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The Role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Conflict Resolution: The case of Guduru Woreda of Oromia Regional state, Ethiopia.

By

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A Thesis Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Masters of Arts (MA) Degree in Civics and Ethical Studies.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my original work and it has not been presented for any degree in any organizations. All materials used in this work are properly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

Conflict is an unavoidable and an inseparable part of the social structure. Since, it is a social event that could happen everywhere, we need to search the way to handle, manage and resolve through peaceful mechanisms. Thus, this study assessed the positive the role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus can play in conflict resolution like: teaching or preaching about the importance of peace, advocate for the truth, bring the conflicting parties in to agreement to reconcile, teaches the members to live by Bible principles, teaches the followers about the negative consequences of conflict and etc.

The study design was analytical qualitative approach. This research design is selected because of it focuses on understanding or describing systematically the social phenomenon by collecting detailed data through interviews, Focus group discussions and document analysis method within the study area. Semi-structured, key informant interviews and Focus Group discussion with participants allowed the researcher to gain insights from participants. Twenty four (24) informants were participated in the study whereas eight (8) for interview and sixteen (16) included in Focus Group Discussion with two rounds. These informants were selected by using purposive sampling technique. Key informant interviews, FGD and document analysis were utilized for data collection mechanism. Data was collected from primary sources by key informant interviews and FGD and from secondary sources by document analysis.

The study also examined different conflict resolution mechanisms and its effectiveness that the EECMY and leaders employed like: Negotiation, teaching and preaching, reconciliation, forgiveness, public pray, facilitation and etc.

The study also analyzed some challenges that Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus faces in conflict resolution activities like: unwillingness of the conflicting parties to come together to resolve their conflicts, political impact (interference) and the environmental situation (insecurity problems) that frequently arises around the study area mainly that hinders the Church from freely moving in the area to get involved in conflict resolution activities, lack of commitment of the leaders and etc. This study put forward recommendations for the concerned body and religious leaders. The Church must get involved in preventing and resolving conflict that arises in the people, The Church's activities in conflict resolution must be encouraged for more effectiveness, the interaction between the Church and government must be further strengthened, there must be a public trust on Church's activities and it is better to work in collaborate with other Religious institutions on conflict prevention and resolution activities and etc.

ACKRONYMS

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
ANC	African National Congress
ATR	African Traditional Religion
AU	African union
C CSL	Council of Churches Sierra Leone
CSA	Central Statistics Agency
ECOMOG	Economic Community Military Observer Group
EECMY	Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus
EOTC	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church
EU	European Union
FBI	Faith Based Institutions
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IRC	Inter-religious Council
IRCE	Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia
IRCSL	Inter-Religious Council Sierra Leone
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MCSL	Methodist Church Sierra Leone
PCOD	Parish Council Organization Department
RUFSL	Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Regional State
UN	United Nation

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Figure 1. Map of the study area

Figure 2. Sample of Key informant interview

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Definition of key Terms

Conflict - A disagreement between people groups or even within a person

Conflict Resolution – The process of ending a dispute and reaching an agreement that satisfies all the parties involved.

Religion - The belief in and worship of God or Supernatural and gods

Religious Institution - A Place or an institution that exists to support and manage the practice of specific set of religious beliefs (place of Worship of God and gods)

Reconciliation - The art of amending the damaged relationships.

Forgiveness - It is to let go of the desire for revenge.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in any humans' society. There is conflict in all human societies and all societies have systems for regulating it. Conflict between people or groups arises from competition for resources, power and status. Family members compete for attention. Individuals compete for jobs and wealth. Nations compete for territory and prestige. Different interest groups compete for influence and the power to make rules. In human society, conflicts will always be there between individuals, between groups, between nations because of differences of opinion, clash of interest, establishment of superiority and various other factors (Duke, 1999). This is what frequently observed around the study area.

Conflict is a situation between at least two independent parties that is characterized by perceived and the parties evaluate as negative Conflict is an inevitable and all-pervasive element in our society and the world (Fattah et al, 2019). Conflict is the result of disagreement between actors on the basis of perceived incompatible goals(Consortium,2012). According to Wall (1985) conflict is a process in which two or more parties attempt to frustrate the attainment of the other's goals.

As it is a social event that could happens everywhere, we need to search the way to handle, manage and resolve through peaceful mechanisms. Due to this social event, human beings have been looking for the way outs of the conflicting issues and made human beings to develop various conflict averting mechanisms which helps either to prevent the occurrence and mitigating the escalation and resolving conflicts peacefully to maintain peace and security.

Religious institutions can be a tool for resolving disputes and maintaining peace. The teachings of religion have the power to encourage compassion and empathy as well as to act as a catalyst for the parties to a conflict to shift their stances and negotiate a settlement. When it comes to influencing or resolving conflicts, charisma is extremely valuable. Religion has the power to settle disputes by using both its functions and its contents.

Throughout Ethiopian history, a variety of conflict resolution strategies have been employed to settle disagreements among individuals, groups, or organizations as well as any violent episodes brought on by social, political, cultural, or private conflicts. There are civil society organizations and non-

governmental organizations with religious roots, but many conflict resolution techniques have their roots in tradition (Yonas, 2017; Yehubneh, 2016).

According to Tsegaye (2014) and Mengistu (2018), religious conflict resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia primarily rely on the authority of religious leaders, utilizing practices like mediation, community dialogue, preaching, and reconciliation to address disputes between individuals and groups within the community, with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church playing a particularly prominent role in this process. Religious leaders often engage in public preaching and community gatherings to promote reconciliation and peaceful coexistence among different groups. Both studies highlight the significant influence of religious leaders, particularly from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, in facilitating conflict resolution through their moral authority and ability to convene disputing parties for dialogue.

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus church is obliged to be a major player in resolving conflicts. Because of it is widely expanded in the area and followed by majority of the people. It has a Devine mandate to reconcile and foster peace. Besides, having a spiritual mandate, the Church should intervene to mediate and resolve conflicts in areas where it occurs. Thus, the bulk of peace building and reconciliation falls on the Church which is considered the conscience of society. The Church's mission is to consolidate peace. Peace making and reconciliation, therefore, are mandates and not merely options for the Church. Indeed, peace and reconciliation are religious terms, therefore inseparable from the Church ministry. The Church therefore has a role to reconcile people and maintain the call for peace. The value of the church is maintained as long as actualizes peace and reconciliation in society. So, the EECMY has a mission of peace and reconciliation where conflict escalate in in the study area and various parts of the country. But there are probably inadequate opportunities and resources that give the church leverage in conflict resolution. The current study, therefore, seeks to access the effectiveness of key roles of the Ethiopian Evangelical church Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution in Guduru Woreda, Horo Guduru Wollega Zone.

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, being the second largest evangelical church in Ethiopia and the most important protestant denomination in the study area serving the whole person, also known as "which means serving both the spiritual and material/physical needs of all human beings (Terfasa, 2017) made significant contributions to the conflict resolution and peace process in different areas.

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus has been actively involved in resolving conflicts in Ethiopia, particularly focusing on Inter-Religious tensions and ethnic violence by facilitating dialogue, promoting peace building initiatives and empowering religious leaders to act as agents of reconciliation,

especially in areas with significant Muslim-Christian co-existence challenges; working in collaboration with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the Inter-Religious council of Ethiopia to achieve this goal. By utilizing their existence network within communities, EECMY engages with individuals and groups from different backgrounds to foster dialogue and reconciliation.

In recent time, insecurity and instability problems has been frequently observed and affecting loss of mass human life, private, Public and governmental properties are destructing severely, mass popular eviction and etc. around the study area. The ongoing conflict involving various guerrilla fighters and government forces, other armed groups and etc) resulted in displacement of peoples, loss of human life and properties, livelihood disruption and destruction of infrastructures, decreased productivity, has left farmland abandoned, forced farmers to flee or concentrate around the towns, displacement of residents and etc. This is what frequently occurs around the study area due to the geographical location of the Woreda and sometimes conflict arises on the mass and fertile land occupied by the Woreda.

Thus, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus needs to play an important role in conflict resolution and peacekeeping in the Guduru Woreda. However, research on the effectiveness the roles of religious institutions in conflict resolution, particularly the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, remains lacking in the Guduru Woreda. Thus, the primary goal of this research is to analyze the effectiveness of the role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution processes in Guduru Woreda, Horo Guduru Wollega, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Religious institutions can make the people come together, discuss matters that affect their lives, and develop mechanisms of addressing issues and concerns of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. In this respect, they offer respected sets of values, moral authorities to oppose injustice; strong influence for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties (Ibid.).

These religious institutions have a significant contribution in conflict mitigation, reconciliation, conflict resolution, and peace building from local to global levels. Thus, they have their own considerable contribution in conflict mitigation; social cohesion, and peaceful community coexistence.

The issue of participating religious institutions in conflict resolution and peace building has been neglected in international affairs studies and diplomacy. However, it is important to analyze the potential of religion in conflict resolution and peace building. They can play this by providing early warnings of conflict, acting as good offices in a conflict situation, and advocating for mediation and reconciliation.

Religion has the potential to ensure stability and unity in a divided society. Religious institution has the capacity to teach and cultivate the attitudes of reconciliation, forgiveness, and unity among its society at large.

In Ethiopia, religious institutions have significant and important role in peace building and conflict resolution (Karbo, 2013). Religion has the potential to be a key source of information and unique resource for preventing and addressing the core causes of violence and conflict in society (Zerihun, 2013). Religion may be a valuable asset in creating peace and resolving conflicts that go beyond traditional diplomacy. This is because religion and religious actors have a broad audience to influence, making religion and ideal vehicle for promoting peaceful cooperation (Mengistu, 2018).

