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## Servant Leadership as an Impetus to Conflict Management among Pastors in Selected Urban Churches in Kenya

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### **Abstract:**

*The study looked into the connection between servant leadership and interpersonal conflict management among pastors from two denominations in urban towns in Kenya. Servant leadership was considered the independent variable, while interpersonal conflict management styles were considered the dependent variable. Three objectives guided the study: to find out how emotional healing affects interpersonal conflict management, to determine how putting followers first affects interpersonal conflict, and to examine the effect of behaving ethically on interpersonal conflict among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya. The study applied a pragmatic philosophical approach and used the convergent parallel mixed methods approach to collect data. The study calculated a sample size of 123 responses, of which 75 participants responded. Quantitative data was analyzed using STATA v17. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationships between the constructs of the variables. Findings from the study indicated that servant leadership behaviours of emotional healing, putting followers first and behaving ethically had an effect on accommodating, compromising, and collaborating conflict management styles among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya. The findings provided empirical strength to the practice of servant leadership behaviours for effective interpersonal conflict management. The researcher recommended that leadership training for pastors incorporate the practical applications of servant leadership behaviours for enhanced interpersonal conflict management among pastors.*

**Keywords:** Servant leadership, conflict management styles, pastors, Kenya

### **1. Introduction**

Servant leadership and conflict management continue to garner attention in organizational leadership. Servant leadership stands out due to its emphasis on serving others, prioritizing their needs above their leader's own and demonstrating that the concerns of others are a priority (Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse, 2016). Interpersonal conflict, on the other hand, exists in all organizations, including churches, and needs to be managed in order for the organization to achieve its desired objectives. Servant leadership has been identified as an instrumental leadership approach to address the conflicts, crises and leadership problems that pastors in churches encounter (Buffel, 2020; Keita & Lao, 2019). According to Buffel (2020), servant leadership helps leaders make better choices and decisions in preventing and managing conflict when it arises. Leaders who display servant leadership are better able to manage interpersonal conflicts. Servant leaders are also typically focused on helping, actively addressing problems, maintaining effective communication, and sustaining healthy relationships (Fields, 2021). Servant leadership is relevant to conflict management because it emphasizes love, human values, dialogue and negotiations (Wuli et al., 2020). Servant leaders are not immune to conflict and must navigate the tension created by the conflict with maturity to positively influence the outcome of the conflict (Craun & Hensen, 2022). Servant leaders also openly recognize conflict, have a desire and intention to expose the truth, are naturally curious, cultivate open-mindedness, and identify common goals to address conflict (Tard, 2019). Thus, servant leadership was considered appropriate and relevant in the effective management of interpersonal conflict among individuals.

Conflict management is one of the challenges facing church institutions. Available studies conducted in the global, continental and local contexts have captured this challenge of conflict management. A literature review study of clergy who leave congregational ministry in the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant denominations in the United States of America concluded that one of the main reasons for clergy exit was interpersonal conflict (Hamm & Eagle, 2021). Other documented effects of unresolved interpersonal conflict among pastors in America include damage to emotional health,

such that they are unable to work together, leading to dysfunctional relationships, resignations, and terminations (Palmer, 2020). Pastors in Africa have not been spared from experiencing the detrimental effects of interpersonal conflicts. Interpersonal conflicts have led to situations of physical violence, litigation, and departure from full-time ministry work, among negative effects (Joynt, 2018; Pali, 2018). In some cases, interpersonal conflicts have had an element of tribal connotations (Msipa, 2020). Various mechanisms such as prayer, counselling, meditative dialogues, persuasion and teaching have been tried (Afolaranmi, 2022).

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

The situation of unmanaged interpersonal conflict among pastors in Kenya has spilled over to the congregations and caused church splits, strained relationships, hindered church growth and negatively impacted spiritual maturity (Mitu et al., 2023; Muhajji, 2021; Mwabonje, 2019). Although pastors are generally highly respected, consulted and considered the most influential Christian leaders who are able to influence their congregants and communities to live in harmony, the impact of unresolved interpersonal conflicts among pastors has caused detrimental effects on faith, brought disillusionment, discouragement, loss of their calling, created forced exits and in some cases, led to the change of vocation altogether (Mwania, 2020). Several studies have investigated the use of authoritative and dictatorial leadership styles in conflict management (Odhiambo et al., 2013). However, there has been limited research that explored the use of servant leadership in interpersonal conflict management, specifically among pastors in Kenya. The study aimed to ascertain the influence of servant leadership as an independent variable and conflict management as the dependent variable among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya.

### 1.2. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives that guided the study were as follows:

- To determine the effect of emotional healing on interpersonal conflict among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya.
- To investigate the effect of putting followers first on interpersonal conflict among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya.
- To determine the effect of behaving ethically on interpersonal conflict among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya.

### 1.3. Research Questions

- To what extent does emotional healing affect interpersonal conflict management among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya?
- In what ways does putting followers first affect interpersonal conflict management among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya?
- To what extent does behaving ethically affect interpersonal conflict management among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya?

### 1.4. Significance of the Study

This study held significance in the discourse surrounding the influence of servant leadership style on the management of interpersonal conflict, particularly within the context of pastors. It provided empirical findings that offer valuable insights to researchers studying servant leadership and conflict management, particularly within the church setting in Kenya, the broader African region, and globally. The research findings have created new knowledge in the realm of servant leadership and interpersonal conflict management styles among pastors in Kenya. Specifically, servant leadership has been proven useful in addressing interpersonal conflicts among pastors. The existing body of knowledge, theory, and practical applications within the religious and scholarly communities in Kenya and globally have also been strengthened by the findings from the study.

The outcomes from the study benefit pastors by providing them with a deeper understanding of servant leadership behaviours that can be used to influence positive and healthy conflict management engagements among themselves. Conflict management is ultimately a leadership issue. The study contributed to human resource management policies by establishing that training in the area of servant leadership behaviours and conflict management styles is absolutely necessary and required to help pastors manage and resolve their interpersonal conflicts in a better way.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Servant Leadership

Servant leadership, attributed to Robert Greenleaf, encompasses both a leadership theory and a leadership style. The term 'servant leadership' originated from Greenleaf's writings (Crowther, 2018; Northouse, 2016). Greenleaf challenged traditional leadership theories such as Transactional Leadership and was motivated by a desire to see a change in business ethics where the consumer as employee or customer is well served instead of the motivation for profit, business growth, and creating good working environments for employees (Sobralse, 2020). Servant leadership endeavours to engage others in decision-making processes, emphasizes caring behaviour, upholds ethical standards, fosters employee growth, and improves the caring and overall quality of organizational life (Spears, 2010).

Several studies examine the application of the servant leadership style in conflict management. Servant leadership has been shown to facilitate constructive conflict management styles in the workplace (Hough, 2021; Obi et al., 2020). Servant leaders make better choices and decisions not only in prevention but also in the management of conflict (Buffel, 2020). Servant leadership has been used effectively to address underlying causes of leadership problems within the church (Keita & Lao, 2019). Individuals who score higher on servant leadership behaviours have also been proven to lower interpersonal conflict in the workplace (Freeborough, 2021). Similarly, research conducted in Africa confirms a positive and significant relationship between servant leadership and interpersonal conflict management. In Nigeria, Obi et al. (2020) investigated the link between servant leadership and emotional well-being and concluded that the servant leadership style complements the collaborating conflict management style.

There are various models of servant leadership in research. One such model was developed by Robert Liden and other researchers in 2014 (Liden et al., 2014; Northouse, 2016). Robert Liden further designed his servant leadership model into the short form servant leadership survey instrument, which identified seven servant leadership behaviours, namely: emotional healing, conceptual skills, putting followers first, helping followers grow and succeed, behaving ethically, empowering, and creating value for the community (Northouse, 2016). The short form Liden Model of Servant Leadership SL-28 was used because of having gone through rigorous construction and validation of the servant leadership measures utilized (Eva et al., 2019). Three servant leadership behaviours were considered for this study: emotional healing, putting followers first and behaving ethically.

