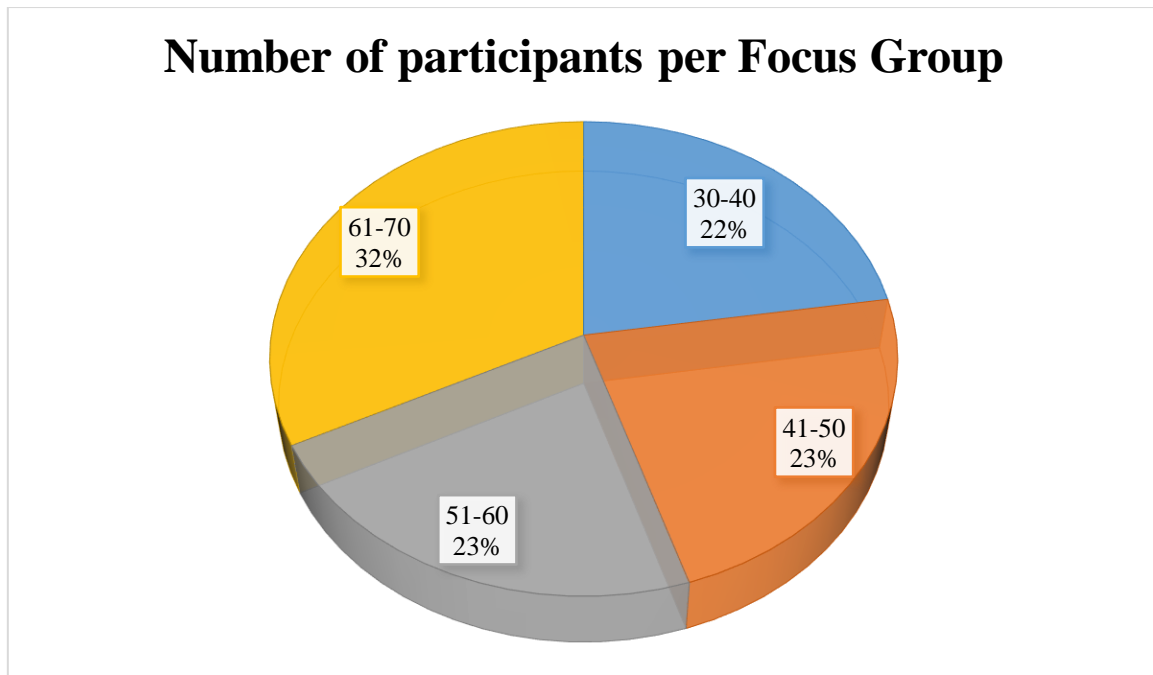


Fig. 1: Number of participants per Focus Group

d) Reconciliation processes in Malawi 2019-20 post conflict period.

The church is one of the organizations that tried to play a vital and pivotal role in the reconciliation process during the postelection demonstrations. But the effort by the church proved futile as the then head of state Professor Peter Mutharika denied to attend meetings organized by religious institutions such as the PAC. Recent history has it that in Malawi, there was a political quagmire that led to political unrest and demonstrations which erupted from the 2019 presidential elections deemed to have been marred by massive irregularities and inconsistencies. The Malawi Congress Party which lost the elections then in May 2019 led by Rev. Dr Lazarus Chakwera followed by Dr. Saulos Klaus Chilima of the United Transformation Movement (UTM) commenced legal action challenging the alleged vote rigging and pursuit to justice. The church during this period encouraged the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) to have dialogue with political leaders of different political parties. This is where they wanted the electoral commission together with the then government and the Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC) for discussions.¹⁰⁸ The church was on a watch as HRDC continued to put pressure on the Mutharika regime to hold peaceful discussions over the issue of peace talks. During the political unrest, a number of businesses in Mzuzu and Lilongwe were negatively affected due to rioting and subsequently looting.¹⁰⁹

The Government showed more reluctance to have the talks and listen to any political leader or organization with an intention of bringing a long lasting solution to the political conflict. It has been observed that a great number of church members was largely involved and participated in the demonstrations.¹¹⁰ The researcher observed that many church members together with their leaders were also involved in the post-election demonstrations.¹¹¹ However, despite the unstable situation created by the demonstrations in the country, government remained adamant in accepting views from other political parties in the opposition.

¹⁰⁸ Malawi Electoral Commission magazine, 2019, Vol, 17. P.23.

¹⁰⁹ Malawi News Paper, Vol 346, p.4

¹¹⁰ Int. focus Group discussion with members of Cavalry Family Church (CFC)

¹¹¹ Int. Fr Kambalame, Catholic Institute, Blantyre, 14.7.2020

Encouraging people to connect at local and international levels by most churches in Malawi is another process the church plays in peaceful reconciliation during political conflicts. During the post-election demonstrations, the church engaged political parties into discussions over the election irregularities. Some church organizations such as PAC engaged all parties involved such as political group alliances and HRDC to cooperate and being tolerant and listen to others' views.¹¹² However, not much was done to bring peace since there was still tension as the electoral results were not accepted and challenged by the MCP, UTM, HRDC, Malawi Law Society and many other civil society organizations.

e) Peace building and Reconciliation Strategies by the Church

The Public Affairs Committee and the Episcopal Conference of Malawi, a membership comprising different churches and faith organizations, were on the forefront in fostering peace using different methods and processes. Reports by Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) show that submission and confession that involve a person in accepting their wrong doing and subsequently owning them up in public was the most common form of reconciliation. This was followed by mediation, implied dialogue, peace workshops and peace visits.¹¹³ Submission and confession involve an absolution by church ministers. Mediation requires church ministers to be intermediaries between the conflicting parties. Dialogue calls for the facilitation of friendly interaction with conflicting communities.

The church has also been organizing peace workshops and peace visits.¹¹⁴ The peace visit involves members of different churches to pay another church a visit and engaging in dialogue over the causes of conflict and how peace can be achieved¹¹⁵. For instance, engaging in peace races and participating in cultural activities. In addition, holding ball games together, organizing inter-communities, debates in schools and institutions facilitated peace. Intermarriages and holding interdenominational prayers were also cited as approaches used by the church. The failure of the peace actors especially local NGOs to include the local people and communities in resolving conflicts contributed to ineffectiveness of the methods involved.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Babblers, Hudson, *Introduction to conflict resolution strategies*, 2009, p.78.