Research was undertaken on institutional activities related to religion and religious institutions. However, many of them focused on Faith-Based Institutions (FBI) at both the national and international levels (Tsegaye 2014). Researchers like Flemmen and Mulumebet, 2016; Bitwoded Admasu, 2017; Mengistu Tarekegn, 2018) they made limited overviews and tried to show conflict resolution activities and mechanism of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church in resolving conflicts in local communities.

On the other hand, Meskerem (2016), Solid (2013), Karbo (2013) and Smordal(2012) have studied on conflict management style among Orthodox priests; Conflicts in Ethiopian churches; religion and Social cohesion in Ethiopia and religion and development in Ethiopia respectively. One of the plausible mechanism to ensure peace and stability in a given country is developing an Interfaith code of conduct in preaching that would serve as a blue print for all religious leaders and followers at large(Ibid).

Though, Religious institutions can play a key role in conflict resolution, their potential has been largely ignored, less emphasis has been paid to their functions that they can play in conflict resolution efforts in Ethiopia in general and in the study area in particular.

There has been insufficient research conducted in the study area on the topic. It is crucial to critically assess the effectiveness of the role of religious institutions particularly Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus. Thus, this research is hoped to contribute to the area and country.

This study differs from others in that it assesses the role of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus in recommending other governmental entities to collaborate closely with religious institutions on conflict prevention, resolution, and management initiatives and how it could be utilized to effectively intervene in conflict resolution.

In this study area, there are conflicts and tensions & clashes between ethnics, between community, between different armed forces and the issue is transferring in to a security problem from time to time in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, Guduru woreda administration and areas in particular and posing effect on the Western part of country in general. This insecurity problem is posing different social, economic crisis on the life of the people.

As a result, religion's positive involvement in conflict resolution in Ethiopia in general, and the study area in particular, have gotten little attention, particularly in the Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, Guduru Woreda, and Oromia Regional State.

Thus, researches need to be conducted and it needs deep investigation especially assessing how different bodies can play their role in resolving conflicts. Therefore, this research accesses the positive implication of religious institutions especially the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution and in the overall peace building in Guduru Woreda. This woreda is selected from other woredas of Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, because of conflicts are frequently observed in this woreda and it can represent the situation of other woredas regarding the issue.

1. 3. Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to analyze the role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution processes in Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, Guduru Woreda of Oromia Regional state, Ethiopia.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Beside of above general objective, the following specific objectives are developed. These are:

- To analyze the effectiveness of key roles played by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus in mitigating conflicts in the study area.
- To evaluate the impact of different conflict resolution strategies employed by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution in Guduru Woreda.
- To assess how contextual factors influence the effectiveness of conflict resolution activities by EECMY and to analyze how it addresses these challenges.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the above objectives of the study, the following research questions are designed. Hence, the aim of this research is to answer the following questions.

- ❖ How effective are the different roles adopted by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in reducing conflict within Guduru Woreda, and what factors contribute to their effectiveness.
- ❖ How are the conflict resolution strategies employed by the EECMY implemented, and what impact do these have on promoting sustainable peace in the local communities?
- ❖ What are the main limitations faced by Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus in overcoming the challenges to conflict resolution in the study area and how are these challenges addressed by the church?

1.5 Significance of the study

This Thesis benefits the Guduru Woreda people and governmental administrative bodies in particular and others in general by using the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus and leaders in mitigating conflicts around the Study area. Also, the contributions of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus of teaching and preaching about peace, love and etc. in maintaining public harmony , resolving conflicts peacefully, mitigating the possibility of conflict occurrences. This strengthens the possible collaboration between the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus and other bodies working on conflict resolution and peace building. Its importance also extends exploring experiences and strategies expertise gathered from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution activities.

In addition to this, the study helps the concerned administrative government organ to be aware on the effectiveness of the conflict resolution mechanisms employed by the EECMY and participating it resolving conflicts. It may also serve as a reference for who wants to conduct further study in the area of conflict and conflict resolution mechanisms by religious institutions in the Study area and others.

1.6. Delimitation of the study

This study is geographically delimited to Guduru Woreda, Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, Oromia Regional state, Ethiopia. Thematically, the research focuses on the conflict resolution activities of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus of Kombosha, specifically analysing its mediation approaches within the context of local conflicts. The study excludes the examination of other religious actors and other mechanisms of conflict resolutions that do not involve the identified church. The geographical scope of this research is limited to Guduru Woreda, Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, based on the strategic importance of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus of Kombosha. While the church is a key institution within this Woreda, a comparative analysis with other locations or

churches didn't included in the research. The Thematic focus is on how the church's specific activities contribute to conflict resolution rather than its peace building activities more generally. This study's empirical investigation is restricted to a single case, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus of Kombosha in Guduru Woreda. The selection is based on the fact that the church is a central actor in the local communities and plays a prominent role in the on-going local conflicts. This focus allows for a deeper analysis of the specific contextual factors that influence its involvement in conflict resolution. This study does not examine the activities of the EECMY on a national scale, nor does it include the dynamics of other religious institutions, and is therefore limited to the study of the particular.

1.7 Limitation of the study

To conduct this study, it was not easy to get the necessary data as expected because of the sensitiveness of the issue. As well as, there are no sufficient related prior researches conducted in the study area on the title. There is a lack of access of sources, transportation and internet coverage around the study area. In addition to this, it was difficult to get recorded reports regarding the religious activities in peace and conflict resolution. Also, due to the environment condition (problem of insecurity) of the woreda, the Zone and the region in general it was very difficult to collect people together for Group discussion. The researcher obliged to limit on focus group and key informants interview data. The researcher also tried to supplement the literature review task by taking international as well as national experiences. In order to overcome these limitations and challenges, the researcher primarily asked the Woreda administration and the EECMY of Kombosha with a letter. As well as, the researcher went to the place where get the internet coverage and arranged other resources that enables in conducting the Thesis.

1.8 Organization of the study

The Thesis is organized in to five chapters. The first chapter provides background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, Research questions, significance of the study, Delimitation of the study, limitation of the study, and organization of the study.

The second chapter covers the conceptual and theoretical perspective and debates on the role of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution and peace building.

The Third chapter deals about Research methodology. Thus, Description of the study area, Research method, Research design, sources of data, methods and instruments of data collection, population, sample size and sampling technique, data analysis & discussions. Chapter four contains Results and analysis, whereas chapter five includes summary, conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In general, the literature review can take several forms. Cooper (2010) discussed four types: literature reviews that (a) integrate what others have done and said, (b) criticize previous scholarly works, (c) build bridges between related topics, and (d) identify the central issues in a field. With the exception of criticizing previous scholarly works, most dissertations and theses serve to integrate the literature, organize it into a series of related topics (often from general topics to narrower ones), and summarize the literature by pointing out the central issues.

2. Religion, religious institutions, Conflict, Theories of conflict and Conflict Resolution

2.1 Religion

Although there are many definitions of religion, only a few are given. Religious belief or worship is commonly defined as "belief in, or worship of, a god or gods" or "service and worship of God or the Supernatural." To cover the range of religious experience and thought, authors and scholars have expanded the definitions of "belief in god."

Tylor (2007:424) defined religion as "the belief in spiritual beings". Religion was defined by Clifford Geertz as a "system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in Men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions which such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic" .

In his seminal book, 'The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life,' sociologist Durkheim defined religion as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things." He defined sacred things as "set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices that unite in to one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them." Sacred things, however, are not restricted to gods or spirits.

2. 2 Religious institutions

Religious institutions are non-profit, volunteer organizations whose identity and mission stem from a religious or spiritual heritage. For this article, religious institutions are defined as groups whose identity and mission stem from a religious or spiritual tradition and operate as non-profit, voluntary organizations, whether registered or unregistered.

Berger distinguishes religious institutions along four dimensions. The four pillars are self-identity, pervasiveness (of religious influence), interaction with religious leaders, and mission (Berger, 2020).

Religious institutions include mosques, churches, temples, synagogues, prayer houses, structures, and gathering places (Hinings & Raynard, 2014).

2. 3 Conflict

Conflict has many meanings to our day to day life. As a result, it has no single universally agreed definition. As many scholars explained, conflict is an inevitable part of human life. It occurs between people in all kinds of human relationships and in all social settings. Consequently, no one can escape from conflict. As long as there is interaction, conflict existed as part and parcel of human society and can take place anywhere at any time. Hence, “there is no immunity from conflict” (Schilling, 2012).

According to schilling (2012), conflict in a narrow “objective” sense understood as “an incompatibly different position about a particular issue or over a particular thing” (p.95). On the other hand in a broader sense, it includes disagreements, debates, disputes and active efforts to prevent someone from gaining what he/she wants to secure (Sikander, 2011). Wallenstein (2002), on his hand defined conflict as “a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment in time an available set of scarce resources” (p.16).It is a disagreement that leads to tension within, and between people (Vestergaard, Helvard & Sorensen, 2011).

Conflict can be defined as the incompatibility of interests, aims, values, needs, and expectations among groups or parties (Dennen, J.M.GX.D, 2005).

In general, conflict is used to describe a broad range of human activities including hostility between individuals and people to international war. In this regard, people mostly perceived conflict merely in its negative connotations and try to avoid it, stay away from, neglect or

Forget about it. But conflict is not just an evil or negative thing as many perceived it. Rather it has a dual capacity both the force that can detach relationships apart and the force that binds them together. From this point of view, some conflicts can be understood as a desirable social phenomena and have the capacity to bring change. Therefore, conflict managed constructively is an opportunity for constructive change (Schilling, 2012). Hence, conflict by itself is neither good nor bad or neither positive nor negative. It is determined by the way that conflicting parties attempt to handle either in constructive or destructive manner (Fisher, 1977, Rev. 1985, 2000; Schilling, 2012). As conflict is the part and parcel of human life and human beings have a wide range of differences

and interests, it is compulsory to handle conflict in constructive manner through appropriate resolution mechanisms to have peaceful life.