### 2.1.1. Emotional Healing

Interpersonal conflict is likely to cause anger and hurt in the hearts of those engaged in conflict. Emotional healing, integral to servant leadership, encompasses demonstrating sensitivity to the personal concerns of others (Song, 2018). According to Spears (2010), one of the hallmarks of servant leadership lies in its potential to foster self-healing and repair relationships with others. This happens through the creation of an environment that encourages emotional mending and facilitates emotional healing. Such an environment includes listening, empathy, forgiveness and compassion (Liden et al., 2014; Song, 2018). Compassion includes forgiving others for their mistakes, exhibiting unconditional love, aiding others to overcome hardship or difficulties, demonstrating sensitivity to the needs of others, and displaying concern for their well-being, among other virtues (Coetzer et al., 2017). Emotional healing includes being attuned to the personal concerns of others through empathy and awareness (Liden et al., 2014). To provide emotional healing, a leader needs to be aware and able to manage their emotions (Song, 2018).

### 2.1.2. Putting Followers First

Leaders bear the crucial responsibility of managing conflict among their followers (Obi et al., 2020). According to Liden et al. (2014), servant leaders who prioritize the well-being of others above their own create a culture of service that directly and positively influences performance. In conflict, a servant leader sets the tone and example for the team to follow, influences others through their actions and attitude, and demonstrates humility, respect, honesty, integrity and compassion, which are necessary for conflict management. Moreover, servant leaders empower their followers to openly discuss their difficulties, disagreements, and frustrations directly, fostering collaborative problem-solving that benefits the team as a whole (Wong et al., 2018).

### 2.1.3. Behaving Ethically

Ethical behaviours include principles such as respect, integrity, justice, communication, dialogue, loyalty, fairness, strong moral principles, honesty, openness and respect (Coetzer et al., 2017; Lemoine et al., 2019; Northouse, 2016). Research indicates that ethical behaviour fosters an ethical organizational culture, nurtures organizational citizenship, diminishes organizational cynicism, and enhances organizational success (Chi et al., 2020; Ouma, 2017). Religious values and spirituality are recognized as pivotal in forming and shaping organizations with robust ethical practices (Astrachan et al., 2020). Joo et al. (2018) also found that members of the Korean Catholic Church who perceived their priests or leaders as having high levels of servant leadership tended to demonstrate greater commitment to the leader and participated more actively in church activities. This goes on to show that pastors who practice servant leadership behave ethically with each other, enhancing the success of the church they serve in. Furthermore, such pastors demonstrate courage, possess the ability to take calculated risks, and stand up for what is morally righteous despite potential negative repercussions. Servant leadership also serves as an effective self-guard against moral and ethical leadership failures (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018).

## *2.2. Organizational Conflict Management*

Rahim (2023) defines conflict as an interactive phenomenon marked by disagreement or discord between entities, such as individuals, groups, or organizations, arising from incompatibilities. Conflicts can be classified according to the source of origin or antecedent. According to O'Neill et al. (2018), scholarly attention has predominantly centred on the three main types of conflict: task conflict, relationship conflict and process conflict. Task conflict pertains to disagreement among group members concerning ideas and opinions related to task execution (Todorova et al., 2022). Relationship conflict occurs when two or more members develop emotions and feelings about a problem they are trying to solve (Gallo, 2017). The emotions and feelings may also be created by personality clashes, sarcasm, and making fun of one's ideas, which leads to hostility, distrust, and negative feelings of anger and frustration. Process conflict is brought about by team members' perceptions of the allocation of duties and resources and how the various tasks will be addressed. Gallo (2017) further adds that there is a status conflict, which is about who is in charge, and it happens where there is no

unclear hierarchy of who is in charge, who appears in charge, or who makes the call. Status conflict happens in teams that are put together for a specific task or objective or where shared leadership exists. To effectively address any of the aforementioned types of conflict, it is essential to apply an appropriate conflict management style.

Conflict management styles (CMS) refer to how individuals respond to conflict. McCorkle and Reese (2018) define conflict management style as a structured response pattern to conflict scenarios. These styles represent specific behavioural reactions that individuals use when confronted with conflict (Caputo et al., 2019). In 1940, Mary Parker Follet developed the initial conflict management styles. This was followed in 1949 by Morton Deutsch, who developed the cooperation-conflict dichotomy (Deutsch et al., 2011). In 1964, Robert Blake and Jane Mouton devised the two-dimensional managerial grid. Building upon Blake and Mouton's framework, Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann developed the Thomas Kilmann conflict management styles model in 1974, expanding the spectrum of conflict management based on the inclination to satisfy personal and others' concerns. Thomas and Kilmann identified five similar styles of conflict management, though they used different words. The five conflict management styles are: avoiding, accommodating, compromising, competing and collaborating. Following is a discussion on the various conflict management styles.

### 2.2.1. Avoiding

Avoiding refers to withdrawing from a situation; it is unassertive and uncooperative. This style is characterized by low concern for both self and others. The individual neither pursues personal concerns nor those of the other person (Valente et al., 2020). Individuals who opt for avoidance do not directly address the conflict. Instead, they diplomatically side-step the issue, postpone resolution or withdraw from the situation altogether. Avoiding can be advantageous if the conflict is not yet ready for discussion and settlement if the issue is insignificant if preserving harmony is paramount, and if there is no possibility of future contact between the individuals (McCorkle & Reese, 2018). Temporary avoidance, achieved by postponing a conflict encounter to a specified time, can allow the parties in conflict to regroup and adjust. However, when conflict is suppressed instead of being exposed, it may manifest in other dysfunctional ways such as withdrawal, complaining to others, keeping score of grievances, gradual erosion of relationships, outbursts, verbal aggressiveness or other extreme measures (McCorkle & Reese, 2018).

### 2.2.2. Accommodating

Accommodating is the complete opposite of competing; it is unassertive yet cooperative. Individuals who adopt an accommodating style prioritize the satisfaction of the other party's concern over their own. Accommodating is often perceived as an act of self-sacrifice, demonstrating selflessness as individuals willingly defer to the perspectives of others or comply with directives even against their own wishes. In conflict situations, the accommodating style is advantageous when the one person giving way has little or no vested interest in the outcome, the risks are minimal, the potential losses are insignificant, there is a deep concern for self-preservation, or the relationship has either very high or very low commitment (McCorkle & Reese, 2018). However, the accommodating conflict management style becomes disadvantageous if power becomes imbalanced between the people if personal goals remain unfulfilled and if the relationship is stagnant. If habits are condoned instead of setting boundaries, the overbearing person may take advantage, and thus, it becomes much harder to negotiate a change of behaviour in the future (McCorkle & Reese, 2018).

### 2.2.3. Compromising

Compromising conflict management style presents a balance between competing and collaboration. It is often adopted by individuals who downplay differences and emphasize commonality to address the concerns of both parties involved in conflict (Chen et al., 2019). Compromising exhibits low concern for self and high concern for others, alongside low personal assertiveness and high cooperation (Valente et al., 2020). This conflict style is described as a loose-win conflict. According to Palmer (2020), compromising follows the give-and-take philosophy, where the interests and goals of each party are negotiated and bartered. It involves self-sacrifice and may include generosity, charity or obedience to others (Rahim & Katz, 2020). Compromising proves beneficial when the conflict issue holds moderate importance, if time is limited, a temporary solution is needed, or when both parties are willing to accept a partially satisfying solution. Effective use of a compromising conflict management style requires a leadership style that is assertive yet flexible, willing to engage in persuasion and negotiation as needed. Brewer (2018) considers the compromising style as the willingness among the parties involved to negotiate an agreement that represents giving up their first preference to make a deal.

### 2.2.4. Competing

Competing conflict management style is both assertive and uncooperative. It is often characterized as a power-oriented approach where an individual prioritizes their own concern over those of others (McCorkle & Reese, 2018). This style is synonymous with a power struggle where the individual seeks to advance their position at the expense of the other party, employing various power tactics such as argumentativeness, leveraging authority, or imposing sanctions. The individuals who apply the competing style firmly believe in advocating for their rights, defend positions they deem correct, and exhibit a strong desire to win at all costs. Competing style can be effectively used in situations when there are genuinely limited resources, time constraints are pressing, or when achieving the goal outweighs consideration for the relationship (McCorkle & Reese, 2018). However, competing is disadvantageous if there is a relationship at risk of being ruined or the other party is humiliated in the achievement of the goal.

