CHURCH CONFLICTS, PUBLIC RELATIONS AND EVANGELISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

It has been noted in this study that there are several intra and Inter church conflicts. Even though some seem more subtle than others, the cause of the conflicts are issues bothering on doctrine, finances, leadership styles, etc. furthermore, public perception of church conflict and the effect it has on their evangelism pattern were also examined.

Introduction

The church like every other human organization needs the understanding, goodwill and continued support of its operative environment to survive and exist. To accomplish this noble but obviously arduous task, the church ceaselessly seeks to identify and service or meet the needs and aspirations of its members at a most profitable cost. It is more so among Pentecostal churches in this era of church proliferation, especially, in Port Harcourt, Rivers state where church business has turned out to be a lucrative and serious venture. The race for membership acquisition is becoming increasingly hot and many Pentecostal Churches are not left out in this art of fishing men (Okoye, 2009).

It is noteworthy that while some churches rewardingly achieve their objectives in winning souls through evangelism, others fail woefully. Failure in this regard is often associated with both internal weakness and or external threats. Internal inadequacies are manifested in the issues like members discontent etc., intra church conflicts, inter church conflicts. While externally speaking (external threats) inter religious conflicts, socio-cultural and legal factors also constitute serious bottlenecks to the churches progress, especially in the areas of unhealthy church-to-church (inter church) relations and so on. All these more often than not, combine and conspire to make the task of managing the churches and other similar human institutions increasingly complex and overwhelming mostly as they sometimes condense into a more serious corporate image damage (Ogusanya,2015).

While crisis is inevitable, it can be properly managed. Often however, church crisis is poorly addressed by ignoring vital dynamics. To avoid such an ugly scenario (serious image crack), the church needs to go back to the drawing board, undertake proper drastic image cleansing and then evoke the most pragmatic persuasive communication strategy towards assuaging the pains and winning back its members. The fact that the church thinks that it is composed of responsible people makes the task of managing it more demanding and challenging. This is because it is in the nature of man (woman inclusive) to suspect, criticize and oppose any action that seems to run contrary to his held belief and position in any given matter or situation. It, therefore, requires great task, diplomacy and persuasion, through effective communication, which can only be rooted through sound Public Relations practice, in handling such disturbing moments in order to win his support and approval.

According to Onaji (2001), "Public Relations is concerned with how and what others think about you as a person or an organization." All persons who attend a Church or have one thing or the other to do with her have a view of that Church. Their views may either be good or bad. The growth of any church hinges on either of these two. If a church and her pastors are viewed in

bad light, the growth of such a church would be stunted, while the contrary would apply to any church that is viewed in a good light by the public. The ideal thing is for the community in which the Church is located to think well of her members and Pastors. On account of this, it is important that Churches according to Onaji (2001), "generate good Public Relations practice and remain in good public view."

Public relations have myriad of definitions. The British Institute of Public Relations (1994) defines it as deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish mutual understanding between an organization and it's publics. The Mexican definition which was as a result of International conference held in Mexico City in 1978, says, Public relations practice is the art and social science of analyzing trend, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leader, and implementing planned programmer of action which will serve both the organization and the public interest. Harlow(1976) defines it as distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its publics; involves the management of problems or issues; helps management to keep informed and responsive to public opinions, defines and emphasizes the responsibility of management keeps abreast of and effectively utilize change; serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools. Indeed, Public Relations have long been discovered as not only a management function but the basis of philosophy of management. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (7th edition) crisis entails a time of great danger, difficulty or confusion when problems must be solved or important decisions must be made. 'Crisis can be said to be an unsettling situation with disquieting disposition needing a return from the status quo. In view of the situation in Nigeria currently, crisis can be in different forms, example political crisis, financial crisis, fuel crisis, labour crisis, civil disturbance engendered by a perceived wrong doing by a corporate organization, management, shareholder and management related crisis and so on. These are to mention but a few instances because there are so many dimensions to crisis.

Crisis can occur as a recall of an action of omission or negligence; even a natural disaster can trigger off crisis in an organization. Crisis can either be violent or non-violent in nature (Solu, 1994). However, in as much as crisis is an inevitable situation, there is always the need to develop pre-emptive strategic method to prevent its occurrence.

All hands should therefore, be on deck to ensure that all possible impediments to the church's negative public relations are eliminated so as to avoid misunderstanding, rumors, suspicion, gossip, grapevine, frustration, inaction and conflicts. It is on this effective podium that this study stands to critically and conscientiously review and assess the public relations implications of church conflict on evangelism.

Statement of the Problem

In recent times, there have been many conflicts between and amongst church leaders/men of God and members of the church. This situation has led to formation of perception and sometimes out right conclusions by members of the churches and the public. In many of the instances, the utterances or verbal statements parishioners or members of the public base their perception on are rarely statements made directly but utterances made usually inferentially that has led to the accumulation of so much hatred in the hearts of some church leaders and members. It has also led to depletion and sometimes out right closure of some churches.

Whether the public/church members' perceptions of these utterances are a source of conflict between these churches or amongst her members are not at all in question. What is not known is whether these conflicts have implications on the evangelistic aspirations of the churches; It is also not known whether there are

other causes of these conflicts between and amongst churches; most importantly, it is difficult to tell how the public relations implications of these conflicts on evangelism, hence this study. This study seeks to provide empirical data on how the somewhat undeclared conflicts between and within churches have impacted on their evangelism.