¹¹³ *Catholic Commission for Justice Peace*, 30.7. 2020

¹¹⁴ *National Elections Monitoring Unit (NEMU), Courting Disaster: A Report on the Ethnic Clashes*. Nairobi: NEMU, 1993.

¹¹⁵ Brock-Utne, *Birgit Educating for Peace. A Feminist Perspective*. New York/Oxford/Toronto/Sydney/Paris/ Frankfurt: Pergamon Press, 1985. p44

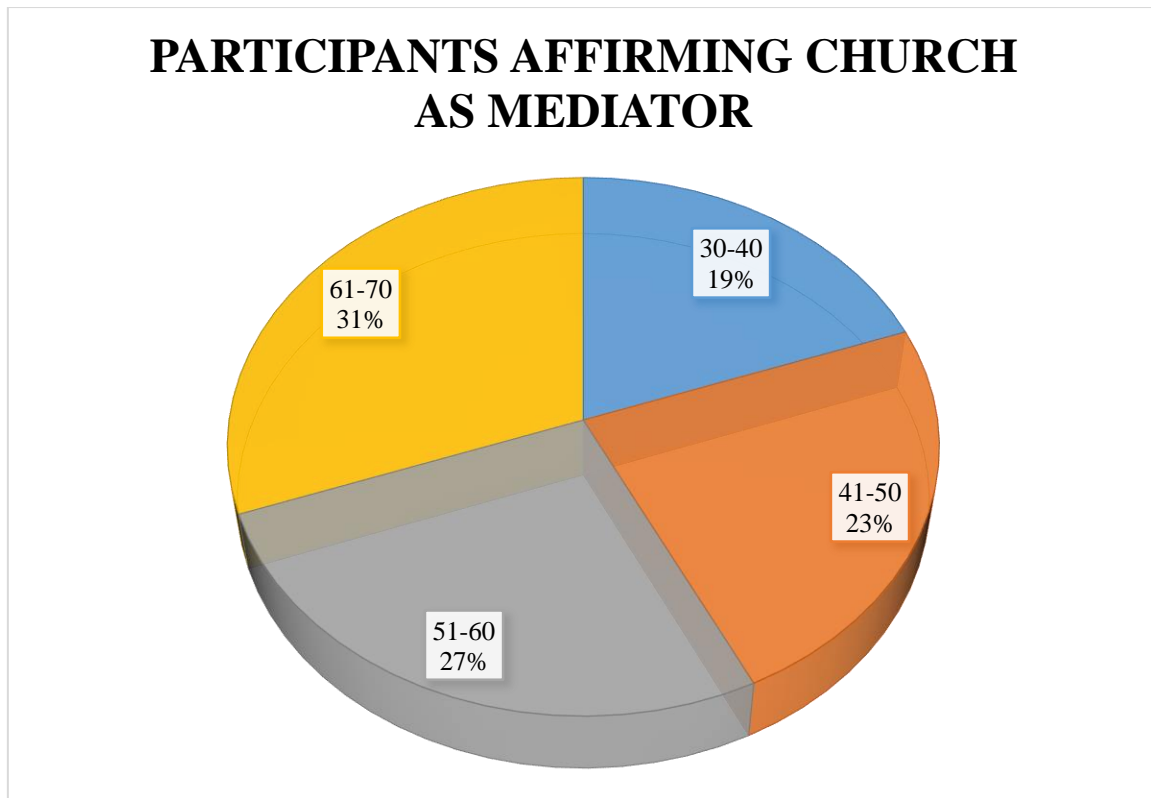


Fig. 2: PARTICIPANTS AFFIRMING CHURCH AS MEDIATOR

Participants in the age group of 30-40 affirmed their position that the church took necessary steps to act as a bridge in mediating between the conflicting parties. This represents 19% of the total number of participants during the discussions. Twentythree (23%) of age group 41-50, 23% of age group 51-60 and 32% of age group 61-70 also concurred with the former category. The focus groups at Calvary Family Church in Zomba, Chigodi CCAP, Mphasaweni in traditional authority Kachere in Dedza and Chiseka at Mitundu in Lilongwe district confirmed that the church played a major role in the conflict resolution. They indicated that, one of the responsibilities taken by the church was to pray for the nation's peace and its leaders.

Therefore, the church through PAC called for a dialogue on the political opponents. It is suggested that the church has a significant part in political governance to bring meaningful transformation to the nation without any violence. The focus groups echoed similar sentiments that, since the Dr. Banda regime prior to the referendum in 1993, the church has been there to bring change. It was the church through the catholic Bishops that wrote a Pastoral letter using scripture and refer them to good governance. It is the role of the church to comment on issues lying in the margin of social injustices and oppression. The rationale by the focus groups marries a statement of Rev Dr S.D. Chimphangwi who echoed these sentiments in his sermon.

Our choices and decisions either as private individuals or as public figures matter immensely. If we chose a right we help to build Malawi into "the warm heart of Africa", but if we decide wrongly we make hell of ourselves and for future generations. For this matter, let us not make things drift. Do not leave the future shape and image of Malawi to chance. Assume responsibility now for we are all answerable to God for the future character and image of Malawi.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷Rev Dr S.D. Chimphangwi, *Sermon at Martyr's Day Service, St Michael and All Angels Church, 3 March 1985.*

At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that the critical issues of the churches was occasional and muted. Moreover, the years of repressive dictatorial rule took their toll on the life of the churches. Not only was their social witness largely silenced but their own institutional life came to reflect the one—party system. When the churches became prominent in the struggle for democratization in Malawi, it was not long before members began to point out how an oppressive “one –party” system of government prevailed *within* the life of the church. At a joint Anglican-Presbyterian Seminar on Civic Education prior to the General Election of 1994, e.g., the point which aroused by far the most interest and support among younger clergy was the need for accountability and democracy in the structures of the church.¹¹⁸

Therefore, considering the stand taken by the focus group discussions in this study and comparatively taking the views of different scholars quoted in this paper, it cannot be out ruled that since time immemorial, the church has taken a rigid stand to usher change and transformation. The transformation should not be looked into unilaterally as speaking about changing politics in a wider view, but to also indulge itself into dialogue with conflicting parties and mediate in their differences whenever there is a political tension. The church has therefore a significant stand to take in easing conflicts in political governance.