### 2.2.5. Collaborating

Collaborating conflict style emerges when two or more individuals work together to exchange information and collectively make significant decisions (Raines, 2019). According to Raines (2019), collaborating views conflict as an opportunity to solve problems constructively, working positively with others with a win-win mindset. Individuals who employ the collaborating style strive to find solutions that fully satisfy both their concerns and those of others. They are open to exploring disagreements, seeking to understand the perspectives of others, identifying underlying needs and desires and devising creative solutions to interpersonal issues. Collaborating offers several advantages, including the maximization of goal-achievement of all parties involved, engagement in creative problem-solving and fostering commitment to the solutions (McCorkle & Reese, 2018). A collaborative conflict management style is considered best for several reasons. Firstly, studies on conflict management in various sectors such as business, education and nursing indicate that collaborating is a preferred style of conflict management (Lahana, 2019; Rapatalo, 2020; Shariq et al., 2022). Secondly, the collaborating conflict management style demonstrates a high level of concern for both self and others, ensuring that the needs and concerns of all parties involved in the conflict are taken into consideration as a solution is sought (Deutsch et al., 2011). Thirdly, according to Fields (2021) and Obi et al. (2020), leaders who practice servant leadership refrain from avoiding and competing conflict management styles and instead opt for collaborating. Research suggests that using an avoiding conflict management style among pastors is associated with an increase in the likelihood of strain and emotional exhaustion (Boyd, 2020). Collaborating conflict management style is recommended as the preferred conflict management style among pastors, which, if used consistently, builds trust, stronger relationships, and confidence in managing future conflicts and leads to positive decisions for the church (Palmer, 2020).

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design

For this current study, the chosen research philosophy was pragmatism. Pragmatism is a worldview focused on what works rather than what might be considered objectively true (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Pragmatists argue that social research inquiry requires the use of more than one scientific method to uncover truths in the world. Moreover, pragmatism permits the flexible use of diverse tools tailored to the specific research inquiries under consideration (Leavy, 2017). Pragmatism worldview provides a foundation for mixed methods research (Creswell, 2014). A pragmatic approach proves beneficial when the researcher aims to obtain practical and actionable insights capable of addressing tangible issues (Gray, 2021; Patton, 2015). In the context of the current study, the overarching problem was to understand the impact of servant leadership on interpersonal conflict management among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya. However, this article presented only the quantitative data that was captured through a close-ended questionnaire and analyzed using STATA v17.

### 3.2. Target Population

Category	Number	Percentage
Protestant pastors	90	50%
Pentecostal pastors	90	50%
Total	180	100%

Table 1: Distribution of the Target Population

Source: Author (2024)

Table 1 captures the target population of this study. The target was all pastors within the identified Protestant and Pentecostal church denominations in urban counties in Kenya.

### 3.3. Sample Size Determination and Sampling Technique

The Yamane sampling size formula was used to calculate how many respondents from the target population would be sampled for the study. In order to achieve a sample size,  $N$  is the population and  $e$  is at the 95% confidence level. Thus,

$$n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

$$180 / (1 + 180(0.05)^2) = 124$$

Based on the Yamane formula, a total of 124 respondents from the total population were invited to engage in the study.

Category of Respondents	Total Number	Sample Size
Pentecostal Senior Pastors	29	19
Protestant Parish Ministers	45	31
Pentecostal ministry heads of departments	61	42
Protestant Evangelists	45	31
Total	180	123

Table 2: Sample Size

Source: Author (2024)

### 3.4. Data Collection Instruments

An important aspect of data collection in mixed methods research is the integration of both quantitative and qualitative methods during data collection (Fetters & Molina-Azolin, 2017). In the current study, data were collected using the same instrument, a semi-structured survey questionnaire. The concurrent data collection approach, typical in convergent mixed methods design, ensures efficiency as both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered during one phase of the research simultaneously (Creswell & Clark, 2018). Timeliness in gathering data from the field within the desired timeframe and meeting the timing orientation of concurrent design was thus ensured.

#### 3.4.1. Reliability of Research Instruments

To establish and ensure the reliability of the questionnaire used for this current study, all input was captured on a form before data collection. The commonly used internal consistency measure is the Cronbach alpha, which can be determined using data analysis software. Taber (2018) described alpha values of 0.64 – 0.85 as adequate. The alpha value for this present study was >0.7. Thus, the Liden et al. (2014) short-form SL28 questionnaire and the Thomas Kilmann conflict inventory questionnaire were deemed reliable and used for this study.

#### 3.4.2. Validity of Research Instruments

The use of already existing research instruments that have already been tested for reliability and validity is acceptable in research (Bastos et al., 2014). The researcher used research instruments that had already been validated by other studies to ensure they met the required criteria. The Servant Leadership questionnaire SL-28 has been validated and used by researchers such as Gaskova (2020), who used the SL-28 in his research on servant leadership in relation to work performance. Thomas Kilmann Inventory for Conflict Management has also been used by researchers to assess the conflict management styles of professionals such as school administrators (Rapatalo, 2020).

### 3.5. Data Collection Methods and Procedures

The quantitative data was collected through close-ended questions and provided data for the statistical part of the study.

### 3.6. Data Analysis and Presentation

Quantitative data was subjected to both descriptive analysis and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis entailed computing frequencies and proportions for categorical data, as well as mean and standard deviations for continuous variables. The majority of the questions employed a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) or 1 (very low extent) to 5 (very great extent). For each category, a continuous composite score was generated by summing the responses from each of the questions within that category. The composite scores were then summarised analytically using means and standard deviations.

## 4. Research Findings and Discussion

### 4.1. Response Rate

Category of Respondents	Total Number	Sample Size	Response Rate	Response
Pentecostal Senior Pastors	29	19	14	19%
Protestant Parish Ministers	45	31	19	25%
Pentecostal Ministry/Heads of Departments	61	42	29	39%
Protestant Evangelists	45	31	13	17%
Total	180	123	75	100%

Table 3: Response Rate  
Source: Author (2024)

Table 3 presents an analysis of the respondents. A total of 123 participants were targeted. Out of all the respondents reached out to, 77 responded to the questionnaire. Response rates in mixed research studies range from 29% to 100%, depending on the survey distribution method (Tomasi et al., 2018). The online web survey was used, whereby the research questions were captured on Google Forms, and the link to the questionnaire was sent to participants via email. A meta-analysis of response rates of online surveys found that the average response rate was 44.1% (Wu et al., 2022). The current study had a response rate of 63%.

#### 4.2. Demographic Characteristics

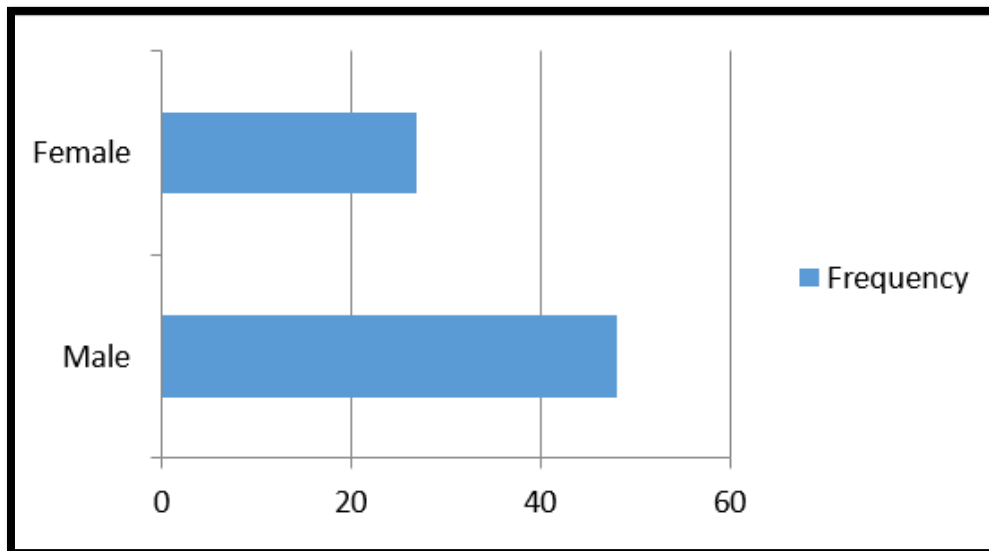


Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

The gender distribution is illustrated in figure 1. 27 respondents, representing 36%, were females, while 48 respondents, representing 64%, were males. Male representation was predominant in comparison to female pastors. This finding was similar to that of Maina et al. (2018), who found that most pastors in church ministry in Nairobi County, Kenya, are males. Therefore, the current study confirmed the presence of more male than female pastors among the two denominations that were included in the study.