Objectives of the Study
The objectives of the study was to investigate the public relation implication of church conflicts on evangelism

The specific objectives are to:
I.   Identify The Causes Of Church Conflicts
II. Find out how the conflict between churches has impacted on evangelism.

Scope of the Study
The study specifically looked at the Public relations implications of church conflict between specific churches within Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt cities in Rivers State. The study was restricted to select churches within the area mentioned above. This target population was chosen considering their proximity to the subject.

Theoretical Framework
This chapter will review relevant literatures on the subject matter dealing with public relations practice and its implications for church conflict, how most church/religious conflicts are caused by ideologies of people and their interests, this chapter will also review works from other scholars, about church public relations, church conflicts, brief history of Salvation Ministries and Omega Power Ministries respectively.

Structural Functionalism Theory
Structural Functionalism Theory was developed by Emile Durkheim to complement the Social Conflict Theory. This theory, posits that, an "organ" as a result of being interrelated and interdependent, can affect the others and ultimately the whole. There are various institutions in society which include family, religion, education and politics just to name a few. If one of these institutions is affected, then the "whole" society is affected. The "whole" can also affect one or all the social institutions. This theory relates well with the study. Churches in general can be classified as social institutions which perform the religious duties among other social roles. Therefore, churches as one of the major institutions in society are interrelated with other structures such that they can affect one another, positively or negatively.

This theory has been chosen to guide this study because the theory talks about relationships between variables in the society and the current study is about how the conflict is about how the conflict between two religious organizations influences other variables in the society.

In summary, the religious foundation moulds the society`s super structure which include morality, ideology, arts and literature. The social institutions that support the leadership structure of society, for instance, the state, educational system, the family and religious institutions are part of this system. It can therefore be concluded that, when the church is stable, the society is healthy but when it is unstable then the society to some extent becomes unstable too.

The Concept of Public Relations
Every organization needs Public Relations to survive in a competitive world as ours. For churches to remain alive and expand and also impact the environment wherein they exist, the use of Public Relations is imperative.

Public relations according to Okereke (1993) are "a top management function for company planning, for positioning of organizations, monitoring environmental trends and predicting their consequences."

The concept of public relations is a unique management function that uses communication to help manage relationships with key publics. Charles Okigbo sees public relations as instrument of management; thus must be given a careful thought when formulating policies. Nwosu (1996) defines it as that management function that identifies the interest, needs, want

and expectations of the organization from both the internal and external publics, on the other hand and then works out a planned and systematic programme of ACTION and COMMUNICATIONS, aimed at building mutual understanding, respect, recognition, peace and harmony between the organization and its publics to ensure mutual satisfaction, greater productivity and improve work ethics. The International Public Relations Association (IPRA) perceives PR as "Function of a continuing and planned character through which private organization and institutions seek to win support of those whom they may be concerned by evaluating public opinion about themselves.

The objective of Public Relations in any organization or company is to maintain a healthy interaction with her host environments/publics. This position is in conformity with Hendrix (2001:3) when he asserts that "one way of defining Public Relations has been simply to invert the term so that it becomes 'relations with public'." Public Relations afford both government and non-government organizations to drive home their primary targets and bring about the desired change. Lattimore et al., (2004), confirmed this assertion when they posited that, "Public Relations is a leadership and management function that helps achieve organizational objectives … and facilitate organizational change."

Operational Public Relations impacts on the perspectives of both individuals and groups toward an organization, this includes views on its products and services in a positive manner. Scott and Carter (as cited in Grunig & Hunt, 1984:7) opined that, "Public Relations is the planned effort to influence opinion through good character and responsible performance based upon mutual satisfactory two-way communication."

Instruments, such as marketing and advertising, fashioned to achieve the intent and purposes of Public Relations are sometimes mistaken for Public Relations, but they are not in any way

Public Relations. Marketing is one out of many strategies used by Public Relations to create goodwill. According to Adeyemi (1994), "when customers know about your company through a systematic Public Relations programme, the goods and services are likely to be sold faster."

Supporting this statement, Belch (1998: 578) referred to Public Relations activities designed to support marketing objectives as "marketing public relations (MPR) function." According to him, "marketing objectives that may be aided by Public Relations include raising awareness, informing and educating, gaining understanding, building trust, giving consumers a reason to buy and motivating consumer acceptance."

Maintaining good relationship and disseminating information to people and groups who have one thing or the other to do with an organization, and creating good climate for marketing its products and services is what Public Relations is all about. Encyclopedia Britannica (2007:780) opines that Public Relations is concerned with creating a favourable climate for marketing good relations with merchants and distributors as well as placing products publicity and disseminating information to trade and industrial groups."

The official statement of Public Relations formally adopted by the Public Relations Society of American Assembly on Nov. 5, 1982 also supported this view and went further to say that Public Relations serves a wide variety of institutions in a pluralistic society.

"Public Relations help our complex, pluralistic society to reach decisions and function more effectively by contributing to mutual understanding among groups and institutions. It serves to bring private and public policies into harmony.
Public Relations serve a wide variety of institutions in society such as business, trade unions, government agencies, voluntary associations, foundations, and hospitals, educational and religious institutions. To achieve their goals, these institutions must develop effective relationships with many different

audiences or publics such as employees, members, customers, local communities, shareholders and other institutions and with society at large" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984:7).

Public Relations in Non-government Organization (NGOs) especially in Christian Churches can be described as a projection of the image of the Church. It is not possible for any organization to build a reputation without an image, so it is with Christian Churches. A Christian church is said to be a growing organism, and for it grow as expected, it must have a good reputation in the eyes of the public.