2. 4 Theories of Conflicts

This part focuses on theories of conflict. There are different theories of conflict. Some of them are:

2.4.1 Biological and socio-biological theories

Biological theoretical approaches trace the sources of conflict and violence in the human genes. This, emphasis on the biological factors or inborn traits of human beings. Biologically determined factors are seen to be responsible for inter-personal and inter-group violence. The biological theories mostly focus on aggression. It considers aggression as being genetically programmed in the human nervous system.

Instinct Theory

It argues that aggressive behavior is rooted in human instinct. An instinctive impulse is the source of human aggression and destructive behavior.

Psychological and social psychological Theories

Psychological theories locate conflict in the “minds of men” in the beliefs, ideology, motivation, perceptions, values etc. Some psychological traditions also focus on experiences of frustration that could lead to aggression. The Socio-psychological perspective also focuses on processes of group formation and differentiation. Groups try to differentiate themselves from the “others” and in this process (mis) perceptions, stereotyping and dehumanization play a role, which in turn could lead to violent conflict.

2.4.2 Social structural Violence Theories

Social Structural theories emphasize on the organization of society. It believes that the way society is organized or the divisions within society create the causes and conditions for conflict. These include socio-economic aspects as well as race, religion, ethnicity, age and gender divisions.

According to the structural violence theory, conflict is inherent in social structures. Social structures and institutions cause structural violence. Johan Galtung distinguished between three kinds of violence: direct or overt, indirect or structural and cultural. Direct violence intends to harm another individual or group directly. In structural violence, institutions, systems and structures either discriminate between people or deny or deprive them of their rights and the ability to satisfy their basic human needs such as survival, well-being, satisfy, respect, freedom, identity, religion etc. Cultural violence is used to justify and legitimize overt and structural violence through ideology, religion, language, arts, education etc.

2.4.3 Human needs theories

This theory believes that human beings have certain basic or universal human needs. When those are not met or remain unsatisfied, it could lead to conflict. The process of conflict resolution should thus look to satisfy the basic human needs of the people or groups involved in the conflict. Human needs are seen as essentials or requirements that a person needs to live or continue and propagate life. These needs must be satisfied within the social context and not outside it. These basic human needs are material, cultural, and social in nature.

According to Abraham Maslow's need hierarchy from bottom to top: Physiological needs, Safety and Security needs, Love and Belonging needs, Esteem needs and Self-actualization needs.

2.4.4 Relative Deprivation theory

This is based on the concept of deprivation which indicates difference between what one expects in life and what s/he eventually gets. People feel deprived when they get much less than what they have expected or what they have been promised. This can lead to aggression and make people enter in to conflict with others.

2.4.6 Socio-economic Theories

Karl Marx believed that structures of economic organization lay the foundation for class conflict. The economic structure is thus the source of conflict. Social institutions and structures reflect the material reality of society. Economic structure has determined every other aspect of life including politics in the development of human history. The capitalists, who control the means of production or the economic structure also control and have power over the social structures. Such an economic system will always be exploitative of the working class and this will give rise to class conflict. Max Weber related social conflict to social change. He stressed on both political as well as economic factors.

2.5 Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution can be defined as the informal or formal process that two or more parties use to find a peaceful solution to their dispute. Conflict resolution is the process of resolving a dispute or a conflict by meeting at least some of each side's needs and addressing their interests. Conflict resolution is the process of managing a conflict and negotiating a solution. It is best understood as a working model with two key elements, conflict management and negotiation (Nnaemeka, 2021). It is a situation where two or more individuals or groups try to pursue goals or ambitions which they believe they cannot share not all conflict is violent. Conflict is normal when there is change. Some people want change, but others disagree. If their disagreement or their conflict is managed peacefully, it can be a positive process. But,

when conflict is not managed properly, it becomes violent.

Conflict resolution, according to Ibrahim (1999), is a wide range of techniques for addressing the causes of conflict, whether they exist between states or between individuals, and for figuring out how to start a particular conflict or continue it in less serious ways than, say, armed conflict. Generally speaking, the conflict resolution process consists of diplomacy, mediation, negotiation, and innovative peace building.

Conflict resolution has been developing as a field of study since the 1950s by following the atrocities of the Second World War (Wallenstein, 2002). In this regard, many scholars such as Shepard, Mouton, Burton, Kelman, Doob, Mitchell, Walton, Hynes, Coogler and others had great contribution for the emergency of the concept (Abu-Nimere, 1996).

Conflict resolution as a concept is open to many interpretations. Consequently, it has no single agreed expression among scholars. On the one hand, it can be regarded as any process that resolves or ends conflict through diverse methods, including warfare. On the other hand, it can be viewed as a non-violent process that manages conflict through compromise or the assistance of a third party (Manning, n.d.). For Jeong (2010), conflict resolution is “a movement from one condition to another for more acceptable long-term process” (p.10). It includes many and varied processes that can be seen in a range of collaborative, participatory, informal, non-binding processes (such as mediation, conciliation, third party negotiation) to adversarial, fact-oriented, legally binding institutional (courts and tribunals) decision making (Boulle, 1996 cited in Manning, n.d.; Abu-Nimere, 1996).

The main objective of conflict resolution is a purposeful, constructive and productive transformation of conflicts. The process can be carried out by minimizing the use of violence, overcoming antagonisms between the sides of conflicts and maintaining resolution measures either in a long or short term perspective depending on the nature, magnitude of the issue and parties’ interest (Kazanský, 2015).

Conflict resolution demands creating strategies, studying the interests and goals of the participants, their behavior, negotiating mechanisms, creating favorable environment and the third party involvement. It also demands looking for ways to reach, realize and long-term maintenance of agreements between parties (Kazanský, 2015). Thus, conflict resolution has to do with “all process orientated activities that aim to address the underlying causes of direct, cultural and structural violence” (Reimann cited in Omoyefa, 2014, p.53). Rehman, (2011), Sweeney & Carruthers (1996),

further strengthened this concept as “a process used by parties in conflict to reach a settlement” (p. 57& 327) respectively.

From the scholars view stated earlier, one can understand that conflict resolution is a couple of activities, that primarily focuses on defining and investigating the causes of conflicts and then examining the progress of the relationships between parties involved in conflict to reach an agreement. It is a process undertaken by parties to settle their conflicting issues, so that it would not become a basis for new disputes in the future. In this respect, conflicting parties may employ diverse mechanisms or approaches of conflict resolution to address their contradictory issues or goals whenever they face conflict.

2.6 Conflict Resolution Styles

An appreciation of conflict resolution styles is integral to understanding the communication process. While the names may differ slightly, there are five major responsive approaches to managing conflicts. There is no right or wrong conflict resolution style and each conflict participant is capable of choosing the approach deems most appropriate in any given situation.

Accommodating

The accommodating approach emphasizes cooperation instead of assertiveness. A person places his interests last and allows the other parties to further their interests. The accommodating approach often occurs when a party is not significantly invested in securing a victory, because he does not perceive the alternative option as a significant threat.

Avoiding

Avoiding conflict involves one of the conflicted parties avoiding communicating about or confronting the problem, hoping it will go away. By not participating in the problem solving process, she is effectively removing herself from it. When employing this approach, the conflict might go away if the other party doesn't press for a resolution. The underlying differences between the parties are never resolved.

Collaborating

The Collaboration style involves parties working together to resolve issues, and both sides come to the table with win-win attitudes. It is a favorable negotiation style informal dispute resolution situations, such as mediation where the parties employ a mediator but must agree on the final, binding resolution.

Compromise

Bargaining is the hallmark of the compromise approach to conflict resolution. The conflicting parties can identify some interests they are willing to compromise on to bring about a resolution. While the emotional level might still be high, the compromise style sometimes results in interim solutions when a full resolution is not immediately possible. Parties might reach a settlement to prevent further escalated of the conflict.

Confrontation

The confrontation style to conflict resolution entails the party placing his desires above those of all others involved in the conflict. Assertiveness is the hallmark of this approach, and those employing this style of negotiation aim to address the conflict head-on. It might involve high levels of emotions as the parties establish position in what can sometimes involve in to hostile communications.

2.7 The Role of Religion in Conflict Resolution

In a greater percentage of the conflicts that ravaged Africa after the cold war, civil society, NGOs, Inter-governmental Organizations, the church and other religious institutions have continued to play a critical role in resolving conflicts and building peace. A plethora of examples are quite evident throughout the length and breadth of the African continent from the World-acclaimed roles played by the community of Saint' Egidio in Mozambique; the Council of churches in South Africa, the Catholic church in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe, Zambia, Burundi and Rwanda; the Acholi Religious Forum in Northern Uganda; Christian- Muslim Dialogue in Nigeria; and the community of Saint' Egidio in Algeria. These examples indicate that civil society particularly religious institutions have continued to play a fundamental role in ending hostilities on the continent, cementing the argument that religion is indeed a resource for peace.

Douglas Johnston, in his article, 'Faith- based organizations: The religious Dimension to peace-building, explores what he termed 'the potential of the faith-based approaches to conflict prevention and transformation. Faith- based approaches represent a viable and more often than not effective alternative, as opposed to traditional approaches. Such approaches may take the form of interventions by outside agencies and organizations rooted in religious traditions or the local religious bodies themselves, "acting with moral authority they possess to cool tempers and promote reconciliation." This may also take the forms of religious leaders bridging the gap between faiths and engaging in dialogue, with the view to developing trust and building strong relationships to enable joint collaboration in addressing common problems.