#### 4.3. Distribution of Respondents Based on Age

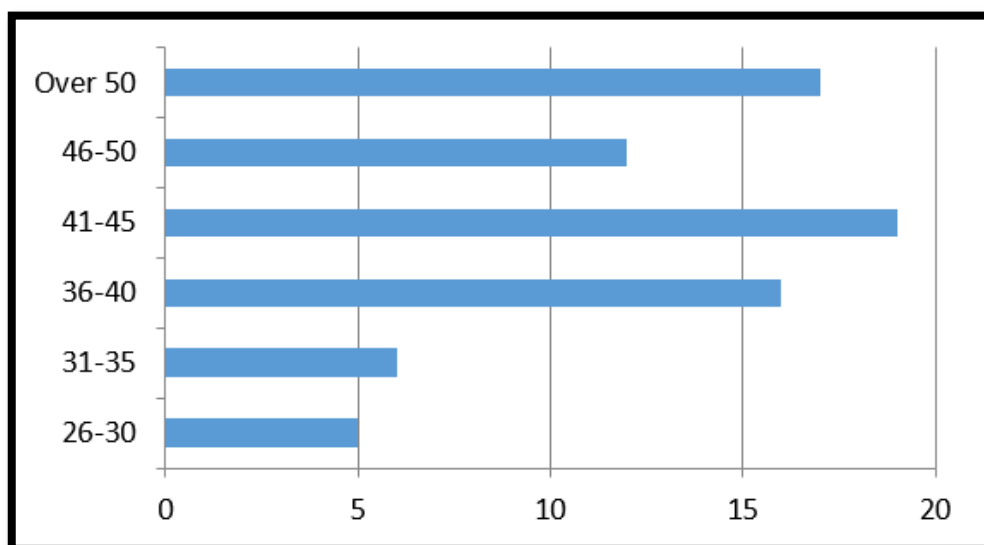


Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Figure 2 demonstrates the age distribution of the respondents. The age distribution was broken down as follows:

- 5 respondents, representing 6.7% of the total population, were aged 26 and 30 years
- 6 respondents, representing 8% of the population, were aged between 31 and 35 years
- 16 respondents, representing 21.3% of the total respondents, were aged between 36 and 40 years
- 19 respondents, representing 25.3% of the population, were aged between 41 and 45 years
- 12 respondents, representing 16% of the population, were aged between 46 and 50 years.
- 17 respondents, representing 22.7% of the population, were aged 50 and above

In summary, the majority of the respondents, 48 out of 75, were aged 41 and above. The findings show that most of the pastors were aged 40 years and above, with the majority falling in the 41-45 years age bracket (27.3%). The finding on pastors aged 41 and above is supported by another study among selected churches in Nairobi, which found that the majority of the pastors in Nairobi were aged 41 and above (Thiga et al., 2021).

4.4. Distribution of Respondents Based on Level of Education

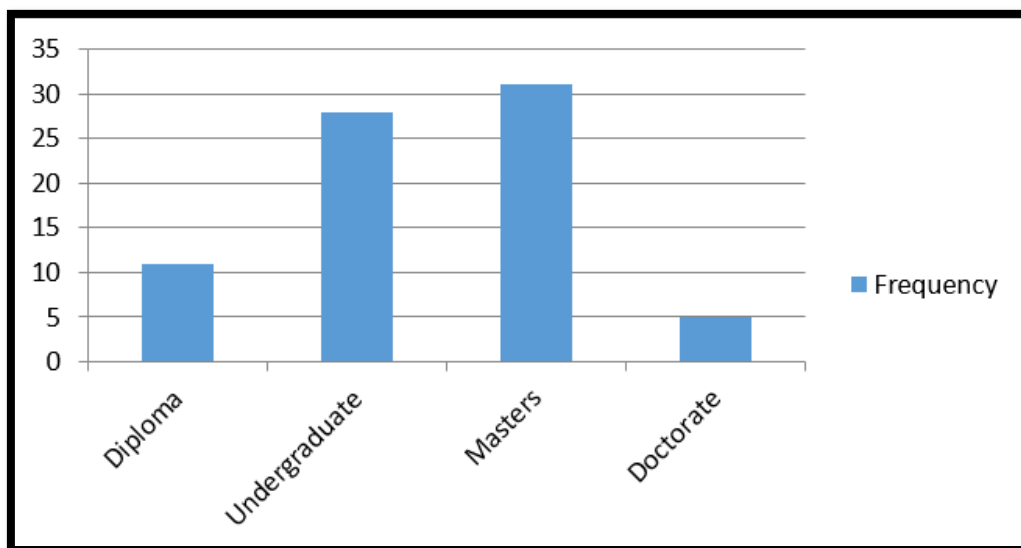


Figure 3: Distribution of Respondents Based on Level of Education

Figure 3 presents a summary of the levels of education of the respondents. Regarding their level of education, 32 (41.5%) respondents had attained up to Masters level, while 28 (36%) respondents had attained their undergraduate degree. There were 5 (6.5%) PhD holders among the respondents, and 12 (15%) were diploma holders. The highest number of respondents held a master's degree (41.5%), followed closely by those who had completed their undergraduate studies (36%). In summary, the findings indicated that 84% of the respondents had attained university-level education.

4.5. Distribution of Respondents Based on Years of Service

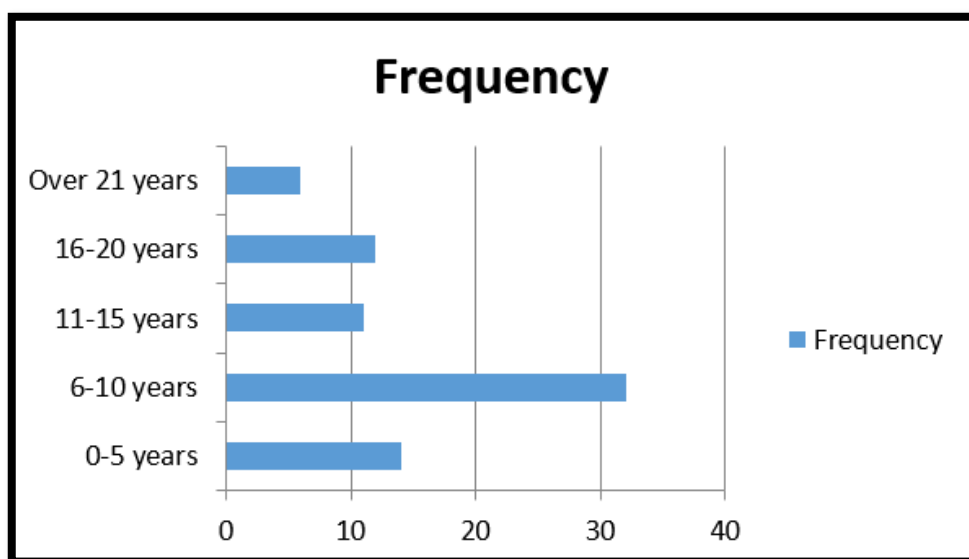


Figure 4: Period of Service as a Pastor

Figure 4 illustrates the number of years that respondents had been working in the church. Six respondents (7.8%) had served the longest, for 20 years and above, in the church. Twelve respondents (15.6%) had worked in the church for 16 to 20 years, and another 12 (15.6%) had also worked in the church for 11 to 15 years. The majority of the respondents, totalling 33 (42.8%), had worked in the church between 6 to 10 years, while 14 (18.1%) respondents had worked for a period between 0 to 5 years.