According to Haywood (1984), "Perhaps the most satisfactory practical definition of public relations is that it is the management of corporate reputation."

Public Relations in Christian Churches can be said to be a professional way of achieving good image in order to promote success and growth or the welfare of the Churches or its members on whose behalf the public relations efforts is being made. It is therefore worthy of note to say that public relations are important to the successful operation of Christian Churches and to ensure the corporate life and existence of the Churches.

The image of a Church or her Pastor in the eyes of its public is also important if the Church or pastor is to be effective in carrying out his/her pastoral work. Jefkins (1980) also supported this when he said, "Public Relations aim at image making to foster a good image of an organization in the eyes of the public. That a bad image can be changed through a change in policy or activity and also as people learn more about the organization concerned."

Providing boreholes, schools and hospitals for the communities in which churches are located will create favourable impression in the minds of their external publics. "When it comes to good church public relations … simply that relating to the public so as to create favourable impression" (churches leader.com).

Public Relations can also be useful to a Church for example in advising the pastors and Elders about the effectiveness of advertising and also in facilitating the publicity and news releases to media organizations in Maiduguri metropolis. Public Relations effort on the part of the Church will also assist the Senior Pastors of the Church in achieving their goals.

The purpose of Public Relations is: 'To promote the church in an effective attractive and exciting manner. Developing and maintaining all communications of CRPC, advising the Executive and administrator about advertising effectiveness. Facilitating the publicity and news releases of media and assisting the senior Pastor to achieve his goals" (Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church, 2003).

The central reason why Public Relations are needed in a church is for the purpose of communicating the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to its external public. This communication can be done both in words and in needs.

According to the Bishop's Institute for Social Communication Conference on "Church and public relations" held in Singapore, Sept.1-5, 1997, "Public Relations should not be seen only from a business point of view but rather as a witness of Christians and Christian communities to the values of the Kingdom of God, a proclamation through Christ-like deeds … above all, to live like Him in the midst of our neighbours of other faith and persuasions and to do His deeds by the power of His grace. Before all other techniques, the witness of life stays central."

Public Relations in the Church can also be used to create a relationship of trust and confidence between it and her various publics.

Greer (2003) sees Public Relations in a different way. To her Public Relations means disseminating information to both its internal and external publics. "… is involved in disseminating information to church members and to the community at large. This is done in several

ways; Sunday morning Announcements, public press releases and church Newsletters."

In a Church where there are crisis between the head of the Church and her members (the internal) and the external publics, good policy and sound practice, openness, justice, financial accountability and replacement of the leadership with selfless individuals may go a long way in restoring the image of the Church in the eyes of its publics.

According to Hough (2003), "often I am asked what makes for good public relations. My answer is unequivocal: good PR is a reflection of good policy and sound practice … sell off palatial bishops' residences like those in Seattle, Chicago and Boston and give the money to the victims of abuse. These properties add nothing to the Church's mandate to preach the Gospel and stand as expensive, effective barriers between the Bishops and reality. That's a PR programme that might work. Even better than good PR, however, would be the policy of selecting a new generation of selfless church leaders who are committed to the practice of openness, justice, financial accountability and inclusiveness. There are no two ways about it. Anything less will be a PR disaster."

Public Relations can also be employed by various departments or sections of a church or of an organization to achieve their goals. The Church of God in Christ Women's department District Missionary, use Public Relations to promote their organizations.

According to the Women's Handbook (1989) of the Church of God in Christ, "it is the duty of the Public Relations Department to issue news releases to all media, arrange press conferences, and arrange for publication of books telling the history of the organization, film and motion pictures. Make certain that convention activities are reported before, during and after the convention. Select photographers for all important events. The Public Relations department or organ of the Church should provide materials in cooperation with the program committee for advanced distribution to delegates … other duties are to promote the Women's Department, publicize the conventions,

state and national, thus creating a desire for the public as well as members to attend."

The Nature of Crisis

Nwosu (1996) views crisis as "any event, issue, occurrence or situation that could be described as a turning point, for better or for worse, viewed in this way, we can see that crisis has both positive and negative valences or scores as a change agent or factor in organizational management". Crisis is one major force that can cause change in any organization; crisis is an enviable page in any organization history. This means there is no clear departure of the concept of crisis in an organization. Crisis is a departure or expected and usual.

In other words it is dysfunctional and is a disturbance in the normal functioning of the organization. It is wise to comment that crisis and conflict occur because it is functional and strengthening for solid change as well as organizational change at specific time. This is because crisis can strengthen organization internally, that relations, among department and units could reinforce and grow for instance, challenge and competition with other organization within the industry. Crisis public relations otherwise referred to as crisis management is practiced at occasions when catastrophe-minor or major demands immediate and effective action rather likes a fire engine or a life boat responding to anSos. (Black 1989:31).

Black describes the two distinct public relations crisis that can happen. They are:

I. Known unknown: This describes the type of misfortune that might occur because of the nature of your business or service. If you manufacture motorcars or capital equipment of any kind "product recall" is always a possibility. If you are in the chemical or unclear field a radioactive or lethal discharge is a potential danger. In all these instances and many similar fields, it is known that a catastrophe may occur but it is unknown if or when it will take place.

II. Unknown: These are sudden calamitous events that cannot be foreseen by anybody.

An example was the "Tylenol" incident in 1982 in the USA when someone injected Cyanide

Element of Crisis

There are four identified elements in public relations crisis management they are:

1.   **Trigger:** An unexpected event from a component part of a crisis which has the possibility to heavy change the way the public's perceived the organization. A good case is when five outbreaks in an organization destroy relevant documents completely and no alternative option to recover than as they were completely burnt down. This king of incident will provoke or trigger unexpected consequences and will result to a problem or instituting a panel of enquiry.