Poverty also featured prominently as a major causative factor for recurrence of conflicts. Many youths have been used by politicians to go and destroy infrastructure of the country. During the 2019-20 post-election conflict, while standing at my offices at Ginnery corner at NBS Bank in Blantyre, I witnessed several trucks painted in DPP logo carrying young politicians commonly called the DPP Cadets. They came from the direction of Limbe going towards Blantyre. On their way they met MCP, UTM and HRDC supporters going to Blantyre District Council offices to deliver their petition. It was a sad situation to see that the peaceful demonstrations were cut short after the cadets armed with machetes, stones, *sjamboks*¹¹⁹ and various weapons began to attack the demonstrators. Rev Richard Sembeleka of the HRDC was hacked in the head and greatly injured and was taken to Queen Elizabeth Central hospital where he was admitted to. In 2012, similar incidents happened in Blantyre when people were marching against the dictatorial leadership of Dr Binguwa Mutharika. Shops such as NBS Bank at Ginnery corner, PTC, Bata and many more were broken into in the city of Blantyre. Looting took place. People’s properties such as vehicles were smashed their windscreens. Police shot teargas canisters. I witnessed the shooting of a young boy at MbayaniTownship. It is pathetic that the youth who took part in this business are also young Christians. It is the active role that the church plays in the region strengthen the conviction that the church has a responsibility in fostering peace in the region and to act as a unifying factor. Nevertheless, these efforts alone are not adequate when building peace in a religious setting. Church’s approach to peace-building and reconciliation are critical in efforts geared at fostering long lasting peace.¹²⁰ There is a need for an intervention by the church to have a follow-up strategy to quell conflict.

¹¹⁸CCAP Synod of Blantyre, Department of Church and Society, Ecumenical Seminar for Clergy, Chilema, 9-11February 1994, address by DR K.R. Ross on “The Theology of Political Action.”

¹¹⁹ sjambok is a heavy leather whip. It is traditionally made from an adult hippopotamus or rhinoceros hide, but is also commonly made out of plastic (for more information see <https://www.google.com/search?q=sjambok&oq=shambok&aqs=chrome.1.69i57j0i1013j0i10i457j0i1015.18613j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>) (accessed online on 8th June 2021).

¹²⁰National Elections Monitoring Unit (NEMU), *Courting Disaster: A Report on the Ethnic Clashes*. Nairobi: NEMU, 1993, p.123.

As the background of the conflict is explored, the social situation of each individual or party is considered. This is to form an impression of the interests and needs as well as aspirations and motivations of each party¹²¹. From the beginning of the conflict transformation, there may be an inclination to understand more about the inner motives of the parties. As the talking proceeds, there is an openness to feedback or influence from the social surrounding, which may lead to modifications of perceptions or positions of the mediators or the parties involved. And the constituencies of the parties as well as the social groups are respected. .¹²²

The decision making process considers the social importance of conflict solving because social relations and internal solidarity are crucial. At this stage, having looked at both sides, the community may suggest that one party makes this concession. It would then be fair to expect the other party to respond by reciprocating concession from the other side. The point is to make a fair exchange for public recognition. The presence of CCJP members on the ground also help to unearth some injustices in society and report them to regional office for appropriate reconciliation measure.

As part of a society struggling to come out of a deeply traumatic experience, Banda's Malawi, a thirty – year contraption of totalitarian power, was a land of pervasive fear where words were constantly monitored, manipulated and mutilated, a country stalked by silence and suspicion, a nation where the monotonous story of the Ngwazi's achievements could be told and retold, a state of dull uniformity that criminalized difference, ambiguity, creativity, an omniscient regime with a divine right to nationalize time and thought , history and the popular will. And so it censored memories, stories and words that contested and mocked its singular authority, banishing and imprisoning numerous opponents, real and imaginary, hunting and murdering exiled “rebels”, and appropriated and dissolved the boundaries between private and public spheres, individual and collective lives, so that no one was sure of anyone, not of friends or colleagues, or relatives, not even of partners and spouses, and even one's careless dreams could be dangerous. All was contaminated by this naked, arbitrary power.¹²³The Banda regime left the church in Malawi deeply wounded, disoriented and almost without voice.¹²⁴ Fortunately, the Church can learn from the experiences of churches in other countries and other ages such as Germany after the 2nd World War or South Africa after apartheid. Although the political situation in Malawi has not been so tense and fearful as compared to the former and latter countries, the church in Malawi would only borrow a leaf on the processes, procedures and tools and modalities used by those countries to ease tension and end conflicts. .To do so, the Church must quickly move to recover its voice, restore its credibility and play its prophetic role in advancing the cause of justice, healing and reconciliation as it was done in the Kenyan crisis.¹²⁵

¹²¹Schirch, Lisa. “Ritual Reconciliation I: *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence; Theory and Practice*, Mohammed Abu-Nimer (ed). Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001.p97

¹²²Wirkmark, Bo (ed). *Government-NGO Relations in Preventing Violence, Transforming Conflict and Building Peace*. Report from a Conference in Marie Fred, Sweden, September 4-6. Peace Team Forum.1997. P 178.

¹²³P.T. Zeleza, “*Totalitarian Power and Censorship in Malawi*”, *Sothorn Africa Political and Economic Monthly*, Vol. 8 No.11 (August 1995, p. 33.