## 4.6. Descriptive Analysis of Independent Variable Indicators

Emotional Healing	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)	p-Value
Overall score (mean, SD)	4.0 (0.7)	4.1 (0.5)	4.1 (0.6)	0.485
Overall mean percentage score	75.5 (18.3)	78.1 (13.3)	77.2 (15.2)	0.472
<i>Other pastors seek help from me if they have a personal problem</i>				
Disagree	4(8.3)	2(7.4)	6(8)	0.896
Neutral	5(10.4)	2(7.4)	7(9.3)	
Agree	39(81.3)	23(85.2)	62(82.7)	
<i>I care about the well-being of fellow pastors</i>				
Disagree	3(6.3)	1(3.7)	4(5.3)	0.360
Neutral	3(6.3)	0	3(4)	
Agree	42(87.4)	26(96.3)	68(90.7)	
<i>I take time to talk to fellow pastors on a personal level</i>				
Disagree	0	1 (3.7)	1 (1.3)	0.204
Neutral	6 (12.5)	6 (22.2)	12 (16)	
Agree	42 (87.5)	20 (74.1)	62 (82.7)	
<i>I can recognize when other pastors are feeling down without asking them</i>				
Disagree	1 (2.1)	1 (3.7)	2 (2.7)	0.645
Neutral	9 (18.8)	3 (11.1)	12 (16)	
Agree	38 (79.2)	23 (85.2)	61 (81.3)	

Table 4: Emotional Healing

Source: Author (2024)

The findings revealed a strong tendency among pastors, both male and female, to engage in practices that support the *emotional well-being* of their colleagues. The mean score was 4.1 (SD=0.6), which corresponded to 'agree' on the scale used. The percentage agreement score was 77% overall, and it was similar for both males and females. The majority of the pastors (82.7%), with 81.3% of males and 85.2% of females, agreed that other pastors seek their help for personal problems, indicating a high level of trust and emotional support within their community. This was further supported by the responses to caring about the well-being of fellow pastors, where 87.4% of male and an even higher 96.3% of female pastors agreed with the statement. Moreover, the findings show that most pastors actively engage in personal conversations with their peers, with 87.5% of male and 74.1% of female pastors taking time to talk on a personal level, indicating high levels of personal engagement and emotional availability among pastors. Finally, the ability to recognize emotional distress in others without being told is also notably high among pastors. A total of 79.2% of male and 85.2% of female pastors indicated their ability to discern when other pastors are feeling down. This high level of empathy and emotional awareness is a crucial aspect of emotional healing in a leadership context. The findings on emotional healing among pastors support a previous study by Song (2019), who found that relational capacity can be enhanced by recognizing and being comfortable with one's emotions and others.

## 4.6.1. Putting Followers First

Putting Followers First	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)	p-Value
Overall score (mean (sd))	3.7 (0.7)	3.7 (0.7)	3.7 (0.7)	0.891
Overall mean percentage score	67.1 (16.7)	67.6 (16.4)	67.4 (16.4)	0.910
<i>I care more about the success of other pastors than my own</i>				
Disagree	4 (8.3)	3 (11.1)	7 (9.3)	0.714
Neutral	18 (37.5)	12 (44.4)	30 (40)	
Agree	26 (54.2)	12 (44.4)	38 (50.7)	
<i>I put the interests of other pastors above my own</i>				
Disagree	6 (12.5)	1 (3.7)	7 (9.3)	0.427
Neutral	16 (33.3)	11 (40.7)	27 (36)	
Agree	26 (54.2)	15 (55.6)	41 (54.7)	
<i>I sacrifice my own interests to meet the needs of other pastors</i>				
Disagree	5 (10.4)	3 (11.1)	8 (10.7)	0.916
Neutral	14 (29.2)	9 (33.3)	23 (30.7)	
Agree	29 (60.4)	15 (55.6)	44 (58.7)	
<i>I do what I can to make the jobs of other pastors easier</i>				
Disagree	0	0	0	0.978
Neutral	7 (14.6)	4 (14.8)	11 (14.7)	
Agree	41 (85.4)	23 (85.2)	64 (85.3)	

Table 5: Putting Followers First

Source: Author (2024)

Table 5 covers the section on *putting followers first*. The responses from pastors reflected a commitment to the well-being and success of others, a characteristic of servant leadership. The mean score was 3.7 (SD =0.7), corresponding to agreement based on the scale used. The percentage agreement score was 67% overall, and it was similar for both males and females. When asked whether they care more about the success of other pastors than their own, the majority of male pastors (54.2%) and 44.4% of female pastors agreed with this statement. However, a notable number from both genders remained neutral (37.5% of males and 44.4% of females), suggesting a balanced view between personal success and the success of others. Pastors were also asked whether they put the interests of other pastors above their own. Similar proportions of male (54.2%) and female (55.6%) pastors agreed, with a highly neutral response (33.3% of males and 40.7% of females) across genders, indicating that the majority of pastors demonstrate a selfless approach, putting others' interests first. However, a substantial portion of people are hesitant to commit fully to this aspect of servant leadership. The highly neutral response indicated the delicate balance between the human desires to focus on self and the desire to support others. Findings from a study by Wu et al. (2022) similarly showed that the positive relationship between servant leadership and follower behaviours was significantly enhanced by the self-interest of each person.

Whether they sacrifice their own interests to meet the needs of other pastors, the majority of the leaders, 60.4% of males and 55.6% of females were willing to sacrifice their own interests for others. However, about a third of respondents from both genders remained neutral. This finding indicated the hesitation on how far to sacrifice for others. The hesitation to sacrifice the interests of self for others may be fear of missing opportunities such as promotions and recognition. According to Liao et al. (2020), engaging in daily servant leadership behaviour can come at a cost for leaders. Their study found that leaders who were low in perspective-taking felt depleted and exhibited greater laissez-faire behaviour the next day, while leaders who frequently engaged in perspective-taking exercises experienced less depletion and exhibited less laissez-faire behaviour the next day. An overwhelming majority from both genders agreed (85.4% of males and 85.2% of females) that they do what they possibly can to make the jobs of other pastors easier, with only a small portion remaining neutral, showing a commitment among pastors to actively support their peers, reflecting a core principle of servant leadership. Overall, pastors are often caught in the daily demands of their time and service such that a healthy lifestyle of balance is difficult to maintain. A call to ministry is a vocation to self-sacrifice to meet the needs of others. The neutral results on willingness to sacrifice their own interests for the sake of others were indicated in a previous study by Moss and Snograd (2020), who found that the clergy selectively revealed and guarded their emotions from others, especially congregants, and relied more on God and self-care when battling health concerns.

Behaving Ethically	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)	p-value
Overall score (mean (sd))	4.5 (0.4)	4.5 (0.5)	4.5 (0.5)	0.687
Overall mean percentage score	86.4 (10.4)	87.4 (11.9)	87.1 (11.3)	0.708
<i>I hold high ethical standards</i>				
Disagree	0	0	0	0.179
Neutral	0	1 (3.7)	1 (1.3)	
Agree	48 (100)	26 (96.3)	74 (98.7)	
<i>I am always honest</i>				
Disagree	2 (4.2)	0	2 (2.7)	0.283
Neutral	3 (6.3)	4 (14.8)	7 (9.3)	
Agree	43 (89.5)	23 (85.2)	66 (88)	
<i>I would not compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success</i>				
Disagree	0	1 (3.7)	1 (1.3)	0.234
Neutral	2 (4.2)	0	2 (2.7)	
Agree	46 (95.8)	26 (96.3)	72 (96)	
<i>I value honesty more than profits</i>				
Disagree	0	0	0	0.179
Neutral	0	1 (3.7)	1 (1.3)	
Agree	48 (100)	26 (96.3)	74 (98.7)	
Yes	26 (54.2)	13 (48.2)	39 (52.0)	0.879
No	6 (12.5)	4 (14.8)	10 (13.3)	
I'm not sure	16 (33.3)	10 (37.0)	26 (34.7)	

Table 6: Behaving Ethically  
Source: Author (2024)

Table 6 captures the responses to the questions interrogating pastors' ethical behaviour. The responses revealed that there was strong adherence to ethical standards among pastors, a fundamental aspect of servant leadership. The mean score was high at 4.5 (SD =0.5), corresponding to strongly agree based on the scale used. The percentage agreement score was 87% overall, and it was similar for both males and females. All male pastors (100%) and nearly all female pastors (96.3%) agreed that they hold very high ethical standards, indicating a unanimous commitment to high ethical standards in their professional conduct. In addition to the above, 89.5% of males and 85.2% of females agreed with the

statement that they are always honest. However, a small proportion, particularly among females (14.8%), remained neutral, suggesting some complexities in navigating honesty in every aspect of their roles.

When asked whether or not they would compromise ethical principles to meet success, nearly all pastors, 95.8% of males and 96.3% of females, agreed that they would not, indicating a strong commitment to ethical integrity over success. Finally, respondents were asked whether they valued honesty over profits and again, all male pastors and 96.3% of female pastors agreed with this statement, highlighting a unanimous view that honesty outweighs financial gains among the pastoral team, indicating a profound commitment to honesty, aligning with the altruistic and service-oriented nature of pastoral work.