2.   **Threat**: A threat is a situation where the public relations expert be up and doing with wide open ears and eye including others sensory feature to closely follow up a trigger and be sure whether or not, it pose or can process to a threat in the organization ever pose danger to human life, environment degradation, financial loss and corporate image dangers. This could be dangerous to any organization life.

3.   **An uncontrolled situation**: Public relations practitioners do have the motion or believe that crisis will always introduce difficult hand and present a shake-up of the organization environment that will make the situation beyond the control of management for a period of time.

4.   **Urgent attention needed**: Truly, once the first three positions are undirected, there will be high pressure that would demand urgent attention to the matter. This is either to avoid damage or minimize damage to the lowest possible level. This will require fast response from the management to protect itself as well as the target public, and others who will be affected in crisis for sure (Solu 1994).

Public Relations in the Church

Every organization try very hard to establish and maintain friendliness, more appealing and shared approval with the inhabitants of its environment particularly those that come in direct contact with it. This explains why the contemporary philosophy of Public Relations acknowledges the logic of the view that an institution subsists with the ecclesiastical decree of the whole community. This triggered the opinion of Perriman (1964) to see Public Relations "as a planned action undertaken to gain and keep the goodwill of every section of the public with which the institution or organization comes into constant". Owing to this view, it is an imperative responsibility of an organization's top management, on the condition that they are staid about keeping business afloat. Businesses will keep dwindling except they turn a new leaf in their approach and attitude towards Public Relations.

However, Perriman warned that, "for Public Relations to succeed, it must become an attitude of the mind by which management consciously appreciates that its own interest and those of its publics are in the long run identifiable and acts accordingly".

Ignorantly, some argue that organization can excel without Public Relations. Undoubtedly, such narrow-minded, myopic and ill-informed persuasion is an indication of how little or zero-appreciation and/or understanding of the idea of public relations. Perhaps, it is such small-minded opinions that sparked off Norman (1991) echo that "some organizations claim quite succinctly that they do know Public Relations. They are mistaken because they have no option. They can choose what they are going to do about Public Relations and they can carry out these intentions more or less effectively".

"What they cannot choose" he continues "is to have no publics and no relationship with them-if they take that line, that it means that their Public Relations is unplanned, unstructured, unbudgeted and unsuccessful, in a word, unaffordable". This, it is not possible to ideate of

the life of public without Public Relations. Cristford (1973) opinionated that "the cardinal point to bear in mind that Public Relations is fundamentally concerned with people and their relationship with each other". For the Public Relations News, public relations "are the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an organization with the public interest and executes a programme of action and communication to earn Public understanding and acceptance".

According to the Mexican statement, "Public Relations is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organizations leaders and implementing planned programmes of actions which will serve both the organizations and the public interest". Before the curtain on Public Relations discussion is drawn close, it is suitable to track Harlow's, (1976) summary of definitions of this all – important concept: "a distinctive management function which helps establish and maintain mutual lines of communications, understanding, acceptance, and cooperation between an organization and its public, involves the management of problems or issues, helps management to keep informed and be responsive to public opinion, defines and helps management to keep abreast with an effectively utilized change, serving as an early warning system to help anticipate trends and uses research and ethical communication techniques as its principal tools".

Public relation can be likened to a double-edged sword, that is to say is can cut at both ends, making or marring, restoring peace or creating crisis, etc. In plain language, public relations are a sharp and significant weapon for building or destroying a specific situation, institution or even individual. For this reason, Cutlip and Center (1982) calls to attention that, "the power of public opinion must be first understood and dealt with. It provides the psychological environment in which organization prosper or perish". (Nweke, 2001) paints it as "an invaluable time bomb"

which every reasonable mind ought to identify and beware off". Baskin and Aronoff (1988) put it this way:

> *Public opinion has always been a force in human events. Leaders have courted the sentiments of the people to sustain their power and gain support for their actions. Only those rulers who were believed to be gods, or chosen by gods, could afford to ignore public attitudes and even they usually took pains to assure their subjects that their faith was well placed. Many despots, believing they held absolute power and were thus immune to public opinion later lost their heads.*

The possible future effect of the above is that regardless of what an organization have in mind, express with words or actions must agree with and/or chip in to the configuration and occlusion of favourable opinions (of the publics) in the direction of the organization. Nweke (2001) opines that despite the factuality that public opinion is resulting from careful thought of the conviction of people outside the decision making external to the authentic seat of power and who for some rationale vary to a great extent from those answerable for resolutions, it is still deciphered as a very important and necessary element in the generic decision making process.

Consequently, an utter identification and understanding of the process of public opinion arrangement and posture change thereupon forms the basis for the outcome and productiveness of contemporary Public Relations in the churches. This is so when one considers that the will of the public provides the doubtless nucleus against which an institution spins of activities and goals rotate. Ginsberg, (cited in Awosika, 1986) maintains that, "the will of the publics has become the ultimate standard

against which an organization conducts its activities and sets its goals." The needfulness to identify and recognize public opinion in a democratically administered human institution as the churches does not need any form of excessively resilience since the greater input in decision making process comes from the people. They, therefore, need to be duly consulted especially on matters affecting them directly if the church is to make a headway. Man, by his nature, complains when his opinion is not respected. Thus, the church pastoral council has to be conscious of this so as to carry all and sundry along or else, they should be ready to entertain frustration, misconception, protect, lack of interest, suspicion and other pockets of negative attitudes towards the affairs of the church. Idemili (1990) warns, by ignoring the public view-point, Public Relations communication often fails to correct misconceptions, provide a new information or develop favourable attitudes". The church and its leaders must therefore use this weapon of positive change positively or be prepared to fail woefully.