¹²⁴Thistle thwart, S.& Stassen, G. *Abrahamic Alternatives to war: Jewish, Christian and Muslim Perspectives on Just Peacemaking*. Washington: USIP.2008.P. 112

¹²⁵Reinmann, C. *Assessing the State of Art in Conflict Transformation*, <http://www.Berghoffhandbook.2010>. P23

The churches' role in addressing reconciliation more broadly in society should obviously be informed, limited and complemented by its internal reconciliation process. While the church can only play a limited role externally without having its internal house in order, the internal process will never be completely finalized. The external role is thus one that needs to continue, but will only reach its full potential through being energized by the fruition of its internal processes. The internal processes may include emotional and spiritual support to the affected communities, effective mobilization of the communities and others for peace, mediation between conflicting parties and dialogue.¹²⁶ These are the four main contributions of Faith Based Organizations to conflict resolution which the church can employ to bring peace. These strategies have been used for internal reconciliation processes and/or for promoting broader national and community reconciliation. The most obvious role was to provide guidance regarding the values and journey of reconciliation through sermons¹²⁷. While some felt that not enough attention was given in developing this message and addressing it consistently, it seems to have been a very common phenomenon for the churches to take on this role in their regular services. Symbolic events, such as mass gatherings, memorial services, marches, public celebrations are commonly cited as things the church should be doing. There is however a recognition that more training needs to be provided to equip church staff with appropriate skills. Another component to the role of counseling is to provide space for confession. Some interviewees felt that perpetrators of human rights abuses were not sufficiently confronted.

The church uses different strategies in order to resolve conflicts that arise in a country between political parties and the government. During data collection for this study one of the participants in the focus group discussion pointed out that the church should bring the opposing parties together for dialogue. This is in line with Babler's observations who pointed out that dialogue is the best way of resolving conflicts among people. It is through dialogue that the solutions to the conflicts can be realized. However, the recent post-election demonstrations in Malawi was difficult to dialogue since the then government was uncooperative and refused to dialogue with the opposition.

During oral interviews that conducted at Chinamwali CCAP Church, it was reported that inviting the concerned political parties to a round table discussion is another effective strategy of resolving conflicts within a country or society.¹²⁸ It has been observed that calling the concerned parties to a round table has been a traditional approach of resolving conflicts and one way where different conflicting parties can start reconciling. Whenever, the parties differ in views and understanding one way to end this amicably is to come together for round table discussion despite the fact that most governments and their leaders demean the procedure and they have developed a syndrome of not meeting their opponents face to face. The pride by the state has brought about the plight of the resolving the conflict hence remains a danger to democracy and human rights.

Another strategy the church uses to effectively employ in reconciling the parties that are in conflict is to avoid being partial in dealing with conflicting issues. There have been cases during general elections in Malawi which the church had to show partiality within the political parties. The church has a role that it remains impartial in situations like these. However, some church leadership especially the Synod of Blantyre through its General Secretary Rev Dr. Billy Gama showed that they were siding with the DPP. It is widely believed that the sum of Seventy Million Kwacha (MK70, 000,000.00) was given as donation to the Synod to use it for making political campaigns and propaganda against the opposition. The allegations were further approved in social media as evidenced by ministers preaching against MCP in funerals ceremonies. The attitude and conduct by the synod destroys trust from public opinion to consider the church as political institution. Although the church should remain prophetic on issues of social injustice, it should not be siding with political parties. The churches' role is to preach peace and love as the body of Christ.¹²⁹ Since Christ is

¹²⁶Haynes (2009).

¹²⁷*Ibid*, p. 93.

¹²⁸ Int. James Khando, *Church elder, Chinamwali CCAP*, 23.7.20

¹²⁹John 11:5, 13:1,

one body and not divided so as the church should be are in side with some political parties. Partiality by the church dismantles trust and union of g the political parties.

f) Effect of political conflicts on the lives of people and the nation

Malawi just like one of the countries in the sub Saharan countries faces political conflicts that may have negative impact on the lives of people in Malawi. During the time of political conflicts in the country, a number took to the streets to display their anger against the Mutharika regime. Businesses came to stand still due to fear and subsequent participation in the demonstrations and as a result it affected many activities in the country and most of them stopped their operations including small scale business. During demonstration days, business owners could not go out to purchase commodities for their shops as they were afraid that people in the riot would seize or confiscate the products either steal money from them. Foreign businesses locally operated also came to a halt as those of Rwandese, Burundians and Democratic Republic of Congo who were within the local area. Traders were afraid to go to their usual places of business. Political conflicts are dangerous and slow down the development of a county.¹³⁰ During a situation like this, access to basic human needs become affected.

While there was political conflict in Malawi, there were unnecessary deaths caused by violent demonstrators. For instance, a police officer was brutally murdered in cold blood in line of duty by an irate mob during the demonstrations at Nsundwe Trading Centre in Lilongwe district.¹³¹ Despite the fact that this was the first incident to occur during the demonstrations, it only gives a picture of how bad conflicts may be if parties to it cannot be swift to find a solution to their differences. Innocent people may end up losing life and subsequently families suffer which may in future affect development activities of the country as it may have lost energetic and future leaders who would contribute to the economy of the nation. Below is a picture of the murdered police officer swimming in a pool of blood due to conflict.

Shops, businesses and schools were closed during the stampede. Most employees were afraid to travel to their duty stations to work. As a result, as many people failed to access their basic needs. Loss of life, violation of human rights and abduction of innocent people was experienced during this period.