Religious leaders are also uniquely positioned to use their moral authority and influence to encourage mutual understanding within and between protagonists. Thus, serious consideration should always be

given to their inclusion in formal peace processes. Not only does their influence provide the necessary moral authority that is sometimes missing and enhanced capacity for dealing with all kinds of religious issues that may arise in such negotiations, but their often-unrivalled influence at grass roots level can be useful in ensuring that any political settlement which emerges will be lasting.

Religious communities can also provide social cohesion in the aftermath of violent conflict. They may also provide spiritual support to help people face agonizing pain and suffering with some prospect for the kind of forgiveness that can break the cycle of revenge. It can be summed up that religious actors, communities and their institutions can play a significant role in the resolution of intractable conflicts in the contemporary world.

With respect to our present interest, interfaith dialogue would seem an important, often proactive means of minimizing conflict through addressing ignorance and distrust. At its core, inter-religious dialogue brings together those of different faiths for conversation. In the pursuit of the goals of seeking peace, religious leaders and faith-based NGOs have frequently played prominent role as mediators or other forms of intervention in conflict scenarios.

2.8 The Role of Religious Institutions in Conflict Resolution a Theoretical Debate

As many scholars agreed and one can easily understand from humans' day to day experiences, no conflict free individual, group, society or state. Multi-dimensional differences such as interest, goals, values, religion, class, economic status, culture...exists among individuals, groups, societies or states and others. These differences sometimes may change the positive human interaction to competitive and hostile interaction to the destructive forms of conflict.

Religion is one of the most important factors that distinguish individuals, organizations, and human cultures. Currently, numerous religions have thrived over the world, each with its own set of distinctive references and revered organizations. Because religion is one of the most sensitive subjects for individuals, groups, and civilizations, most people have a strong connection to their religion, religious institutions, religious-based organizations, and ideals in some form (Smock, 2006).

Religion and religious institution can also influence human life and practices in different forms including in peace and conflict issues. Religious institutions and leaders do have trustworthiness and respected set of values and moral warrants that gives them power to oppose injustice on the part of governments or else; promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties; re humanize situations that have become dehumanized over the course of protracted conflicts. Community

mobilization, promotion of national and international support for peace process is also their potential in peace process (Smock, 2006; Shore, 2009).

But in contrast religion and religious institutions are also the sources of important values Such as empathy, nonviolence, compassion, truthfulness which serve as the bases of conflict resolution, reconciliation and peace-building (Ilo, 2015). As Gopin (2000), explained religion and its institutions have also considerable significance in developing critical peace-related values including openness to and even love for strangers, the suppression of unbridled ego and acquisitiveness, forgiveness and humility, interpersonal repentance and the acceptance of responsibility for past errors as a means of reconciliation and the drive for social justice. Religious institutions have also a vocational role and responsibility to play in fostering the values of truth, justice and mercy over deception and division. Religious leaders continuously engaged in promoting tolerance and persuading others by putting psycho-spiritual influences more in-depth and further-reaching than governmental institutions (Devine, 2017).

Employing the assets of religious leaders and religious institutions to promote peace was usually disregarded by politicians. However, traditionally religion and religious institutions had significant role in peacemaking, conflict resolution and peace building. These religious leaders' and religious institutions' contribution has been shown by Israel/Palestine, Iraq, Macedonia, Nigeria, Sudan cases and in Northern Ireland (Landau, 2003; Smock, 2006; Tsegaye, 2014). Mennonites, Catholic Leaders, and the Quakers had successfully intervened in Asian, African, and Latin American conflicts. In this religious conflict resolution activity actors like Desmond Tutu, Maha Gosananda and Thich Nhat Han from South Africa, Cambodia and Vietnam, the Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Ali al-Husayni al-Sistani in Iraq; the Dalai Lama in Tibet, others in Nigeria, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, and the Philippines had played prominent role (Ilo, 2015). They have mediated the parties involved in conflict; coordinating and facilitating peace movements and gathering in churches, mosques, and temples for peace (De Juanm/Vüllers, 2010).

Now a day, even if societies become more "modern" and technologically developed, religion can still play an important role in the public sphere and such positive roles should be recognized and effectively utilized (Moiba, 2016). The aforementioned discussions reveals the duality of religious impacts of religion and religious institutions towards conflict either a motive force for conflict or resolving conflict and building peace.

2.9 Experiences of Religious Institutions in Resolving Conflict

2.9.1 Israel – Palestine Conflict

The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most complex and protracted conflicts in the world since Israel came into existence in 1948. The land of Israel/Palestine is still continued as the homeland of two peoples locked in conflict over it (Landau, 2003).

Politicians and diplomats have been trying for years to find a solution to the conflict between the Israelites and Arabs, who are descended from Abraham and are descendants of Ishmael and Isaac. In this sense, the United States and the United Nations have assisted in a number of peace talks, such as Oslo 13, 1993, Taba, Wye River, and Camp David. However, negotiators on both sides did not pay much attention to the religious aspects of the conflict and its resolutions in that disputed territory, which both Israel and Palestine believed and considered to be their "Holy Land" (Ibid). But later, religious leaders from the three monotheistic religions—Muslim, Christian, and Jewish—convened for the first time in the Middle East in Alexandria, Egypt, to look for solutions.

The leaders of the three monotheistic religions gathered and pray in the name of almighty, Merciful and compassionate God for true peace in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. They declared their commitment to end violence and bloodshed that denies the right of life and dignity in the Holy Land. These religious actors strongly condemn that killing innocents in the name of God is a denial of his Holy Name, and offends religion in the world. They strongly expressed violence in the Holy Land is an evil which must be opposed by all people of good faith (Landau, 2003). Apart from this, in January 21, 2002, religious leaders, including a chief rabbi from Israel, the most important Palestinian sheikh, and the Latin patriarch in Jerusalem, gathered in Alexandria, Egypt. The goal was to work out a joint commitment to promote peace, and to oppose violence and terror. These high-ranking clerics of all three Abrahamic faiths Rabbi Menahem Froman, from the West Bank settlement of Tekoa, and Sheikh Talal el-Sider, a former Hamas leader, have met to discuss elements of a peace agreement based on Jewish-Muslim reconciliation (Landau, 2003). The meeting was backed by both the president of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, and the prime minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon. It was chaired by the then archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, and the grand imam of the Al-Azhar Islamic University, Sheikh Mohamed Saied Tantawi. Negotiations continued around the clock to achieve agreement on the wording of the document. At the end of the second day, all parties reached an agreement and signed the Alexandria Declaration. It was for the first time, representatives of all the faith traditions in Israel and Palestine signed a declaration calling for a religiously sanctioned cease-fire and an end to both violence and demonization of the

“other” (White, n.d.). In this historical religious gathering, the leaders of the three monotheistic religions, Muslim, Christian and Jewish passed the following statement of declarations in Alexandria. They also request all communities of these religious groups and governments to work in commitment for resolution and respect the Alexandrian declaration.

2.9.2 The Nigeria’s Experience

Most African countries do not have strong democratic institutions that facilitate administration, democratic procedures and dealing with grievances in an effective manner. In this circumstance, unless political leaders and their followers restrained by strong ethical commitment, political opponents and competitive politicians will promote violent conflicts (Phiri, 2000).

Nigeria is the most populous country in West Africa that holds religious diversities of Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion as dominant religions (Afolabi, 2015).

It has nearly 350 ethnic groups and more than 250 languages. The three dominant religions in Nigeria consists of 10, 50 and 40 percent for African Traditional Religion, Muslims and Christians respectively (Afolabi, 2015; Piereder, 2014) Conflict in Africa is still continued as the commonfeature of many countries. Nigeria is one of the conflicts ridden country in the continent. It has been influenced by a history of violence, particularly conflicts embedded between Christian and Muslim groups. These clashes were commonly seen in the Plateau and Kaduna States of Nigeria. However, recently the Islamist fundamentalist group, Boko Haram has been also the causes of enormous brutal attacks and deaths of the hundreds in Yobe and Borno States (Piereder, 2014).

Violence between Christians and Muslims has resulted in thousands of deaths, displacements, and property losses in Nigeria in recent years (Olawale and Yemisi, 2012). In reality, colonial burden, territorial disputes, ethnic division, poverty, and injustice—rather than religious difference or intolerance—are the main causes of conflict in Nigeria (Chukwud, 2013). The worst violent conflict has occurred in Plateau State of Nigeria. The most recent Christian-Muslim conflict in Plateau State occurred in Yelwa-Nshar, in the Shendam local government area in 2004. In this violent conflict, almost 1,000 people were killed and buried in mass graves (Smock, 2006).

As explained early, due to the occurrence of violence cycles, Nigeria had been tagged with the “security risk nation”. This is by the reason that Nigeria has been experiencing a number of crises, social-vices and absence of friendly relationship among her citizens since independence. These circumstances in turn led to the 1967-1970 civil wars which have had devastating, effects on unity and peaceful co-existence of the Nigerian (Olawale and Yemisi, 2012). As a result, communities in

Nigeria loss peace and there was a need for quick solution before it degenerates in to a full blown civil war (Olawale and Yemisi, 2012).

To come out from this threat and state crisis since 1995, both Islam and Christian religious leaders thought about the potentials of the two religions for peace. Then they established an Inter Faith Mediation Centre, and committed themselves to work collaboratively to promote reconciliation. Particularly, the two leaders, Wuye and Ashafa gathered key leaders of the Plateau State for five days of sharing and negotiation in November 2004. It was the first event that gathered the two communities together for a face-to-face contact. The facilitators of this gathering, Wuye and Ashafa employed a combination of preaching and teaching as conflict resolution techniques. In this process the pastor and imam frequently quoted the Koran and the Bible how the two religions teach about peace (Okpanachi, 2009; Smock, 2006; Pierede, 2014).