The Church Publics

These are the most important elements of this discussion for it is on them that all actions, attentions and efforts are directed. When we talk about the church, we are directly or indirectly referring to these groups – the internal and external constituents of the community. A well formulated Public Relations programme should thus be aimed at these groups of the desired effect. These groups will, to a large extent vary from programme to programme. Restraint must however be applied in deciding which of these publics should be reached effectively within the available resources. It would be sound economic modem to direct specific messages to specific publics. The choice of language, the mood, the media of communication and the method of message delivery are usually determined by these publics. The success or otherwise of every Public Relations programme is usually decided by these groups of people. Each of these groups

comprises a set of people united by one common interest, needs, goals, aspirations or even destinies. (Nolte, 1974) points out that, "the publics is every one interested in, or affected by an organization, or whose opinions can affect the organization". (Seitel, 1987) categories them as; internal, external, primary, secondary, marginal, traditional and future proponents, opponents and uncommitted publics". The publics of the church, therefore, may include: the entire congregation both the clergy and the laity (internal publics), community neighbours, opinion leaders, schools and colleges, other churches, business organizations, hospitals, the mass media, financial institutions, governments with their agencies and parastatals, trade associations, non-governmental organizations among many others.

The church willy-nilly has to always endeavour to identify the needs and concerns of these varying public and fashion an enduring way of satisfying them. This is a fact the church must not toy with if it hopes to record appreciable return in its Public Relations programmes and activities. From the foregoing submission, we can see clearly that the church is an organized human institution, an assembly of people who believe in and worship a supreme being (God). As such, it needs to be properly run and administered so as to accomplish the goal of its faithful, and the generality of the publics who depends on it and on whom it also depends on for continued existence and survival. Be that as it may, it demands that the opinions, feelings, expectations, aspirations and problems of these publics have to be met and solved through their association with the church. They need a dosage of accurate and timely information about their institution so as to have a pride of place. This thus calls for constant supply of almost an overflow of effective communication in virtually all matters affecting them about the church. This is exactly the vision and mission of a sound modem and effective Public Relations practice in the churches. Until, Public Relations is given as

pride of place in our churches the center can never hold.

Factors that Cause Conflicts in Churches

This section deals with the causes of conflict in Pentecostal churches. The factors discussed below include: - doctrines, dressing code, church authority, finances and lack of training of leaders. Conflict according to Ayanga (2002) is a reality in, but not limited to the Pentecostal churches in Africa. Other institutions like the family and governments in and out of Africa suffer conflict too. The conflicts affect the religious and spiritual lives thus disrupting harmony in the society.

Vahakangas and Kyomo (2003) indicate that there are numerous conflicts encountered by Pentecostal churches. Some of the factors that cause conflict include the dress code. Some Pentecostal churches emphasize the covering of the head by women who, further, should wear long dresses. This becomes their identity that distances them from their fellow Pentecostal believers. Such a group of believers operate on their own and have no relations with other churches. Divisions also occur due to the dressing codes of the clergy. While some Pentecostal pastors put on robes or other outer garments during pastoral services, others do not. For example the Church of God does not ascribe to any dressing code. In some churches, pastors cannot preside over ceremonies without outfits designed for those occasions. In others, pastors and other members of the clergy are at liberty to wear ordinary clothes while conducting weddings or funeral services. This disparity in dressing by both lay members and clergy cause frequent arguments and counter-accusations within Pentecostal churches.

Some Pentecostal churches according to Harrison (1999), forbid women from participating in church activities like preaching or praying. They believe that it is only men who are supposed to lead in worship and preaching. The members of such churches have open disagreements with other Pentecostals who allow women believers to participate in church services. He further notes that another major doctrine which divides the Pentecostal believers is the gift of speaking in tongues. Some insist that all believers should speak in tongues, while others disagree. Those who oppose this belief argue that, all spiritual gifts are equal and are all meant to edify the body of Christ (Church). Some Pentecostal believers overemphasize on the gift of prophesy at the expense of other gifts. The gift of prophesy is used to pair up marriage partners, decide on levels of education and even personal careers. This becomes another divisive doctrine in the Pentecostal churches.

The use of anointing oil has also been identified as another major cause of conflict in Pentecostal churches. Adeyemo (2006), for instance argues that some Pentecostal Christians drink the anointing oil or apply it on their residential homes to protect themselves from evil. Others use it in different ways. The interpretation and application of these varying doctrines have caused many Pentecostal believers to differ leading to splits. For example some members of the Winners Chapel Church (WCC) decamped and joined other churches because they were dissatisfied by the ritualistic use of anointing oil. Sanders (1994) and Kamau (1994) observe that the expulsion of some members, who do not follow set policies by church leadership, becomes another cause of conflicts. When such people are expelled, they usually start their own Pentecostal denominations.

Gichaga et al (2004) observe that debate on the celebration of the Holy Communion is another divisive factor in Pentecostal churches. There are those churches that regularly observe this rite on a weekly basis (every Sunday). Some of them take a longer period, even years without partaking sacraments. As a result, this brings divisions because the attitude attached to them is varied. He also identifies the teachings on eschatology (study of end times) as another cause of division among Pentecostal churches. Some of these churches give false eschatological teachings which make their followers to behave in unnatural ways. In fact some Christians have

died under mysterious circumstances due to such teachings. The Apostolic Faith Church is a good example where some of their members in Baringo County locked themselves for forty days of prayer and fasting. At the end of this session some of them died due to starvation. Some Christians encourage others to sell their property, stop working and even commit suicide in order to get to heaven.