With these developments, it is likely for a country to venture into financial and economic challenges which may lead into high level of poverty and illiteracy. Fundamental human rights for people are breached and violated during the political conflicts. For instance, the right to education is disturbed whenever there are political conflicts. There are also imbalances in terms of resource distribution.¹³² When there are political conflicts, equality in the distribution of resources is experienced in the country. In some parts of the country access to basic needs and requirements in life in other regions that are just developing is not within reach and people begin to suffer. On the other hand, the country becomes lawless hence provoking law enforcers and its agencies to become cruel on the subjects.¹³³

Therefore, a state of lawlessness is bad and this situation is a transition to the making of a dictator in the political arena. The government is forced to control its citizens through enactment of harsh laws, use of force in order for its people to comply with. Government will try to implement and

Romans 8:35,
Ephesians 5:25

¹³⁰ Int. held focus group discussion with local leaders at Mphaseweni in Dedza, 2.8.2020

¹³¹ Int. Rev. Robert Maskam, *Evangelical Bible College of Malawi*, 25.7.20

¹³² Int. Rev Yassin Gama, *Mvama CCAP*, 1.8.20

¹³³ Fr. Kampango, *Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace*, CCJP, 30.8.20

enforce every possible strategy to bring the status quo on the rule of law.¹³⁴ Lawlessness also promotes many evil things to take place in the country such as rampant killings, rape, defilement, human and child trafficking on people who may be prone to be used in estates or farms and young girls and women may become sexual objects.

g) Causes of political conflicts in the 2019-20 elections in Malawi

Several issues and factors led to the 2019-20 political conflicts in the country. One of the main and contributing factors that brought forth the volcano of political conflict in the country was the massive electoral irregularities and the alleged rigging of the 2019 tripartite elections especially on the presidential results.¹³⁵ The Malawi Electoral commission was criticized for favoring the then ruling political party – Democratic Progressive Party which emerged the winner of the election. The MEC mishandled the elections. However, Chilima and Chakwera not satisfied with the results of the election, commenced legal action against MEC, DPP and Muthalika to challenge the results.¹³⁶ Whilst legal proceedings were still progressing, Human Rights Defenders Coalition HRDC under the leadership of Timothy Mtambo now minister of Civil Education held demonstrations demanding that chairperson MEC Jane Ansah to step down. The demonstrations were intensified across the country as an indication of dissatisfaction with how the MEC managed the elections¹³⁷. Below is the figure showing frustrated people against Jane Ansah and the Electoral commission.

However, despite the demonstrations that were held in-order for the Malawi Electoral commission to accept that the elections were marred with irregularities and that Jane Ansah should step down, all efforts proved futile. However, the conflict was resolved through a judicial process when the Supreme Court of Appeal gave its decision in the case.

In Malawi, during the 2019-20 political conflicts, all the church used almost all avenues for conflict transformation. Some of the processes that were employed to bring peace were the of reconciliation approach, peace building whereas the latter mostly deals with the most underlying issues to deal with such nepotism, corruption, ethnicity. The judicial approach to resolve the conflict approved to be more effective and efficient.

The suppression of human rights is another cause of conflict in the country.¹³⁸ The government was not considerate and trampled more on the rights of the people in the country. Evident of this scenario is where people were not allowed to voice out when they noticed some inconsistencies in the governance of the nation by the government¹³⁹. People were beaten up by the political youth league commonly known as DPP cadets. This was done in the presence of the law enforcers an example of the incident of this nature happened at Masintha Ground at Kawale 1 in Lilongwe district when the then opposition leaders Rev Dr Lazarus Chakwera and Dr Saulos Klaus Chilima conducted a joint political rally. The DDP youth league organized themselves and beat up people and destroying the platform and the gathering discontinued. In Mzuzu the then DPP high figure Rev Mzomera Ngwira also organized the youth in the north to stop Dr Chakwera from conducting a political rally in the city and people were hacked, beaten up etc. in the southern region there was a youth league leader commonly known as “Bangwe 1” or “ana achepa”¹⁴⁰ who was the organizing official of such incidents. These acts of cruelty and immoral behavior triggered the HRDC to stand up against the DPP and advocate for change and transformation in the political administration. Below is a figure showing mass demonstrations by the HRDC.

¹³⁴ Int. Rev Mwechumu, *Blantyre Synod*, 15.7.20

¹³⁵ *The 2019 elections were marred with irregulars such as Tipex , Inflating of figures,*

¹³⁶ Int. Honourable Nkumba, *Ndirande Malabada Constituency*, 25.7.20

¹³⁷ Int. Hon. Nomale, *Chiradzulu East Constituency*, 25.7.20

¹³⁸ Int. Honourable Chidovu, *Member of Parliament*, Dedza South Constituency 6.6.20

¹³⁹ Int. Honourable Mwale, *Ward Councillor for Thete ward*, Dedza, 6.6.20

¹⁴⁰ This term loosely means ‘They are kids’ or ‘they are small.’

Interviews with the participants indicate that Christians from various denominations and different parts participated in the political demonstrations. Their argument for the demonstrations has been that the DPP was at the pick of violating human rights and it could not listen to the voice of the poor and a lot of people suffered concerns.¹⁴¹ During focus group discussions with church leaders fifteen participants out of twenty indicated that they joined the demonstrations because it is their right to demonstrate whenever such rights are violated.

Weak political governance (without respect on the rule of law on the separation of powers also contributed to the cause of political conflicts in the nation of Malawi. According to Rev. Vasco Kachipapa of Nkhoma Synod “the weak leadership coupled with weak political governance led to the development of political conflict in the country.”¹⁴² It has been observed that the political conflicts arose because the Democratic Progress Party was not tolerant to the views of opposition parties and paid a deaf ear. The ruling party had negligence in handling issues.

Corruption and looting of public funds and resources by the government which would help in the development of the country is also among the causes of political conflict in the country. Interviews with politicians indicate that under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) leadership, many people were involved in the looting of public funds and resources and most people including cabinet ministers were corrupt. These argue that the looted properties would have been used for the purchase of medical drugs in hospitals, road infrastructure development as well as paying salaries to civil servants whom their wages are below the required human usage.¹⁴³ Malawians greatly suffered under the leadership of the DPP government. During the Mutharika regime, 8.2 billion Malawi Kwacha was embezzled by DPP political gurus.¹⁴⁴ Some members even found their way into parastatal organizations drawing up fuel and allowances when in actual sense they were not employees of such organizations and companies. The political muscle then was abused.¹⁴⁵ The money would have been used for the development of the country and politicians pocketed this without any consideration on the needs of the country thereby leaving the marginalized and poor people suffer and die due to hunger and poverty. Lack of transparency and accountability was a tune of the day and many people without proper credentials amassed worthy a scenario that would ruin the country in the next decade. Under such circumstances, the church has a role to preach about love and sin. People should be told the significance of love towards the poor. God is a God of the poor and the oppressed.¹⁴⁶ Jesus called Pharisees hypocrites. He was not afraid to confront and bring to light the evil of others. The world is full of evil leaders.¹⁴⁷ They must turn their hearts to God and ask for forgiveness.¹⁴⁸