The first issue was the Christian complaint that Muslims, who migrated to the area from Northern Nigeria, violate to respect local traditions and leaders. In resolving this grievance, the principal Muslim leader agreed on their appeal and accepted it as an unacceptable behavior. Then Muslims apologized to the Christians and sought their forgiveness. This unprecedented Muslim's response made Christians in turn to ask Muslims to forgive their unacceptable behavior. On the last day, both sides agreed to work on all remaining issues, to find an ultimately acceptable resolution in both sides. Then they drafted a peace affirmation which was shared by two communities. They prepare public pray for true peace in the name of their Almighty, Merciful and Compassionate God in Shendam local government area of Plateau to end the violence and bloodshed that deny the right to life and dignity (Smock, 2006).

In this religiously organized mediation and religious affirmation, the representatives of the government of Shendam in plateau state acknowledged their defective leadership that contribute for Yelwa community disharmony and they accept to resolve the problem without any prejudice (Smock, 2006).

After this committed effort, on February 19, 2005, several thousand people celebrate the peace agreement, including many of those who had fled from their homes previously and now felt sufficiently safe to return and resettle. The governor of Plateau State and many other dignitaries attended and declared their support for the peace settlement. Finally reconciliation process achieved successfully (Okpanachi, 2009 and Smock, 2006). This kinds of mediation and

reconciliation process brought similar achievement on the city of Jos, capital of Plateau State (Okpanachi, 2009 and Smock, 2006).

Generally in Nigeria to address conflicting issues, religious actors involved as mediator and community mobilizer and reconciliation facilitator. The Nigeria's cases shows that if religious institution and leaders skillfully organized and pursued an interfaith dialogues, it can encourage previous enemies including those who have personally been involved in conflict, to work together towards peaceful accommodation and achieving lasting peace. This is not merely for religious conflicts rather it can also concern for human development issues, such as poverty, injustice and others that cause resentments which could develop to conflict and crisis (Haynes, 2009).

2.9.3 The Mozambique Experience

Mozambique is a former Portuguese colony which is found in Southern Africa. It consists up to twenty native ethnic groups, European and Indian origin groups as a result of colonization. It became as an independent country in June 1975 and established an interim government from Mozambican (the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique - FRELIMO) and the Portuguese politicians. However, in 1976, military force developed in border areas of the former Rhodesia and conflict outburst in the country in which later transformed into an armed confrontation. The armed confrontation was basically between the Mozambican National Resistance – RENAMO, which was created outside the country and the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique FRELIMO, which had political position at a time (Lundin, 1998).

The two warring groups struggled over to settle the problem by the military means. But the armed confrontation could not end. In this situation, certain individuals and civil societies, the Catholic Church and various religious groups had tried many attempts to resolve the confrontation by establishing contacts with the warring parties and initiating them to negotiations (Lundin, 1998). In relation to this, the Catholic Church and other religious institutions had played great role. The Mozambican Catholic Church enjoyed the characteristics of a civil society and it played a very successful role in ending civil war in Mozambique (Serapiao, 2004).

To make conflict resolution process successful and influencing peace negotiations, the Mozambican Catholic Church designed its own approaches. The church started its negotiation process by selecting specific days of the week for prayers to end the war; to explore ways for representatives of FRELIMO and RENAMO to meet and discuss possibilities for peace negotiations; explore opportunities for representatives of Catholic Church, bishops if possible, to

meet the leadership of RENAMO in the bush where RENAMO was fighting; to contact influential international figures and ask them to exert their influence to bring the contending parties to the negotiation table (Serapiao, 2004).

Additionally, Pope John Paul requested leaders of the world's major religious groups to meet for world peace at Assis on 27 October 1986. In this meeting one hundred representatives were gathered to attend the meeting. Among them, Don Jaime Pedro Gonçalves, Archbishop of Beira, Mozambique, Franciscan priest; Manuel Carreira Neves, and José Luís Cabaço (on the FRELIMO side) and Evo Fernandes (on the RENAMO) were selected to participate in the meeting. In this way religious leaders had tried to bring together FRELIMO and RENAMO representatives for peace negotiation. But all efforts were failed and required other options. Then the Catholic Church arch bishop, Gonçalves himself went to the RENAMO leader, Afonso Dhlakama inside the bush. This trip created better picture and opened hopes for Gonçalves for further work. Therefore, the bishops continue to contact the leaders of warring groups. In this moment both FRELIMO and RENAMO had come to the realization that the Catholic Church paves the way to peace.

The successive mediation efforts made by the Mozambique Catholic church with the aid of Roman Catholic Church community, Saint Egidio brought an ideological change both in FRELIMO and RENAMO to reach on a meaningful reconciliation, multiparty democracy and peace accord in 1992 (Lamb, 2008).

In general, the Mozambique peace process left some useful lessons which can contribute a potential uses in other conflict situations. It reveals that to make negotiation or mediation successful, attention must be given on the core issues of the conflict; the essence of designing peace framework on target situations for trustworthiness and accepting local mediators based on competence and creativity. Being patience must be also taken as paramount. Furthermore, in Mozambique peace process, one can learn the essence of looking for the platforms within the confrontation and working for mutual respect, confidence and trust.

Finally, one can see how religious institutions can facilitate platforms for dialogue and reconciliation to build channels for peace and national unity (Lamb, 2008). In relation to this, one can also understand how the mediation efforts of Saint' Egidio in Mozambique were relevant to mediate the warring factions skillfully and effectively (Haynes, 2009).”

2.9.4 Sierra Leone and South Africa

Sierra Leone is geographically located in West Africa. It has had experienced protracted conflict in the country since its independence from British colonial rule in 1961 to the end of civil war in 2002 (Civil War 1991-2002) (Moiba, 2016; Petra, 2014; Goldman, 2005). Islam, Christianity and Africa traditional religion are the major religious beliefs in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone had hosted one of the worst conflicts in Africa. In this conflict, more than 50,000 people were killed and over the half the population were displaced (Cilliersy, Dubez, and Siddiqix, 2015; Evenson, 2004). As Moiba (2016), stated in his doctoral dissertation, youth exclusion and marginalization, the pre-war politics, which was the undemocratic politics of the All Peoples Congress (APC) regime and the support of the rebels from Liberian insurgences were the main triggering factors that ignite Civil War in Sierra Leone (Bah, 2013; Frazer, and Friedli, 2015).

In alleviating the Sierra Leone conflict, the contending blocks in the country had used the military means for years. But the military means to end conflict further worsened the security crisis in the country. This protracted security crisis worried the religious leaders of various religious institutions in Sierra Leone and abroad. In this case, the leaders and representatives of religious institutions in the country stand to work in commitment by using their spiritual power and religious organizations to end the destructive civil war in the country. Particularly, the Christian leaders spoke to each other in churches so that they will find ways together. Consequently, religious institutions through their leaders and organizational structures in collaboration with ECOWAS, UN, and British forces brought remarkable achievements to end the Civil War (Moiba, 2016).

At the macro level, the leaders of the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL), the Inter-Religious Council Sierra Leone (IRCSL), the Methodist Church Sierra Leone (MCSL), African Traditional Religion (ATR) and other churches formally or informally developed the confidence needed to promote peace (Moiba, 2016). This enables them to work together on peace initiatives, missions and negotiations. The Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL), which is founded in 1997, pursued a very active role in mediating conflicts in Sierra Leone by conducting dialogue with the fighting factions, listening to their complaints and condemning human rights violations (Petra, 2014) In this regard, the bishop of the United Methodist Church (UMC), Christian J.C. Humper was actually able to bring all warring factions together, bring a lot of people, both perpetrators and victims together. Then confessed for what wrong they did in the war (Moiba, 2016; Perchoc, 2016; Portaankorva, 2015).The bishop had used lots of his religious background to calm people down and smoothing the public annoyance about what was going on in their country.

The other influential religious man who engaged with the CCSL member churches to end the war was Peacock. He facilitated to institute the national day of prayer to end the war and was instrumental for the formation of the IRCSL and in the peace efforts of the Methodist Church of Sierra Leone.

Finally, the war came to an end in 2002 after a combination of the methods of faith-based diplomacy by the CCSL and IRCSL, supported by All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Norwegian Church AID, and World Council of Religions for Peace (WCRP), ECOWAS, the UN, military campaigns led by British forces, Economic Community Military Observer Group (ECOMOG) and other ATR defense forces (Moiba, 2016; Petra, 2014). These efforts forced the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUFSL) and its allies to sign a peace accord in Lomé to end the war. Later, the peace accord was followed by a process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Rehabilitation (DDR) programme and other transitional justice systems (Frazer and Friedli, 2015; Moiba, 2016; Portaankorva, 2015).

South Africa is a country that has had serious conflicts in the past, especially during the Apartheid rule. Conflicts in South Africa were manifested in many areas of lives between the black majority led by the African National Congress (ANC) and the white minority led by the National Party. The uncompromising stands on the part of the two parties, led many people to deaths, imprisonment and deprivation (Omoyefa, 2014 and the Religious Foundations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), 2013). After many years rule of the apartheid, conflict in South Africa settled in 1994 with the first Non-racial multi-party election, and by transferring the political power to the black people. The Non-violent conflicts settlement between the black majority and the white minority was achieved in 1994 and followed by the inauguration of a new constitution in 1996 (Omoyefa, 2014). Within the long period apartheid rule of South Africa, racial division and unjust black repressive rule created deep rooted grievance and hostility between the black and whites in the country. This critical problem requires high commitment and series of activities to avoid hostile relationships through reconciliation other than simple political transformation. In this regard, religious institutions and religious leaders could play a significant role by employing their tremendous abilities and moral languages to influence the people. This was what has been done in South Africa that led the people towards reconciliation and relatively positive public interaction among the whites and blacks.