Gichaga et al, (2004) also observe that baptism is a major cause of conflict in Pentecostal churches. Although most Pentecostals believe in immersion, differences occur due to the controversy on whether a new believer should be baptized immediately after conversion or later. Differences also occur due to beliefs and teachings on the subject of resurrection. There are those who hold the belief that believers will resurrect in their present form when Christ returns. Others hold that all believers will be given new spiritual bodies and will become new personalities. These diversities in beliefs, doctrines and teachings create sharp differences and conflicts among Pentecostal churches.

These findings guided the study to have an in-depth understanding of the teachings, beliefs and practices that may have led to conflicts in CCI Kiria-ini.

Wesangula (2010), points that Pentecostals differ and split due to features they display. These include the use of healing symbols such as holy water and handkerchiefs, among others. Samora (2009) observes that, some Pentecostal preachers encourage their followers to buy "holy water", anointing oil and handkerchiefs for protection against evil. Other Pentecostal churches for example the Winners Chapel encourage followers to literally drink olive oil for protection. Some Pentecostal Churches such as PEFA strongly condemn such practices. This therefore, brings conflict in Pentecostal churches.

Conflict and divisions according to Burges (2002) occur due to the powers given to the church leaders especially the pastors by the appointing authorities. In some instances, these leaders treat the churches like private property, exclusively co-owned and managed by spouses, close family members and friends. Such leaders exercise a lot of authority, in effect jeopardizing the purpose of the church organs. Church boards and councils are relegated to simple means of legitimizing the will of the leaders. As a result, the created autocratic leaders choose leadership styles that benefit them.

Those dissatisfied with the happenings are forced to quit and go to other churches or start their own. Thus, the way power is executed in some Pentecostal churches also becomes the cause of the numerous wrangles and divisions. Adeyemo (2006) observes that, competition among Pentecostal churches also leads to divisions and splits. He points out that, some of the Pentecostal preachers claim to have power to perform miracles. This makes the believers to move from one church to another looking for a place that may satisfy their quest for spiritual deliverance. This movement from one church to the other has left many believers confused and frustrated. Related to competition are the names given to some of these Pentecostal churches. Some preachers brand their churches with attractive names, such as "House of Harvest`, "Mountain of Fire", "Prayer Palace", "Miracle Centre" and "Helicopter of Christ" among others. These names create curiosity among the believers and increase movement across these churches due to their pronounced publicity. In most cases, many Christians quit their churches to join other Pentecostal churches a trend that creates animosity among them.

Kamau (1994) and Adeyemo (2006) observe that among the many causes of church conflicts, the major one is finances. The gospel of prosperity" has become the sermon of almost every Pentecostal preacher. This has influenced the Pentecostal Christians so much that they judge whether a preacher is anointed or not, depending on his/her material resources. Majority of such preachers insist on generous giving "seed planting" from the congregation in return for the promise of good health, bountiful harvest/income,

children for the barren and immense wealth. In other words, these preachers promise miracles to desperate victims in return for giving. Sande (2004) however observes that, since the Christian faith is not all about material wealth, desperation comes in when some of these Christians do not realize their objectives. They become disappointed and start moving from one Pentecostal church to another seeking for fulfillment. This scenario causes conflict among these churches because in the process of the movement, believers talk ill of one another especially their former pastors. At the same time, some co-pastors defect from their churches as a sign of either disapproval or greed for material things. They pick up the same approach and start their own Pentecostal churches in an attempt to get rich.

Kamau (1994) and Muturi (2009) point out that lack of education and theological training causes divisions in churches because when preachers are not trained, they may not be able to handle challenges that are found in their churches. This limitation has adversely affected their preaching, counseling and other general pastoral duties. Muturi (2009) further observes that uneducated as well as untrained pastors will in most cases preach an impoverished gospel that lacks perspective and retards the spiritual growth of their congregation. In most cases their teachings raise queries from listeners who become dissatisfied with some of their invalid arguments. Such a situation creates tension and conflict in a church. It also makes believers to move from one Pentecostal church to another in search of fellowship and spiritual satisfaction. Such movements cause tensions which create divisions in these churches.

Chacha (2007) observes that, problems emerge in the churches due to the fact that some church leaders assume positions of leadership that they themselves have not either qualified or been called to undertake. It is further noted that, conflicts in churches are accelerated by refusal of the clergy to hand over power after elections. This happens quite often where the incumbent

declines to step aside in transitional leadership. This finally results in two or more different camps each with a leader and a claim for legitimate leadership.

Research Design
Saunders, Lewis &Thornhill (2015), describe research design as a constructed plan showing how research questions would be interpreted. It covers the specifications of the process and tactics to adopt in order to ascertain valid answers to research questions (Oshodi, Asika & Asikhia, 2007). Basically, research design is Exploratory, Explanatory and Descriptive.

This study adopted Focus Group Discussion (FGD), a qualitative research design, to collect relevant data for the study. According to Poindexter & McCombs cited in Ekeanyanwu (2000; Blessing, 2016) A focus group is a qualitative research method that uses open-ended, follow-up and probing questions to search below the surface of a small group of participants' attitudes, opinions, and behaviours to understand motivations, feelings and reactions. A focus group has also been defined as a small gathering of individuals who has a common interest or characteristic, assembled by the researcher who uses the group and its interactions as a way to gain in-depth information about a particular topic (Kart & Williams 2002 cited in Tshuma and Mafa 2013,p.128).