During interviews with some traditional leaders in Dedza and Blantyre districts, similar sentiments were echoed when asked about the role of the church in conflict resolution on the political governance in Malawi. Traditional Authority Machinjiri and Nsomba in Blantyre stated that, the main challenge our nation faces is that, sometimes the church becomes a political vice in fueling violence and conflict. There are many people in the church who belong to different political parties and these people hold different views and values. Because of this scenario, the church is supposed to take a neutral stand to highlight to their members the qualities of Godly leaders not necessarily mentioning their names and encourage them on who to vote for.¹⁴⁹ The church is considered a

¹⁴¹ Focus group discussions with church elders, St Columba CCAP, 25.7.20

¹⁴² Int. Vasco Kachipapa, the then general secretary for Nkhoma Synod. 13.20.

¹⁴³ Int. Honourable Chinkhondo, Dedza West Constituency, 10.4.20

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.kulinji.com/news/ov...> accessed on 11 May 2021.

¹⁴⁵ Nyasa Times, 8, April, 2019

¹⁴⁶ Mark 12:41-43; 12:13-17

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.praisetabernacle.com>>...

¹⁴⁸ Romans 3:23.

¹⁴⁹ Int. T/A Machinjiri, Blantyre, 26.8.20

mother in bringing peace to the society when people or political parties are in conflict. It should play a mediatory role in finding solutions to the conflict. The church should entirely be nonpartisan in discharging her duties.¹⁵⁰ This concurs with John 11:5; 13:1 and Ephesians 5:25.

h) Research Findings

Basing on the discussion of the study, the researcher observed the following as key findings of the study:

The role of the church in conflict resolution in political governance was the first research question for the study. This sought to find out on the role the church plays in resolving conflicts in the country. Findings on this indicate that leaders of different churches took a very important role to ensure that there is peace in the country by ensuring that there is dialogue between the conflicting parties and the government. Blantyre Synod of the CCAP carries an exceptional case in that it sided with the then ruling party so as with Nkhoma Synod which leaned on the MCP and lastly Livingstonia Synod which took the position of Nkhoma and diverted from its mission to preach Christ but preaching a human person.

Therefore, it was difficult for the Synod to take the impartial part of joining other churches to mediate in the conflict to bring peace. The study also established that, the church. The study has revealed that Public Affairs Committee (PAC) initiated the dialogue between opposition political party leaders and the government but the dialogue was not effective by reason that some members in the committee could not be trusted by DDP and government gave them a cold shoulder when the dialogue was called to the table. It has also been established in this study that it is Public Affairs Committee that was in the forefront checking up weakness of the government and call for peaceful dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition party leaders.

Apparently, PAC formed a task force which went around listening to the of the parties opposed to outcome of the May 2019 General election. They also managed to reached out to both opposition leaders, the human rights group, the Malawi Electoral Commission as well as President Mutharika pushing for dialogue. Their intervention led to the opposition leaders taking on a more civilized way of seeking justice by letting them handle the situations.¹⁵¹

The study has also revealed that some church leaders such as Rev Chimesya and Rev Dancain Kananji of Blantyre Synod also took part in criticizing against evils done by government and as such the government was against the approach taken by the church. Instead of correcting where things have gone wrong the government was busy quarrelling and threatening its critics which resulted in the dethroning of the government.

The role of the church played in bringing forth the perpetrators of the conflict in the 2019-2020 post-election demonstrations was one of the research questions of the study. Findings in this indicate that the church to some extent sided with the government against opposition party instead of acting as a bridge between the two opposing sides. This was evident when some churches had to prepare sermons and preach against the government while some churches prepared messages against the ruling government.¹⁵² The study has also revealed that the church to some extent failed to encourage dialogue among the conflicting parties in the country leading to more political unrest and corruption in the government. The church which is responsible for the respect of its freedoms in Malawi was found violating the same freedom of association especially Blantyre Synod which conspicuously

¹⁵⁰Int. T/A Chilikumwendo, Dedza, 16.3.20, Village Head Mphasaweni, Dedza, 16.3.20, T/A Kachere, Dedza 16.3.20

¹⁵¹<http://communications.amecea.org>>...accessed on 12.05.21

¹⁵²Churches in Blantyre synod did prepare the message in the church backing for the government and church leaders who were against this practice were called on to a discipline committee. For instance Rev. Kananji of Chigodi CCAP in the Blantyre Synod.

took the partisan part to side with DPP. It is supposed to protect and respect the freedom of association and take guard of the freedom of expression during political conflicts.

Again, the church had to preach peace among the political parties, however, the peace was on theoretical part of preaching in its essence it was the same church that fueled instability in the country during post elections demonstrations. The study also has established that the church was involved in the mediation talks with the leaders of political parties. Interviews with some participants indicate that the church offered guidance and counseling to both opposition leaders and the government. This concurs with Nyongesa Michael Wafula in his dissertation entitled *The role of the church in promoting reconciliation in 2008-2013 post-election violence Kenya*.¹⁵³ However, it appears that the church did not pay enough attention when developing its message in addressing the political conflicts in the society. The church indeed has a role to guide and counsel the conflicting parties. The church provides guidance regarding the value and journey of reconciliation through sermons.¹⁵⁴

The study has established that the church has been in dilemma in executing its role during political conflicts in the country. Instead of the church to play a prophetic role during this period, it was divided. Other churches were siding with the government while others were siding with opposition parties. This contradicts with Balcomb A in her book entitled *Third Way Theology of conflict and other writings on Nonviolence* who points out that the church should not take political sides during political conflicts.¹⁵⁵ The church also did not show the actual position since most of its members belonged to different parties.