In South Africa, the call for people for reconciliation came with a fruitful campaign by preachers. They were linking faith with political transition every week and on radio stations across the country. Religious institutions have been widely spread and provided places for meetings, and their

hierarchical structure allows connecting the local people to national and international offices and communication structures. The TRC used churches as meeting spaces to hold hearings on human rights violations (Shore, 2009). Churches infuse love in to Africans to play a visible role in peace and reconciliation conference. Religious leaders like Bishop Tutu's neutrality role for truth and reconciliation and his commitment to love for all South Africans Black, White and Asian helped to sustain the process even when it faced much problem (Shore, 2009). The TRC had used the recurrent use of prayer and prominent role of religious leaders such as Chairman Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a former president of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), and Deputy Chairman Alex Boraine, a former president of the Methodist Church of South Africa (The Religious Foundations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2013).

The South African TRC offers the real lessons on the power of a religiously inspired process of "truth-telling" to transform a nation's tolerance. The TRC process also offers some lessons of being committed for more possible success in conflict resolution and reconciliation.

2.10 Religious Institutions in Conflict Resolution and Peace in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, religious institutions play an essential role in promoting peace and resolving conflicts. Formal interreligious contacts, along with religious institutions, can assist by offering conflict early warnings, acting as moral actors in times of violence and conflict, and promoting advocacy for negotiation and mediation (Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, 2012). Religion has the potential to be a valuable source of information as well as a unique resource for preventing and addressing the root causes of societal violence and conflict (Zerihun, 2013). Religion could be a great asset in promoting peace and resolving disputes that go beyond ordinary diplomacy.

This is because religion and religious actors have a broad audience to influence, making religion an ideal vehicle for promoting peaceful cooperation (Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia).

Almost all religious institutions emphasize the value of peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness in their theological teaching. Their service emphasis is on peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. They have helped to peace by providing various sectors of the people with skills and strategies for peace building, maintaining conflict early warning systems, and resolving existing disputes throughout the country (Tsegaye, 2014; as mentioned in Mengistu 2018).

For example, the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY), the most important protestant denomination in Ethiopia, particularly in Oromia (Wollega), made significant contributions to the conflict resolution and peace process of the Oromo-Gumuz conflict caused by grazing land and land

demarcation from 1993 to 2008. The church is participating in conflict assessment, peace and reconciliation conferences, the formation of peace councils and peace committees, monitoring, structured dialogue forums, meditation, and other peace-building initiatives (Tsegaye, 2014; Mengistu 2018).

As conflict is inevitable in human life, and when it transformed into violent situations, reconciling the hostile parties is one of the significant measures to settle the conflicting issue. In this regard, Mathew 5:23-25, 18:23-35 states that reconciliation among the people must be done before going to God. This religious guideline in other word puts making reconciliation as one of the church's responsibility. Thus, believers, leaders and other members of the church often engage to reconcile the hostile parties.

Generally, one can understand from the literature that religious institutions can make a considerable contribution in resolving conflicts, maintaining and effectively implementing peace strategies in different countries of the world. Similarly, they would have also a great significance in making peace and reconciliation in the context of our country if possible works together.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This part of the research presents the methodological aspects of the research, which includes description of the study, research design, research method, study population, sample size and sampling technique, sources of data, data collecting instruments, data analysis and discussions.

3.1.1 Description of the study area

The study is conducted in Guduru district which is one of the 12 districts of Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, Oromia Regional state and has 20 rural kebeles. Kombosha, the principal town of the district, is situated at about 260km, west of Addis Ababa and 67km from east of Shambu town, capital town and the seat of the Zonal administration.

Part of the Horo Guduru Wollega Zone, Guduru is bordered on the south by Chomen Guduru, on the southwest by Jimma Geneti, on the west by Lake Finicha'a, on the northwest by Abay Chomen, on the north by the Abay River which separates it from the Amhara Region, and on the east by the Guder River which separates it from the West Shewa Zone (Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia, 2018).

The total land area of the district is 92,005 hectares and out of these 37.76% is occupied by cultivated land and the rest 62.24% is forest, Grazing land, Settlement land & the other. The district is divided into two agro-ecologic zones these are mid land which cover 79% and lowland which cover 21% of the total area. The district has the potential for both crop and livestock production, which is mainly undertaken by small holder farmers. The agro ecology in the district is best suited for diverse agricultural production. (GRLALO, 2018)

The main crops production of the districts are maize 23.65%, Teff 23.50%, Niger seed 19%, Wheat 14.40%, sesame 5%, Beans 4.52% and others 9.93 (peas, barley, rape seed & millet seed) (GDANRO, 2018).

Thus, these geographical location and a fertile and productive land is sometimes a cause of conflicts that arises in the area. This study area is chosen because of conflict unfolding frequently around this area.

3.1.2 Geography

The geographical location of the study area is 9°15'0''N to 9°37'0''N and 37°10'0'' E to 37°40'0''E it is entirely situated in the catchment of Blue Nile at the bigger scale and partially in Guder and partially in Fincha'a sub catchment at the smaller scale. In terms of altitude, the area varies between 1,190m asl

at closer to Guder river in ‘Kenate Dhinsa’ PA, and 2,240masl at ‘Alamin Hachalu’ and ‘Eni Ama Tolera’ Pas

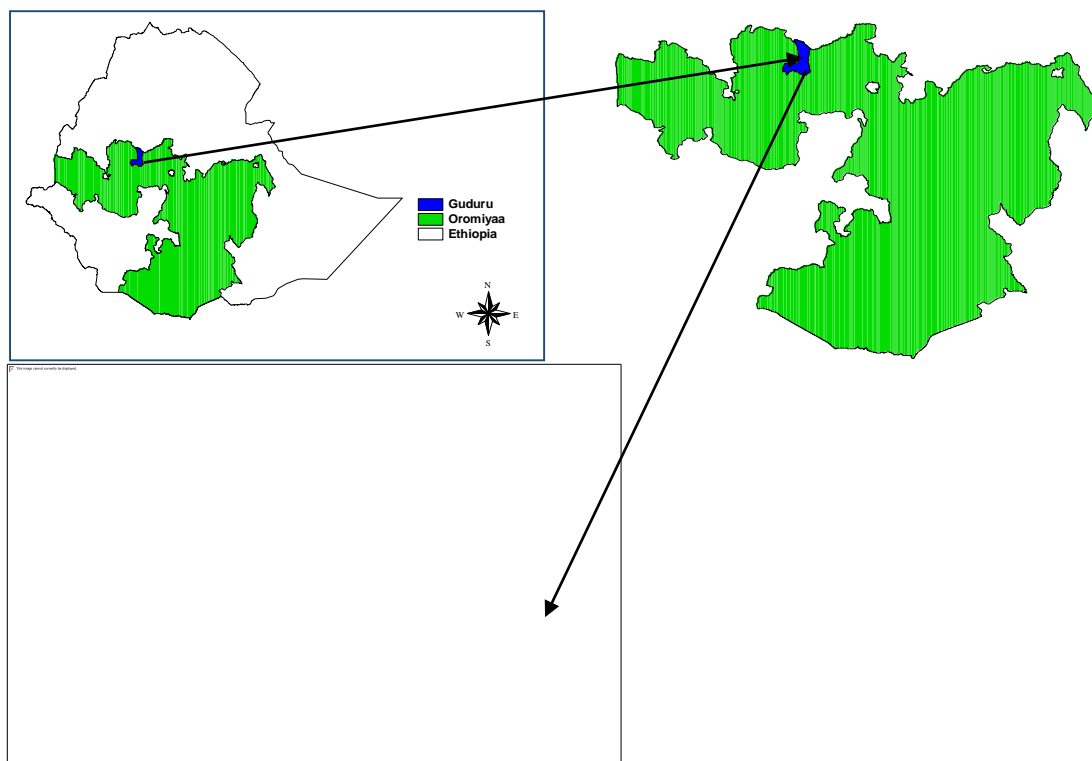


Figure 1 Guduru Map (Sources: Guduru rural land administration & land use office 2018)

3.2 Research Approach

Researchers use a variety of techniques, strategies, and procedures to carry out particular investigations into a particular investigative issue, depending on the nature of the research, the knowledge claims, and the capacity, or experiences (Creswell (2009). They may use Qualitative, quantitative or mixed research methods for scientific investigation. The researcher regularly asserts knowledge when using the qualitative approach founded on constructivist viewpoints at first (Creswell, 2009).

This method relies on reporting of events or data that cannot be stated statistically. As a result, this method produces words as data for study (Hancock, Windridge, and Ockleford, 2007; Patton and Cochran, 2002). Furthermore, the qualitative technique allows the researcher to appear among people, examine institutions, or document behaviors in their natural surroundings while conducting discussions, interviews, and observations (Creswell, 2009). Thus, qualitative research allows the researcher to focus on the details of the phenomenon being studied.

The quantitative technique, on the other hand, is one in which the investigator predominantly employs postpositive claims to acquire knowledge by collecting data using specified instruments that provide

statistical data. On the other side, a mixed approach occurs when the researcher prefers to base knowledge claims on pragmatic reasons. In this strategy, data collecting entails obtaining both numerical and textual data in order to perform research on a specific subject.

As a result, because of the study focuses on the role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution in Guduru woreda, the qualitative research approach was used. The study followed a qualitative research design and analytical research approach. Thus, based on its specific objectives, this study seeks to analyze the key roles of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution in Ethiopia, with a focus on Guduru Woreda, Horro Guduru Wollega Zone, and Oromia Regional State.