Focus group discussion: A focus group discussion (FGD) is a good way to gather together people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest (Stewart, 2015). The group of participants will be guided by the researcher who will introduce the topic for discussion and help the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion amongst them.

The strength of FGD in this study relied on allowing the participants to agree or disagree with each other so that it provided an insight into how a group thinks about an issue, about the range of opinion and ideas, and the inconsistencies and variation that exists in their

community in terms of beliefs and their experiences and practices.

Basically, Focus groups discussions rely on the participant's words to provide insight, fill in the texture, capture the nuances, and explain why participants behave and respond the way they do. The researcher purposively selected six members of the public who formed the focus group. This group consisted of two public relations professionals who are very knowledgeable in their field, two clergy men who gave insight on evangelism, church conflicts and how they perceive these conflicts affect evangelism and two agnostics whom from the researcher's point of view are part of the targets of evangelism.

The researcher arranged a meeting point for all six members of the group to discuss issues which were raised by the researcher based on the research questions. Each participant was allowed to air out his/her views on any topic raised and the researcher moderated the discussion. This design is considered apt for this study because the researcher aims to understand the public relations implications of church conflict on evangelism.

Focus Group Discussion Guide and Instructions to Participants
This focus group discussion was designed to investigate the causes of church conflicts. It also aimed at identifying the Public Relations techniques employed by Salvation Ministries and Omega Power Ministries, to know how the conflict between Salvation Ministries and Omega Power Ministries has impacted on evangelism and to ascertain how the public's perceive this conflict.

The focus group discussion took about three and half hours and proceedings were audio recorded after consent was granted by all participants.

Ground Rules
- Only one person will speak at a time at a time. Even if you are tempted, wait until the person is done with what he/she is saying.

- There was no right or wrong answers.
- The researcher needs as many points as possible, hence, if you have something to say, please do so.
- You do not disagree with the views of other people in the group.

A brief profile was provided for the third group which comprised of the publics, in the other two groups, no introduction was done because they already know themselves.

The nature of the conflict
> Discussants "The conflict among our churches these days is such that is not done directly, church leaders quarrel themselves on their pulpits, some even result to going physical and having many litigations as it was the case of several churches including (Assemblies of God Church, St. Andrew's ANG. Church, Diobu and Christ Army Church of Nigeria). Most times the conflicts are inferential, not making direct statements but everyone knows what they actually mean and who they are referring to.

Threshold of church conflicts
The focus group discussion with the discussants on the issues that lead to the spring up of church conflicts. On this, most of the discussants enthused that:
> Discussants "Most of the things that cause these conflicts are hinged on issues bothering on membership, where you find church leaders begin to hunt for members as though they were in a circular company, the church ceaselessly seeks to identify and service or meet the needs and aspirations of its members at a most profitable cost. It is more so among Pentecostal churches in this era of church proliferation, especially, in Port Harcourt, Rivers state where church

business has turned out to be a lucrative and serious venture.

Finance is also a major cause of church conflict among churches and their leaders, where you find church leaders misappropriate church funds and use them for personal gains.

Church leaders see each other as rivals, they are always wanting to make a show to tell people who has more fame, power, you speaks better and all. They want to know who is more high-handed, who controls more clouth and all. Even these things should not be seen or even heard of in churches, we find it everywhere around, even in the orthodox churches, they are there.

You hear how Pastor David Ibiyeomie, during a program in his church in Port Harcourt, did declare that anyone at the age of 35 and is still Unmarried is an irresponsible person, according to him it is not the will of God. Apostle Chibuzor Chinyere almost immediately raised a counter-sermon stating that if you are 35 and not married, you are not irresponsible. No matter your age, you must marry when you come to OPM

Another major cause of church conflict is doctrine, because doctrines differ from one denomination to another, you realise that one tries to claim superiority over the other, you hear church leaders saying that the other church is not working according to the precepts of God, which is not to be so, because the Bible says we should not judge but our leaders in the church seem not to follow or understand that passage in the Bible. Now look at what is happening between the OPM man and his brother in

Salvation Ministries, first was the silent move by Pastor David Ibiyeomie our papa in destroying brothels, Night Clubs and joints that house prostitutes and adjoining business associated with weird life style which now made Apostle Chinyere Chibuzor to take it upon himself to preach to the sex workers, baptizing them and even joining them in marriage. These things they did ordinarily should boost the kingdom of God the the reverse became the case.

It is very obvious that Salvation Ministries have a problem with the doctrines and belief systems of our church, but it should not be so, because what works for one person may not work for another. This is a business and whatever approach that works for you, is what you follow.

Public Perception of conflict between churches

Conflict between churches shown that most churches do not have functional public relations units, one trying the get one and the other using advertisements in the place of public relations to get publicity. As a result of conflicts, churches have had both negative and positive publicity and have help in both churches to be socially responsible and has brought development in their various locations.