Again Reconciliation processes in Malawi 2019-20 post conflict period was another research question of this study. This study reveals that the church played a vital role in the reconciliation process during post-election demonstrations. The church was also in the forefront ensuring that political leaders get reconciled. The church itself, Faith Based Organizations including PAC put their efforts together in order to reconcile the parties and bring them together. Regardless of all this, the government side shoved the efforts out. Although it has been a norm by the church to help in peace keeping since the time the country was called Nyasaland until the 2012 political conflict, the efforts by the church faced more resistance. In the same vein, there was a period the Church through PAC invited political leaders to a round table discussion so that all should understand each other's views and work together. However, the study indicates that despite the church inviting political leaders, enmity prolonged than ever before. The leaders were adamant to their ideologies and they could not respect views of their opponents. Rev Dr Felix Chingota indicates that, it was [former] President Peter Mutharika who did not want to listen to the church.¹⁵⁶ He actually told the church that there should be separation between the church and state.¹⁵⁷ As a result of the resistance manifested by the government, the 2019-20 efforts by the church to resolve political conflicts in Malawi faced a hiccup and was not really effective since pride, ego and arrogance were at the peak of the DPP.

On the other hand, the opposition and human rights organizations also took a tough stand against government to display their anxiety by conduction mass demonstrations every week or fortnightly with an opinion that government will surrender. Several petitions and ultimatums were issued to government authorities such as the state house, city councils and district commissioners by human rights watch organizations but unfortunately the DPP government stood rigid on to its fit.

¹⁵³Nyongesa Michael Wafula, *The role of the church in promoting reconciliation in 2008-2013 post-election violence Kenya*, 2012. P. 66.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid* p. 93.

¹⁵⁵Balcomb A. *Third Way Theology of conflict and other writings on Nonviolence* Maryknoll, 2001, p78

¹⁵⁶ Int. Felix Chingota. *ex-Chairperson of Public Affairs Committee*, 26.7.2020

¹⁵⁷*Peter Munthalika speech at the political rally in Mangochi*, 13 March, 2019.

Further, the study has established that the church has established effective strategies on how the church should deal with political conflicts. The church has been involved in mediation talks with the parties or individuals who are in conflict. National prayers were organized by the churches such as Calvary Family Church, Living Waters International, SDA, CCAP church from all the three synods with an effort of preaching peace and bringing the parties together as one way of mediation but DDP strongly faced its head down and gave a deaf ear to the calls. By mediating, it shows that stand in between those people who have different views on issues particularly in the political arena.¹⁵⁸

The church has also been in the forefront in engaging the political parties to a round table discussion over political conflicts that prevail in the country. This is in line with what Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Malawi has been encouraging the Catholic (Justice Peace and reconciliation 2020). However much as the church has been engaging different stake holders for dialogue and mediation of different parties. Observations are that some churches fuel conflicts between the opposition and the ruling parties.¹⁵⁹ It has been observed that the then ruling DPP had been giving a deaf ear to the views of the opposition despite the frequent calls for dialogue and mediations that had been taking place between them. This resulted into perpetual conflicts and political demonstrations in the country. Consulting the conflicting parties and bring them together is another dimension of resolving political conflicts.¹⁶⁰

Never the less the study has also revealed that the political conflicts that took place in Malawi during the 2019 general elections and 2020 Fresh Presidential Election negatively affected human life and property of people in the society. This in turn increased poverty levels in the country.¹⁶¹ In the researcher's view, political conflicts slowed down the progress of most businesses in the country thereby negatively affecting the economic development of the country. This is in line with Ransford Kwabena Awuku's observations that the political conflicts increase the poverty of the nation.¹⁶² This also concurs with Nawenga's view that political conflicts slowed down development of the nation at large.¹⁶³ The researcher adds that during the post elections demonstrations people were unable to go out for business or do any work. This hinders the progress of trade and commercial activities in the country.

¹⁵⁸Int.FatherKambalame, *The Catholic Institute- Blantyre*.31.7.20. He is of the view that it is good to engage face to face dialogue with the conflicting parties in order to resolve conflicts that arise in a country.

¹⁵⁹ Int. with Rev Yanduya, *Zambezi Evangelical Church*. 4.8.20.

¹⁶⁰ Jane Binali, *Bible society of Malawi*, 3.8.20

¹⁶¹ Int. Madalitso Charles Phiri, *Team Leader, NBS Bank Plc*, 26.7.20

¹⁶² Ransford Kwabena Awuku, *Assessing the impact of good Governance, church management and Structure on growth and Development of the church in an international Journal of Business and Management: Vol 14:2019* published by Canadian Centre of Science and Education

¹⁶³ Int. with church leaders at *St Columbus CCAP, Blantyre Synod*, 25.7.20

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that the church has a greater role to play whenever there are political conflicts in the country. The church should not side with any political party as it tries to resolve political conflicts in the country but it should stand firm in doing its prophetic role. It is undeniable truth that in the history of Church, Christianity, at times, in some regions or countries, somehow became a state-sponsored religion. Using what had happened in Malawi particularly in the history of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), a critical evaluation is made regarding when, how and why Christianity became a state-sponsored religion in the light of the relation between the Nkhoma Synod and the state between 1964 and 1994.¹⁶⁴ If we look at our own history as the CCAP during the time of the struggle for independence, we will see that the Blantyre Synod was very much in support of the Nyasaland African Congress (later called the MCP). Because of this very verbal stance on the side of the MCP after independence, the CCAP was aligned closely with the government and became so assimilated to with the government's activities that the Synod was often invited to pray after and participate as a church at various government functions.¹⁶⁵ There may be several reasons that made the church fail to achieve its prophetic role in resolving conflicts in the 2019-20 post-election period.