3.3 Research Design

The research design was descriptive approach using qualitative research method in order to analyze the activities of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in Guduru Woreda and their role in conflict resolution. The descriptive approach was chosen because it facilitates a systematic overview of the church's approach to conflict resolution, and a mapping of its networks within the community. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with key members of the church, and analyzed through thematic analysis. This design has limitations, as the findings are specific to the selected case study. However, the aim was to generate detailed information that can be related to the wider theoretical understanding of religious peace building.

3.4 Sources of data

Data collection is one of the most significant components of research since it allows us to get meaningful information from research participants. The method used in a study is determined by the objective of the research. As a result, a researcher must find dependable data sources in order to conduct successful study on a specific subject, taking into account time and financial constraints. The researcher used both primary and secondary data for this study. These data sources are intended to provide the researcher with appropriate data, hence making the study trustworthy.

3.4.1 Primary Source of data

The primary data was collected from Key informants and focus group discussion (FGD) participants by employing semi-structured interview data collection instruments. Semi-structured interview is common in qualitative research. Though interview questions are adjusted early in semi-structured interview, respondents also have an opportunity to reflect their intentions freely for questions posed by the interviewer. On the other hand, it also helps to manage the participants towards

the intended target (Yalew, 2017). The main limitations of primary data sources include: being time-consuming to collect, potentially expensive, susceptible to bias from the researcher, difficulty in obtaining a representative sample, and the potential for limited scope depending on the chosen data collection method; essentially, gathering primary data can be resource-intensive and may not always accurately reflect the broader population being studied.

By employing the above instruments, primary data was collected from religious leaders and other participants who had close contacts with the religious institutions in relation to conflict resolution and peace process. Key informants and FGD participants were selected from religious leaders, religious fathers, evangelists, officials and the council of Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus of Kombolcha. The key informant participants were selected purposefully by considering their knowledge, Position and closeness to the issue raised by the researcher from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, those are in that woreda). Participants were selected from these Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus of Guduru Woreda basically to assess their role in resolving conflict outbreaks in the woreda where these institutions are found and in the zone.

3.4.2 Secondary Source of Data

Relevant data regarding to the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and other important documents were gathered from different secondary materials. This enabled the researcher to get a better understanding about the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and to adjust the ways of approaching with participants and to establish trust and contact with them. This on its hand assists to ease the researchers work more.

In addition, various written documents including journals, books, and other research works which focus on the role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus were assessed in order to determine what has been stated on the topic of this study. Moreover, other related works on Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus at international level were also assessed. This helped the researcher to be aware on the valuable contributions and experiences of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in different countries. This on its hand assisted the researcher to have better insight on the role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution and peace building activities from the other countries' experiences and point of views.

The main limitations of secondary data sources include: lack of relevance to the specific research question, potential inaccuracies due to data collection methods or bias, outdated information, limited detail, difficulty in verifying data quality, and potential inconsistencies across different sources;

essentially, secondary data may not be tailored perfectly to your research needs and could contain biases or gaps in information that limit its usefulness.

Generally, the reviews of these documents are essential in identifying the gaps in previous researches on the subject under study and in the selection of appropriate research framework and tools for the study.

3.5 Methods and instruments of data collection

The following methods were used to collect the necessary data during the field work. The study employed qualitative research approaches: fieldwork data were collected through personal intensive key interviews, focus group discussions and document reviews. The sources of data included religious leaders, religious fathers, officials, councils, evangelists and followers in the research sites. Accordingly, data were collected from different respondents who are supposed to be crucial in relation with the topic under study. Key informant and focus group discussions (FGD) were primarily used as methods of data collection. Document reviews whereby various documents accessed from different religious institutions were thoroughly analyzed to further complement the data. When the conflicts took place in the study area, religious institutions and governmental institutions have played important roles to resolve the conflict and to bring the community back to the normal and peaceful state of living. In this regard, it is critical to explore the roles played by the religious institutions specifically, the role of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in the area to resolve the conflict. Furthermore, identifying the role of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus can play helpful in making them aware of what they can do to enable the community not only to overcome such problems but also to prevent it in collaboration with the government and followers of the religions.

3.5.1 Key Informants Interview

Key informant interviews are an appropriate method of anthropological study. Key informants were employed as major source of data. In order to get data on past events and scenarios and even on the current reality, key informants can give rich information that can better support other data gathering tools. This key informant interview was conducted with 8(eight) EECMY leaders, religious fathers, officials and the councils. The researcher interviewed four Male and for Female key informants. It is used to generate primary information from individuals who have experienced of an event or who have some knowledge or information (Koul,1997 cited in Girma, 2018).The 90% of all social science investigations make use of interviews (Briggs, 1986 cited in cropley, 2019). The researcher employed face- to -face, Key Informant Interview with the religious leaders from the woreda to collect data about

the role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution and peace building. The researcher used audio tapes to record and notebooks to take note in the interview.

3.5.2 Focus Group Discussion

The researcher applied focus group discussion so as to share something in common that is relevant to the topic to discuss and find participants feeling, experience and reflection on the issue under study. The researcher selected Religious leaders and councils by employing purposive sampling technique, because they have deep knowledge and enough information, close to the issue and narrate it effectively. Hence, the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) helped to make triangulation on the results that will be discovered through interviews.

3.5.3 Document Analysis

The researcher explored recorded or written documents put aside to be used in conflict resolutions. In other words, efforts were made to find out if the religious leaders or the community have some agreed upon rules or guidelines to be employed during conflict resolutions. The researcher used different written documents, Peace office of Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus (EECMY).

3.6 Target population, Sample size and sampling technique

3.6.1 Target population

“Population is the entire group of people to which a researcher intends the results of a study to apply (Aron & Coups, 2008). The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus of Kombolcha is selected purposively among the other Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus those are in Guduru woreda parish based on its current status and availability in this study area. So, religious leaders, religious councils, priests (fathers), preachers (evangelists) from this Kombolcha Mekane Yesus Church were target population for the research.

3.6.2 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The main purpose of the research is to analyze the effectiveness of the role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus in conflict resolution. For the case of this study, non-probability sampling technique were used to obtain the representative sample units for this research. First, from many religious institutions in this woreda, one (Kombolcha EECMY) was taken by simple random sampling technique (purposive sampling technique). Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers deliberately select participants based on specific characteristics or criteria relevant to the research question, essentially choosing individuals "on purpose" who are believed to provide the most insightful information for the study, relying heavily on the researcher's judgment to identify the

most appropriate cases to include in the sample; it's commonly used in qualitative research where deep understanding of a specific phenomenon is prioritized over generalizability to a wider population.

Because, the researcher thought (judged) this can represent the rest Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in the woreda parish. The sample was drawn from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus of kombolcha that is found in Guduru parish.

The general method of this study is qualitative approach. Qualitative researches rely almost exclusively on purposive sampling. That is because it needs to work with participants who have the information needed or are in an environment that needs to be studied. Purposive sampling is appropriate to select individuals, institutions or units on particular issue that would give responses for qualitative research questions (Etikant, and Bala, 2017). In this regard, employing probability sampling technique is less convenient in selecting participants on such kinds of issues. Therefore, the researcher employed purposive sampling technique.

The researchers usually select people whom they think as they are well place to cast light on particular issue that is interest to the researcher. All individuals(participants) basically able to reflect up on the issue and talk about themselves, about their connections with their objectives, social and spiritual-cultural environment, about their world-view and interpretations, their action, their life stories and their social-historical, links or have narrative competency(Cropley, 2019). Based on these views, the researcher selected **twenty four (24)** participants (the sample) from Kombolcha ECMY who have enough knowledge about the role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus in resolving conflict. Hence, totally **twenty four (24)** participants were selected from religious leaders, religious councils, priests and preachers (evangelists). In this regard, the researcher found Purposive sampling technique for in-depth interview and for Focus Group Discussion. The researcher assumed that this amount of sample is enough to conduct the research in manageable, inexpensive and in proper way to collect the data.

Accordingly, **Eight (8)** key informant participants and **sixteen (16)** participants in FGD with **two** rounds that each round consist **eight (8)** members were involved in data collection process. This is purposively, from the intent to conduct this in- depth interview and Focus Group discussion in a manageable way and to give chance for participants to raise their ideas and attitudes. All participants were selected from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus of Kombolcha. This is due to the fact that, they are close to this study area (Guduru woreda parish).

The selection of key informants and FGDs participants was conducted in accordance with their knowledge and experiences they have, position and closeness to the issue stated. FGD was conducted to access supportive information for the data collected through Key Informant interview. It also helped the researcher to access additional information and perspectives from the participants regarding controversies existing on the roles of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus can play and the recent empirical realities. Only two FGDs were conducted in this study. This is basically because of two reasons: the time constraint and the difficulties of the local political problem and insecurity to gather participants in one place.

Lastly, in the study a total of twenty four participants were involved both as key informant and FGD participants. The two categories of FGD participants, that each term consists **Eight (8)** members were purposively involved in the discussion from the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus of Kombolcha. This is categorized in two terms to conduct the Focus Group Discussion in a manageable way. The intersection of data gained from Key informant interview, FGD and reviewed data are important for data triangulation.

3.7 Data analysis and Discussions

Qualitative analysis is the analysis of qualitative data such as text data from interview. It is heavily dependent on the researcher's analytic and integrative skills and personal knowledge of the social context where the data is collected. Moreover, the emphasis in qualitative analysis is "sense making or understanding a phenomenon, rather than predicting or explaining" (Bhattacharjee, 2012, p.113).