#### 4.7. Descriptive Analysis of Dependent Variable Indicators

##### 4.7.1 Avoiding

Avoiding	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)	p-value
<i>I attempt to avoid 'being put on the spot' and try to keep my conflict with my peers to myself</i>				
Disagree	20 (41.7)	14 (51.9)	34 (45.3)	0.489
Neutral	9 (18.8)	6 (22.2)	15 (20)	
Agree	19 (39.6)	7 (25.9)	26 (34.7)	
<i>I usually avoid open discussions with my peers</i>				
Disagree	36 (75)	23 (85.2)	59 (78.7)	0.341
Neutral	7 (14.6)	1 (9.7)	8 (10.7)	
Agree	5 (10.4)	3 (11.1)	8 (10.7)	
<i>I try to stay away from disagreements with my peers</i>				
Disagree	26 (54.2)	8 (29.6)	34 (45.3)	0.070
Neutral	7 (14.6)	9 (33.3)	16 (21.3)	
Agree	15 (31.3)	10 (37)	25 (33.3)	
<i>I avoid an encounter with my peers</i>				
Disagree	32 (66.7)	14 (51.9)	46 (61.3)	0.365
Neutral	8 (16.7)	8 (29.6)	16 (21.3)	
Agree	8 (16.7)	5 (18.5)	13 (17.3)	
<i>I try to keep my disagreements with my peers to myself in order to avoid hard feelings</i>				
Disagree	27 (56.3)	13 (48.2)	40 (53.3)	0.728
Neutral	9 (18.8)	7 (25.9)	16 (21.3)	
Agree	12 (25)	7 (25.9)	19 (25.3)	
<i>I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my peers</i>				
Disagree	4 (8.3)	4 (14.8)	8 (10.7)	0.670
Neutral	5 (10.4)	3 (11.1)	8 (10.7)	
Agree	39 (81.3)	20 (74.1)	59 (78.7)	

Table 7: Responses on Avoiding  
Source: Author (2024)

Table 7 presents results on avoiding as a component of conflict management. In the *avoiding* section, 45.3% of pastors disagreed with avoiding conflict and keeping it to themselves, with a higher disagreement rate among female pastors at 51.9% than male pastors at 41.7%. However, 34.7% agreed with this approach. The analysis also shows that most pastors favour open dialogue in conflict situations, suggesting a tendency to address issues directly rather than avoid them. This is because a large majority, 78.7% of pastors, disagreed with the statement on avoiding open discussions with peers, with more females at 85.2% than male respondents at 75% agreeing with this statement. Conversely, while many pastors are willing to engage in disagreements, a significant number also prefer to avoid them. This is because 45.3% of all pastors who took part in the survey disagreed with staying away from disagreements with peers, whereas 33.3% agreed to take this approach.

Respondents were also asked whether they avoid encounters with peers. 61.3% of all pastors disagreed with avoiding encounters, suggesting a willingness to face conflict situations rather than evading them. Comparison by gender shows that there were more male pastors, representing 66.7%, who faced head-on encounters with peers than female pastors, representing 51.9%. In addition, the majority of pastors, 53.3%, preferred not to withhold their disagreements with their peers by keeping the issue to themselves to hide any hard feelings. This indicates a readiness to express differing opinions while considering others' feelings. 25.3% of respondents, however, withheld disagreements to avoid confrontation and hide hard feelings. Lastly, most pastors did not appear ready to engage in challenging discussions, as 78.7% of all pastors agreed with the statement on avoiding unpleasant exchanges with peers to avoid potentially uncomfortable situations. This finding agrees with a study by Rapatalo (2020), which found that school administrators in Bohol, Philippines, preferred avoiding style in managing conflict. In the present study, the majority of males (81.3%) and 74.1% of females chose to avoid conflict.

## 4.7.2. Accommodating

Accommodating	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)	p-value
<i>I generally try to satisfy the needs of my peers</i>				
Disagree	2 (4.2)	3 (11.1)	5 (6.7)	0.447
Neutral	9 (18.8)	6 (22.2)	15 (20)	
Agree	37 (77.1)	18 (66.7)	55 (73.3)	
<i>I usually accommodate the wishes of my peers</i>				
Disagree	3 (6.3)	1 (3.7)	4 (5.3)	0.732
Neutral	14 (29.2)	10 (37)	24 (32)	
Agree	31 (64.6)	16 (59.3)	47 (62.7)	
<i>I give in to the wishes of my peers</i>				
Disagree	17 (35.4)	5 (18.5)	22 (29.3)	0.301
Neutral	22 (45.8)	16 (59.3)	38 (50.7)	
Agree	9 (18.8)	6 (22.2)	15 (20)	
<i>I usually provide concessions to my peers</i>				
Disagree	5 (10.4)	2 (7.4)	7 (9.3)	0.149
Neutral	14 (29.2)	14 (51.9)	28 (37.3)	
Agree	29 (60.4)	11 (40.7)	40 (53.3)	
<i>I often go along with the suggestions of my peers</i>				
Disagree	11 (22.9)	0	11 (14.7)	0.026
Neutral	21 (43.8)	16 (59.3)	37 (49.3)	
Agree	16 (33.3)	11 (40.7)	27 (36)	
<i>I try to satisfy the expectations of my peers</i>				
Disagree	11 (22.9)	2 (7.4)	13 (17.3)	0.040
Neutral	12 (25)	14 (51.9)	26 (34.7)	
Agree	25 (52.1)	11 (40.7)	36 (48)	

Table 8: Responses on Accommodating  
Source: Author (2024)

Table 8 presents the results of accommodating conflict management style. When probed on matters concerning *accommodating* others, the analysis reveals that most pastors were inclined to prioritize the needs of their peers, showing a strong tendency towards accommodation in their interactions. As a majority, 77.1% of male and 66.7% of female pastors agreed with the statement that they generally try to satisfy the needs of their peers, while a minority disagreed (6.7%). This finding is supported by a study done by Hastings et al. (2019), who found that pharmaceutical students who scored high on accommodating were also more empathetic. Further, in their review of a synthesis of empirical studies that examined the use of conflict management styles among nurses, Labrague et al. (2018) also found that accommodating was one of the two most frequent conflict management styles used by nurses. This indicates willingness and consideration of others while resolving conflicts.

A majority of respondents (64.6% of males and 59.3% of females) agreed with accommodating peers' wishes, with a small proportion disagreeing (5.3%) and 37% of all respondents remaining neutral. When respondents were asked whether they give in to the wishes of their peers, fewer pastors, 18.8% of males and 22.2% of females, agreed with this, indicating a lower tendency to fully concede to others' wishes, and a third of the respondents disagreed (29.3%).

The analysis also showed that there was a high willingness among male pastors to use accommodating compared to female pastors. This is because 60.4% of male and 40.7% of female pastors agreed with providing concessions for their peers, while a small minority disagreed (9.3%). This finding is supported by a study conducted by Rowe (2022) on African American pastors, where 71.4% of the participants revealed that they used accommodation most in conflict resolution. A third of all respondents, 33.3% of males and 40.7% of females, agreed to often go along with the suggestions of their peers, with a notable 14.7% disagreeing with the statement. Finally, regarding the accommodating component, respondents were asked whether they tried to satisfy the expectations of their peers. Over half of the male pastors (52.1%) and a lesser proportion of female pastors (40.7%) agreed with this statement, with 17.3% of all respondents disagreeing. Thus, while a good number of pastors strive to meet their peers' expectations, there was also a large number who preferred to maintain their own stance, particularly among female pastors.