The reasons may be classified into two-fold. On the one hand, the church notably Blantyre Synod has been spotted as a playground for politicians. Followed by the Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods. The Church aligned itself so much to the state machinery while the latter two leaned on the opposition where they have established their base. Blantyre Synod is located in the southern region where the DPP established its ethnic base hence gaining more support from the south. So with Nkhoma Synod yielding its loyalty to MCP since its ethnic support comes from the central region and lastly also Livingstonia gave its support to MCP as neighbours with Nkhoma Synod as it would not also want the DPP at the helm. As a result, some political figures used the church for campaigning thereby gaining their political mileage. As a result of this political loyalty by the church, it became compromised hence its subsequent failure to perform the prophetic role. On the other hand, the other contributing factor for failure by the church to resolve the conflicts that were in the country was caused by the political intolerance between the government and the opposition. One side considered it more powerful and infeasible so much so that they could not come for dialogue nor mediation. The Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) tried calling all participating political parties for peace and dialogue but the efforts yielded nothing. The church should continue initiating dialogue and mediation whenever there are misunderstandings between government and its citizens. Chapter four provides details on how the church in Malawi dealt with political conflicts and governance in Malawi. It analyzed the historical overview of how the church's role in the political conflict and governance issues in Malawi. The Historical analysis has shown that conflicts are linked to the trajectory of postcolonial state building.¹⁶⁶ It has shown that the church uses different strategies in resolving the political conflicts in the country.

¹⁶⁴Dr. W.S. Zeze, *Christianity, A State Sponsored Religion in Malawi, An Evaluation of the Relationship between the CCAP Nkhoma Synod and the MCP-led Government (1964-1994)* p. 1.

¹⁶⁵A Statement on the Role of the Church in Transformation of Malawi in the Context of Justice and Peace produced by the Blantyre Synod, 1993 p. 4.

¹⁶⁶Rupesinghe, K. *Ethnicity and Power in the Contemporary World*. Tokyo: United Nations University, 1996. P. 123.

A. Conclusion

Some of the key Findings of the study indicate that some churches in Malawi have been bias in fostering peace at a time when there are political conflicts in the country during elections. Some churches fuel conflicts between the ruling and opposition parties.¹⁶⁷ The CCAP of Blantyre, Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods are one of such churches. They visibly manifested the partisan stand and many people questioned their integrity and professionalism in their mission for the gospel and many people lost trust in the church. On the other hand, the Nkhoma Synod has always remained loyal to the MCP and sermons were also preached to vote for their candidate in the central region. The church through PAC encouraged mediation talks and dialogue and praying for peace of the country.

The church has been at the forefront in preventing their recurrence using several interventions such as peace-building workshops, carrying out civic education, community empowerment and exchange visits.¹⁶⁸ The study has also revealed that the suppression of human rights is another of cause of political conflicts in the country. During the DPP regime, human rights were not respected and were greatly trampled upon and this as an indicator of bad governance led to political conflicts.¹⁶⁹ It has also been established that the processes of peace-building and reconciliation employed by the church are limited. Complementary approaches are inevitable in an effective peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives.¹⁷⁰

B. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were to be made: The church in Malawi should continue encouraging peaceful dialogue and mediation whenever, there are political conflicts in the country. As noted in this study, although the church played an effort in peacebuilding and reconciliation, it has also been one of the organizations and institutions that fueled conflicts between political parties and escalated during the 2019 general elections and 2020 Fresh Presidential Elections.

On the other hand, a major proportion of the church helped in their efforts to initiate dialogue and bring peace. The proportion involved in the peace building process may be summed up as ninety percent (90%). Mainly at a large scale, the church in its history until 2012 has always spearheaded peace among opponents in the political arena. The challenge faced by the Blantyre, Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods of CCAP to take the partisan stand is linked to former's General Secretary Rev Dr Billy Gama who once became a presidential advisor on religious affairs and relinquished his religious loyalty to the DPP. The compromise is also linked to tribal traces of the two whereas both Mutharika and Gama originate from Thyolo and Mulanje districts respectively and majority of people in these two districts are closely related. Mainly, the church emerged and was revealed to be part of the solution in the political tension the country faced in the 2019-20 post presidential general elections. All the Synods lost track and direction and consequently no one could trust them.

The church as a body of Christ should be in the forefront in respecting human rights and the rule of law in the society. Since Jesus Christ is the head of the church and the maker of peace, the church should emulate that example to ensure that it is mending divisions among the people in the country without favor and bias. The church should not look at the opposition parties as enemies but engage them in the reconciliation process in the country. The church must ensure at all cost that it is not involved in corruption and not it is not trampling on the fundamental human rights. It should view people's lives as of significant not exposing it to any risk for the love of money. As a bride for Christ Jesus, who is the center of peace,

¹⁶⁷ Int. Madalitso Charles Phiri. *National board Member of Nazarene Church*. 26.7.20

¹⁶⁸ Basedan, M. & De Juan, A. *'The Ambivalence of the Sacred' in Africa: The Impact on Peace and Conflicting Sub-Saharan Africa*. German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Working paper No. 70.. 2008

¹⁶⁹ Int. Rev. Kananji, *Chigodi CCAP Church, Kachere, Blantyre*, 12.7.20

¹⁷⁰ Kagwanja, M. (2012): *'Power to Uhuru': Youth Identity and Generational Politics in Kenya's 2010 Elections*. In: *African Affairs*, Vol. 105, 51-75

truth and reconciliation, the church must be seen to bear fruits in its mission of ministering the gospel in all aspects. Many people have developed trust in the church as the only and sole parent that can usher hope in times of trouble such as political conflicts which may if tolerated ruin the lives of many including the development of a well strong and established nation. However, from the analysis gathered in the study, it shows that the three Synods of the CCAP church in Malawi, each leans on its own political shoulder. The Livingstonia, Nkhoma and Blantyre Synods each have their own political parties they would like to give support. This conduct by the church is very dangerous and detrimental for the mission of the church, the life of democracy including social life of the subjects within or outside the church. Salvation is eventually lost and taken for granted if people remove their trust from the church as these may eventually stop attending church services. Church leaders and ministers should always put God and Christ first. The church must expel itself from the love of money as we will be answerable to God on the judgement day.

Inter-community and inter-religious dialogue should be facilitated. The various efforts in the country in trying to build a culture of community reconciliation and peaceful existence should be recognized and encouraged by politicians, political parties, their supporters and the society as a whole.

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