For a person like me who is not a Christian, I will not ever think of becoming one, they say they are the body of Christ yet, they embarrass themselves in public to the mockery of others.(Agnostic)

This conflict has brought shame to us as a church; it is very unhealthy for churches to have these kind of conflicts, what I think of these church leaders are intolerant and it has affected even us in other denominations. You try to talk to someone from other religions and they point to what your brothers in the same

faith   are   doing.   It   is   indeed disheartening. (Anglican clergy)

Even though everyone thinks that these conflicts are unhealthy and bad, I thinks the conflict is giving the media some kind of patronage, even young bloggers make little stipends from these stories. If you look around, you will see that churches like the Christ Army Church because of their conflict, each side is trying to expand and plant more churches, landlords will make money, the lawyers are also making money filling law suits, the people in the media have also made some money. Looking further you will realise that Salvation Ministries have built hostels in a tertiary institution, built something for the home of the elderly and has promised to give free education to some students of his church even though it will not be in his school, it is still a welcome development.

These pastors see themselves as people in a competition so one always wants to outshine the other and it are good because the society is benefiting.

From the above excerpts, it is noteworthy that the different participants have different ideas and clues and as to how they feel about church conflicts

Public(s)   response   to   evangelism   from churches

When conflicts occur among churches, it affects the worshippers particularly. It is difficult for Christians to cope up with the situation, bearing in mind that they join churches in order to get divine solace and spiritual nourishment.

These conflicts such as the intra-church conflict in Christ Army Church and Assemblies of God respectively end up being reported in the media thus giving the church negative publicity. Such situations tarnish the image of the church and repel many people from joining the Christian faith. This affects them negatively the "Great

Commission" where Christians are enjoined to go into the world and preach the gospel.

The Conflict between churches to be sincere is considered Unhealthy. This has led to distrust, hostility or loss of affinity and suspicion. Evangelization is preaching Christ to the non-Christian while re-evangelization is the effort made at refining the baptized Christians and maturing them into functional members of the Christian community. Although from a critical appraisal I must say that church conflict has had great impact on both aspect because often times whenever we go out for evangelism, the souls we intend wining focuses more on the controversy between or within churches, thus often times making us not to be able to achieve our aim of conversion. They begin to say things like…'una don preach for una selves finish wey na me una wan convert'

Evangelism and church growth in the face of conflict

Similarly, participants narrated their thoughts on the church conflict and how it has impacted on evangelism.

I know that conflict is not good but this small face-off between our church and Salvation Ministry has had a great impact on evangelism. Do you know that the church prospers when the members are winning souls also evangelism is a key factor in Christianity. We do not do much except we are evangelizing to people of Salvation Ministries, Winners Chapel and their likes. We do not do much, we carry out fliers that have our free schools, skill acquisitions, etc., and they willingly listen to us and even pray for God to bless our papa. Let them continue to insult our church; God is using that to bring more people to us.

Discussion of Findings

This study showed that church conflicts mostly start with misunderstandings and sometimes unguarded statements by church leaders and fuelled by the main stream media and the social media, unnecessary publicity. These churches do not have a functional PR unit but they hope to get one running in the near future, the conflict has impacted negatively on their evangelism pattern and the publics perceive that the media is of the reasons the conflicts escalated but that the conflict is perceived to be a healthy strategy for carrying out their corporate social responsibility. This is seen in the following research question(s) thus;

Research question 1: What are the causes of church conflicts?
Most of the participants in the group discussion have said that major causes of church conflicts are issues bothering on fishing of members, where most church leaders want to be called General Overseers of the largest church with the biggest auditorium in a city. Another factor is mismanagement/misappropriation of finances by church leaders or those they have put in charge of such departments. Doctrines are also major sources of church conflicts, and prominence is also a factor. Church leaders want to be seen as people who can shake heavens, most of them make declarations and prophesy and you the other church leader trying to outshine his counterpart.
Karl Max's social conflict theory tells us of class, and so each church leader t all times wants to be on a higher pedestal than the other.

Research question 2: How has the conflict between churches has impacted on evangelism?
The Conflict between churches has led to distrust, hostility or loss of affinity and suspicion. One of the discussant alleged, although, from a critical appraisal the conflict has had great impact on both aspect because often times whenever members of these churches go out for evangelism, the souls which are supposed to be won focuses more on the controversy between churches, evangelists and pastors begin to hear

things like…'una don preach for una selves finish wey na me una wan convert.' Citing the Functionalism theory, it is evident to note that the church is a religious foundation that moulds the society`s super structure which include morality, ideology, arts and literature. The social institutions that support the leadership structure of society, for instance, the state, educational system, the family and religious institutions are part of this system. It can therefore be concluded that, when the church is stable, the society is healthy but when it is unstable then the society to some extent becomes unstable too.

In a situation where the church is unstable due to conflicts and misunderstanding, the public will perceive it as a threat to public peace and aligning oneself to her doctrines at that point might not be good for public peace.

Summary of findings
Summary of the results on the nature of church conflict reveals that most of the conflicts are going on with inferential and indirect statements. Also the causes of Inter church conflict are issues bothering on doctrines and Practice, leadership style, membership fishing, and finance amongst others
It also revealed that most members of the public feel indifferent about these conflicts and it has affected their evangelism pattern negatively.

Conclusion-work on conclusion
It has been noted in this study that there are several intra and Inter church conflicts. Even though some seem more subtle than others, the cause of the conflicts are issues bothering on doctrine, finances, leadership styles, etc. furthermore, public perception of church conflict and the effect it has on their evangelism pattern were also examined.

Recommendation
This Study recommends that;
- Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Pentecostal fellowship of Nigeria should be allowed to play a more proactive role in educating the leadership of various churches to enable them play their roles

very well when there is misunderstanding within their churches so that they can guard against split of churches.

- Topics about conflict resolution and the likes should be talked about during church meetings.
- Preachers must try and avoid provocative sermons as they mount the pulpit since it has a tendency to create confusion.

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