## 4.7.3. Compromising

Compromising	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)	p-value
<i>I try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse</i>				
Disagree	3 (6.3)	2 (7.4)	5 (6.7)	0.353
Neutral	12 (25)	3 (11.1)	15 (20)	
Agree	33 (68.8)	22 (81.5)	55 (73.3)	
<i>I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks</i>				
Disagree	4 (8.3)	3 (11.1)	7 (9.3)	0.904
Neutral	10 (20.8)	6 (22.2)	16 (21.3)	
Agree	34 (70.8)	18 (66.7)	52 (69.3)	
<i>I negotiate with my peers so that a compromise can be reached</i>				
Disagree	5 (10.4)	3 (11.1)	8 (10.7)	0.348
Neutral	12 (25)	3 (11.1)	15 (20)	
Agree	31 (64.6)	21 (77.8)	52 (69.3)	
<i>I use 'give and take' so that a compromise can be made</i>				
Disagree	11 (22.9)	7 (25.9)	18 (24)	0.897
Neutral	13 (27.1)	8 (29.6)	21 (28)	
Agree	24 (50)	12 (44.4)	36 (48)	

Table 9: Responses on Compromising  
Source: Author (2024)

Responses in the *compromising* section showed that more female respondents (81.5%) compared to male respondents (68.8%) try to find a middle course to resolving an impasse, whereas 6.7% disagreed. This high level of agreement indicates a general tendency to find mutually acceptable solutions rather than persisting with rigid positions. The goal of compromising is fairness, with none of the parties fully realizing their benefits. 70.8% of male and 66.7% of female pastors agreed with proposing a middle ground for breaking deadlocks, suggesting an inclination to avoid protracted conflicts by seeking shared solutions. The majority of the male respondents, 64.6% of males and female respondents, 77.8%, agreed with the statement that they negotiate with peers so that a compromise can be reached, suggesting that most pastors prefer a problem-solving approach that values consensus and balanced solutions over win-lose scenarios. This finding is supported by a study by Mahajan and Sutar (2022), who found that female college students were more likely to compromise than male students. Rahim and Katz (2020) also found that female employees studying management in two American universities consistently used non-competing strategies such as avoiding compared to male employees.

## 4.7.4. Competing

Competing	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)	p-value
<i>I use my influence to get my ideas accepted</i>				
Disagree	21 (43.8)	12 (44.4)	33 (44)	0.489
Neutral	11 (22.9)	9 (33.3)	20 (26.7)	
Agree	16 (33.3)	6 (22.2)	22 (29.3)	
<i>I use my authority to make a decision in my favour</i>				
Disagree	37 (77.0)	23 (85.2)	60 (80)	0.677
Neutral	9 (18.8)	3 (11.1)	12 (16)	
Agree	2 (4.2)	1 (3.7)	3 (4)	
<i>I use my expertise to make a decision in my favour</i>				
Disagree	30 (62.4)	21 (77.8)	51 (68)	0.396
Neutral	9 (18.8)	3 (11.1)	12 (16)	
Agree	9 (18.8)	3 (11.1)	12 (16)	
<i>I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue</i>				
Disagree	21 (43.8)	10 (37)	31 (41.3)	0.248
Neutral	11 (22.9)	11 (0.7)	22 (29.3)	
Agree	16 (33.3)	6 (22.2)	22 (29.3)	
<i>I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation</i>				
Disagree	31 (64.6)	19 (70.4)	50 (66.7)	0.813
Neutral	12 (25)	5 (18.5)	17 (22.7)	
Agree	5 (10.4)	3 (11.1)	8 (10.7)	

Table 10: Responses on Competing  
Source: Author (2024)

Table 10 presents the results of competing conflict management styles. On *competing*, respondents were asked whether they used their own influence to get their ideas accepted. 44% of pastors disagreed with using their influence to get ideas accepted, with a fairly even split between males at 43.8% and females at 44.4%. However, a minority of only 29.3% agreed with this approach. A large majority of respondents, 80%, disagreed with using authority to sway decisions in their favour, indicating a reluctance to impose decisions based on position or power. 68% of respondents also disagreed with using their expertise to influence decisions in their favour, suggesting a preference for broader input rather than relying solely on their expertise. Similarly, 41.3% of all respondents disagreed with being firm in pursuing their side of an issue, while 29.3% agreed, indicating a balance between assertiveness and flexibility. These findings are supported by the study carried out by Fields (2021) among social service employees in the USA, which found that dominating or using force to have one's way reduced the trust of others and enhanced competitiveness.

#### 4.7.5. Collaborating

Collaborating	Male N (%)	Female N (%)	Total N (%)	p-value
<i>I try to investigate an issue with my peers to find a solution acceptable to us</i>				
Disagree	2 (4.2)	2 (7.4)	4 (5.3)	0.371
Neutral	3 (6.3)	4 (14.8)	7 (9.3)	
Agree	43 (89.6)	21 (77.8)	64 (85.3)	
<i>I try to integrate my ideas with those of my peers to find a solution acceptable to us</i>				
Disagree	0	0	0	0.847
Neutral	3 (6.3)	2 (7.4)	5 (6.7)	
Agree	45 (93.8)	25 (92.6)	70 (93.3)	
<i>I try to work with my peers to find a solution to a problem that satisfies our expectations</i>				
Disagree	1 (2.1)	0	1 (1.3)	0.666
Neutral	3 (6.3)	1 (3.7)	4 (5.3)	
Agree	44 (91.7)	26 (96.3)	70 (93.3)	
<i>I exchange accurate information with my peers to solve a problem together</i>				
Disagree	0	0	0	0.847
Neutral	3 (6.3)	2 (7.4)	5 (6.7)	
Agree	45 (93.7)	25 (92.6)	70 (93.3)	
<i>I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that issues can be resolved in the best possible way</i>				
Disagree	2 (4.2)	0	2 (2.7)	0.560
Neutral	7 (14.6)	4 (14.8)	11 (14.7)	
Agree	39 (81.3)	23 (85.2)	62 (82.7)	
<i>I collaborate with my peers to come up with decisions acceptable to us</i>				
Disagree	1 (2.1)	0	1 (1.3)	0.741
Neutral	4 (8.3)	2 (7.4)	6 (8)	
Agree	43 (89.6)	25 (92.6)	68 (90.7)	
<i>I try to work with my peers for a proper understanding of the problem</i>				
Disagree	0	0	0	0.247
Neutral	2 (4.2)	3 (11.1)	5 (6.7)	
Agree	46 (95.8)	24 (88.9)	70 (93.3)	

Table 11: Responses on Collaborating

Source: Author (2024)

Table 11 presents the results on collaboration conflict management style. On *collaborating*, a substantial majority of pastors, with 89.6% of males and 97.8% of females, agreed on investigating issues collaboratively with their peers, while only a small minority disagreed at 5.3%, indicating a strong preference for collaborative problem-solving and shared decision-making among pastors. Nearly all respondents (93.8% males and 92.6% females) agreed on an approach of integrating their own personal ideas with those of their peers to find a solution acceptable to both parties, showing no disagreement among pastors. This demonstrates open-mindedness among pastors and the willingness to consider various perspectives in problem-solving. These findings are supported by a study by Obi et al. (2020) in Nigeria on team conflict among religious convents, who found that servant leadership complements collaborating.

The analysis also showed that pastors highly value collaborative efforts to meet shared goals. 91.7% of male and 96.3% of female pastors agreed on working together to find mutually satisfying solutions, with only a minimal disagreement (1.3%). Additionally, almost all pastors (93.7% of males and 92.6% of females) agreed on the importance of exchanging accurate information with peers for collaborative problem-solving, with no one disagreeing, underscoring the value pastors' place on transparency and open communication in collaborative processes. Furthermore, there seems to be a preference for open dialogue and transparency in conflict management among pastors as the majority, 81.3% of males and 85.2% of females, agreed with openly addressing concerns for effective resolution, while only a small proportion

disagreed (2.7%). A high percentage of pastors, 89.6% of males and 92.6% of females, also agreed with the statement that they collaborate with peers to come up with decisions acceptable to all. Finally, a majority, 95.8% of males and 88.9% of females agreed on working together for a proper understanding of problems, with no one disagreeing. This indicates a collective approach to understanding issues, where pastors prioritize gaining a comprehensive and shared understanding of problems before seeking solutions. The high preference for collaborating, as indicated by the results from respondents, has been captured in other studies (Boyd, 2020; Fields, 2021; Obi et al., 2020). Collaborating involves a deep concern for self and others, where the concerns and needs of both parties are considered to arrive at a solution.

#### 4.8. Regression Analysis Results

##### 4.8.1. Emotional Healing and Interpersonal Conflict Management Styles

The first objective of the study was to examine the effect of emotional healing on conflict management styles among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya.

	$\beta$ (95% CI)	p-value
Conflict management overall	0.06 (-0.07-0.20)	0.355
Avoiding	-0.03 (-0.33-0.27)	0.851
Accommodating	0.03 (-0.19-0.24)	0.806
Compromising	<b>0.24 (0.01-0.47)</b>	<b>0.038</b>
Competing	0.01 (-0.26-0.29)	0.944
Collaborating	0.11 (-0.05-0.28)	0.179

Table 12: Simple Linear Regression Results on the Effect of Emotional Healing on Conflict Management among Pastors

Notes: B = Model Coefficients; CI: Confidence Interval

Table 12 presents the simple linear regression results examining the effect of emotional healing on conflict management among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya. Regression results indicated that emotional healing had a significant effect on compromising as a component of conflict management ( $\beta=0.24$ , 95% CI: 0.01-0.47,  $p=0.038$ ). This result is supported by a previous study that was done in the USA by Fields (2021), who found that emotional healing encouraged the use of compromising conflict management style. In compromising, each party to the conflict sacrifices a portion of his or her solution, and none is left fully satisfied (Ronquillo et al., 2023). Further, Klimecki (2019) found that empathy and compassion, which are key components of emotional healing, are associated with higher readiness for reconciliation in conflict. There was, however, no sufficient evidence from the data to show that emotional healing had a significant effect on conflict management overall and on the other components of conflict management, including collaboration, accommodation, competition, and avoidance.

##### 4.8.2. Putting Followers First and Interpersonal Conflict

The second objective of this study was to determine the effect of putting followers first on interpersonal conflict among pastors in selected urban counties in Kenya.

	$\beta$ (95% CI)	p-value
Conflict management overall	0.12 (-0.01-0.24)	0.057
Avoiding	-0.04 (-0.31-0.24)	0.787
Accommodating	<b>0.22 (0.02-0.41)</b>	<b>0.03</b>
Compromising	0.07 (-0.15-0.29)	0.528
Competing	0.17 (-0.08-0.43)	0.182
Collaborating	<b>0.18 (0.03-0.33)</b>	<b>0.023</b>

Table 13: Simple Linear Regression Results on the Effect of Putting Followers First on Conflict Management among Pastors

Notes:  $\beta$  = model coefficients; CI: Confidence interval

Table 13 presents the simple linear regression results examining the effect of putting followers first on conflict management. Regression results showed that putting followers first had a significant effect on two components of conflict management, including collaborating ( $\beta=0.18$ , 95% CI: 0.03-0.33,  $p=0.023$ ) and accommodating ( $\beta=0.22$ , 95% CI: 0.02-0.41,  $p=0.030$ ). This means that for every one-unit increase in the score on putting followers first, the score for collaborating increases by 0.24 units. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to confirm this model. This finding about the unit increase in putting followers first positively increasing the score for collaborating was supported by a study conducted by Wong et al. (2018), which found that servant leaders who put followers first are able to discuss disagreements, frustrations and difficulties directly and work out solutions that benefit them and those they lead. Wong's study was carried out among team members and team leaders working in consumer electronics firms in China. These results on putting followers first and conflict management are also supported by those of a previous study done in Pakistan by Suppra et al. (2023), who found that putting followers first and other servant leadership attributes made

servant leadership a natural fit for conflict management. Suppra et al. (2023) used a cross-sectional survey to collect data from managerial-level employees in the textile sector in Pakistan. Suppra et al. (2023) used the partial least squares to test the relationships between the variables and confirmed their hypotheses. There was, however, no sufficient evidence from the data to show that there was a significant effect of putting followers first on conflict management overall and on the other components of conflict management, including competing, compromising and avoiding.

#### 4.8.3. Behaving Ethically and Interpersonal Conflict

	$\beta$ (95% CI)	p-value
Conflict management overall	0.08 (-0.11-0.26)	0.4
Avoiding	-0.21 (-0.61-0.19)	0.296
Accommodating	0.12 (-0.17-0.41)	0.423
Compromising	0.15 (-0.17-0.47)	0.351
Competing	-0.07 (0.44-0.31)	0.721
Collaborating	<b>0.36 (0.14-0.57)</b>	<b>0.001</b>

Table 14: Simple Linear Regression Results on the Effect of Behaving Ethically on Conflict Management among Pastors

Notes:  $\beta$  = model coefficients; CI: Confidence interval

Table 14 presents the simple linear regression results examining the effect of behaving ethically on conflict management styles. The third objective of this study was to determine the effect of behaving ethically on interpersonal conflict among pastors in selected urban counties in Kenya. Regression results showed that behaving ethically had a significant effect on collaborating ( $\beta=0.36$ , 95% CI: 0.14-0.57,  $p=0.001$ ) as a component of conflict management. This means that for every one-unit increase in the score on behaving ethically, the score for collaborating increases by 0.36 units. There was, however, no sufficient evidence from the data to show that there was a significant effect of behaving ethically on conflict management overall, and the other components of conflict management including avoiding, accommodating, competing and compromising.

## 5. Conclusion

The first objective of this study was to determine the effect of emotional healing on interpersonal conflict among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya. The overall mean score was 4.1. Simple linear regression results indicated that emotional healing had a significant effect on the compromising conflict management style and no effect on the other four styles, namely, collaborating, accommodating, competing, and avoiding. This suggests that pastors equipped with emotional healing are more adept at using the compromising conflict management style to address conflict with others.

The second objective of this study was to determine the effect of putting followers first on interpersonal conflict among pastors in selected urban counties in Kenya. The mean score was 3.7. Regression analysis revealed that putting followers first had a significant effect on collaborating and accommodating conflict management styles. This suggests that an increase in prioritizing the needs of followers leads to a higher likelihood of engaging, collaborating, and accommodating conflict management styles. However, no sufficient evidence from the data indicated a significant effect between putting followers first and the other three conflict management styles, namely competing, compromising and avoiding.

The third objective of this study was to determine the effect of behaving ethically on interpersonal conflict among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya. The mean score was high at 4.5. Regression results showed that behaving ethically had a significant effect on collaboration. However, there was not sufficient evidence from the data to demonstrate any significant effect of behaving ethically on other conflict management styles, including accommodating, competing, compromising, and avoiding.

Servant leadership plays a critical role in addressing conflict management. Keita and Lao (2019) reiterated that the servant leadership approach is important in resolving the root causes of leadership problems. Pastors can confidently engage in conflict management by using servant leadership. Findings from the current study indicated that servant leadership has a positive effect on collaborating and accommodating conflict management styles. Accommodating is a self-sacrificing position that is willing to yield to another's point of view. It is useful for creating goodwill, keeping peace, addressing issues of low importance and resolving immediate concerns. Collaborating involves working with others to find a solution that completely satisfies everyone. It is good for issues that do not require competitiveness and engages creativity to solve interpersonal problems. Collaborating is useful for finding long-term solutions, gaining commitment to issues, improving relationships, merging perspectives, and integrating solutions. Freeborough (2021) found that higher levels of servant leadership lead to lower levels of interpersonal conflict in the workplace. It is recommended that pastors be trained in servant leadership, conflict management, and emotional intelligence to improve the management of interpersonal conflict. Regarding the application of servant leadership in the church world, Crowther (2018) recommends that servant leadership training must include the soul of the leader to prepare the individual not only to succeed but also to handle success when it comes. The request for regular short and professional training in these three areas was indicated in the recommendations from respondents as captured in the qualitative data analysis.



## 6. Recommendations for Further Studies

The study limited its focus to assessing the relationship between servant leadership and interpersonal conflict management styles and the moderating role of emotional intelligence among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya. Conceptually, the study limited itself to three out of seven sub-variables of servant leadership, namely: emotional healing, putting followers first and behaving ethically. There is a need for further research to be conducted using the remaining sub-variables of servant leadership. Theoretically, the study limited itself to Servant leadership theory. There is a need for further research to be conducted using other leadership theories, such as transformational leadership, authentic leadership and ethical leadership, in relation to conflict management among pastors in Kenya.

The study was done among pastors in selected urban churches in Kenya. There is a need to expand the study to other mainline denominations such as Methodist, Kenya Assemblies of God, Seventh Day Adventists, African Brotherhood Church and Deliverance churches, among others. Similarly, other studies can be done in Para-church and Faith-based organizations such as World Vision, Compassion International, and the Fellowship of Christian Unions (FOCUS), among others. Additionally, future studies can consider other East African countries and organizations in various countries, such as Youth for Christ and Scripture Union.

The majority of research studies on both servant leadership and conflict management have been carried out in corporate organizational settings. There is a need to conduct additional studies in Christian settings such as college institutions and Christian organizations. Other areas of interest could also be in businesses established and run by Christians. Further research studies could be done on organizations with multiple international campuses beyond Kenya and Africa.

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