The data obtained from interview, FGD and document analysis were transcribed, discussed and narrated. On the whole, the data was classified, thematically categorized, analyzed and interpreted to achieve the stated objectives. In analyzing the collected data qualitatively, first key concepts and ideas were thematically categorized and arranged in line with the objectives and research questions then the data was analyzed thematically. Thus, thematic analysis is the analysis mechanism employed in this study. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis mechanism which is used to analyze the data by their themes (Dawson, 2007).

The collected data through key informant interview, FGD and literature review are organized appropriately and analyzed systematically. The entire interview was conducted merely by the researcher. An average of one hour duration was invested with each interviewee and FGDs. Responses from each interviewee were recorded by note taking and recording. Mostly note taking is

used to record interview data. This was done due to the participants' unwillingness to give their sound through recording mediums. In relation to this, to access reliable data, the researcher took notes attentively and re-organized the collected data immediately after the interview process were completed. This assisted the researcher to prevent information missing and having the required information to the study. The collected data were also translated and transcribed into appropriate data forms for the research process.

The data was refined and classified into main topics and sub topics in accordance with the objectives and research questions. After that, the findings of the research questions were analyzed and discussed by contrasting with the international experiences. Since the research is in line with qualitative approach, and focusing on exploring and disclosing the practical experience and contributions of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, these data was appropriate for textual expressions. Thus, the data generated from interviews was described and presented qualitatively.

3.8 Validity and reliability

The instrument of data collection was developed by reviewing relevant literatures on the topic to ensure reliability. The tools were seen, checked and commented. Research experience in studying the issue at hand were also commented on the instruments of data collection in guaranteed the face and content validity. The researcher collected and analyzed the data carefully in helping reliability, accuracy, and transferability of the findings of the present study. The current study ensured the validity and reliability data collected and analyzed. Therefore, the use of several methods of data collection like key informants, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Document Analysis helped the researcher to get reliable and valid data.

Triangulation is a research method strategy that uses a variety of data sources, investigators, theories, or research methods to guarantee that a study's data, analysis, and results are thorough and corrects (Moon, 2019). Triangulating primary and secondary data sources enhances validity and reliability by comparing information gathered from different sources, allowing researchers to cross-check findings and identify inconsistencies, thereby creating a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of the research topic; essentially, using one data set to verify the information gathered from another, strengthening the overall credibility of the results.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher should be guided by research ethics which is universally accepted. Hence, the researcher respected the dignity of all research participants so as not to use them simply as means to achieve

research objectives. To confirm this ethical principle, the researcher relied on the principle of informed consent by informing the purpose of the study. Since the issue is sensitive, in relation to the informants or for whatever information they provide, the researcher secured their privacy. Secondary sources that used in this study was properly cited and acknowledged. Besides, an effort was made to avoid bias and to become objective as possible.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To accurately interpret the data, a kind of framework has been created to organize the data in a systematic way and find themes. Relevant sections of thematic categories have been created to give the collected data meaning.

The themes are organized in the way that they can address the purpose of the study, the objectives and research questions. Accordingly, all the data collected are organized into the following themes based on the specific objectives and the research questions. These identified themes are, the roles of Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus in resolving conflicts, mechanisms and processes of conflict resolution used by the church, major challenges encountered the church in conflict resolution activities efficiently.

4.1. Roles of Religious Institutions in Conflict Resolution

Religious leaders can be seen as additional players in conflict resolution. Religious leaders are viewed by society as individuals who possess the ability to advocate for truth and act in accordance with God's will. Since they are revered, trusted, and highly esteemed by society as God's representatives, no one expects them to say anything untrue.

Leaders of each religious institution thought the society about the disadvantage of conflict. That means they thought their followers as conflict was bad and that killing or wishing to kill a person and take the property of other persons were strictly forbidden in the eyes of God and this isolates them from heaven. Finally, such leaders bring the conflicting parties into agreement to reconcile their antagonistic idea. For mutual co-existence, religious followers have prominent role to make peace, to bring conducive environment for other people to be a law abiding citizens.

As a religious leader, one of my informants told me that he teaches respect for other people and their faiths. In addition, he teaches them to be forgiveness and peacemakers. In addition, he teaches and guides members according to the teachings of the Holy Bible and emphasizes the importance of love for all people, especially unconditional love.

Other religious leaders informed the researcher that the *“The Bible teaches love, respect for others and this is a mandatory principle to be realized”*. Even, the principle works to guide the relationship with animals and plants as well. Other informant briefly expressed that he teaches his church members love for all people even the enemies because the Holy Scriptures commanded to do so. Therefore, he further informed the researcher teaching members to love their enemies even under

persecution and to maintain peace. Often as a religious leader I tell and advice others to act or live in harmony with the rule and regulations by tolerating other religions.

The other informant informed that he teaches the members to live by Bible principles so that they could be flourishing in their entire life. To do so, he said that he teaches them together on regular programs. By doing so, their life will be shaped and molded to fit to the standard of God. This could help the members to exercise God's love through Holy sacraments, getting Holy Baptism and taking Holy Communion. This helps in peace building activities.

The Other informant described that as a religious leader, he used to teach church members to love one another and to avoid conflicts. So, the best remedy is to discuss on the issue and make reconciliation.

According to the response of the other informant, he teaches his religious followers about the negative consequences of conflict and magnifies the importance of peace. He teaches them that God of peace wants all people to live together peacefully. Above all, the Holy Scriptures are the bases of his religion to teach people. Without having (using) Bible, it is impossible to say something about peace and whatever else regarding the follower's life. So, Bible is their teacher. He also explained that he teaches them what he believes and shows them Christian behavior, i.e. being a role model. He also expressed that he teaches how the followers should behave so that they can be a role model for the others in all aspects of their life. Besides, he believed that he guided the followers through the word of God because the word of God is used as an instrument or tool to mitigate.

The other religious leader key informant told the researcher that he teaches based on God's word to resolve conflicts, to be as humble as Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity when they face conflicts of any kind to forgive and forget, to respect each other and each other's values, to cultivate and exercise tolerance in whenever they come across any different thinking, belief and behavior. Furthermore, he described that he strongly advises the members to seek advice from religious leaders as soon as they face difficulties.

According to the researcher's key informant, Religious institutions are influential part of the society. The institutions play important roles in peace building activities. The community approach changes depending on the idea that religious institutions teach.

4.2 Strategies used by EECMY in conflict resolution

4.2.1 Negotiation

Religious institutions have a lion share role to maintain peace, to create a conducive environment for other people to be a law abiding citizens. The informant said that he is playing an important role in his community teaching a word of God from the Bible in relation to the legal context of the country. One of my key informants said most of the time negotiation is used as a mechanism in conflict handling.” The other informant described himself as a religious leader and informed that he teaches respect to other people and their religions. Besides, he teaches them to be role models for peace and forgiveness. The FGD religious leader also told that he gives presentations on cultivating and developing habit of discussing on different issues with others to locate culture of discussion in member’s mind. It is educating members so that they could get tolerance through awareness of other’s thoughts, values, beliefs and different ways of thinking. Additionally, the leader told that he teaches one key value called love for humanity, particularly unconditional love, regardless of their background including their religion. The other male informant informed the researcher that he with his co-peers teaches and guide members based on the principles of the Holy Bible. It teaches love, respect for others and this is a mandatory principle to be realized”. Even, the principle works to guide the relationship with animals and plants as well. Other informant briefly expressed that he teaches his church members love for all people even the enemies because the Holy Scriptures commanded to do so. Therefore, he further informed the researcher that it is teaching members to love their enemies even under persecution and to restore peace in their side. I tell and advice others to act or live in harmony with others. By doing so, their life will be shaped and molded to fit to the standard of God. The members exercise God’s love through Holy sacraments, getting Holy Baptism and taking Holy Communion a religious leader, he used to teach church members to love one another and to avoid conflicts. In addition to this, he told that he did teach in case they face conflict saying that the best remedy is to discuss on the issue and make reconciliation. According to the response of the other informant, he teaches his religious followers about the negative effects of conflict and magnifies the importance of peace. He teaches them that God of peace wants all people to live together peacefully. Above all, the Holy Scriptures are the bases of his religion to teach people. Without having Bible, it is impossible to say something about peace and whatever else regarding the follower’s life. So, he mainly expressed that he considers the Bible is their teacher. He also explained that he teaches them what he believes and shows them Christian behavior, i.e. being a role model. He also expressed that he teaches what he believes and shows them in practice so that he lets the members

imitate his good example in all aspects of their life. Besides, he believed that he guided the followers through the word of God, because the word of God is used as an instrument or tool to mitigate.

The other religious leader key informant told the researcher that he teaches based on God's word to resolve conflicts, to be as humble as Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity when they face conflicts of any kind to forgive and forget, to respect each other and each other's values, to cultivate and exercise tolerance in whenever they come across any different thinking, belief and behavior. He strongly advises the members to seek advice from religious leaders as soon as they face difficulties. Religious institutions are influential part of the society. The institutions play important roles in peace building activities. They can change the community approach depending on the Biblical teachings. They did play critical role in minimizing and in deescalating the conflicts.

4.2.2 Teaching and preaching peace

The researcher, here, was informed by the informant that a leader in his religious organization teaches and gives advice as the primary mechanism of giving awareness and insight for members' knowledge of value of diversity for others and mutual understanding and respect are given in the process of awareness creating. To give knowledge and insight, religious leaders use Holy Scriptures based on their religious doctrine, for example in case of Christianity the guideline is the Holy Bible, and in case of Islam, the guideline is Koran. The respondent further told the researcher that they frequently use Holy Scriptures in order to teach and guide the members. The same Scriptures can also be used to give advice, discipline, and reconciling conflicts. Other informants also explained that they always try to cling to the teachings of prophets which are truth and justice. That means, they always follow the teachings of prophets in resolving conflicts, and they said that before doing so, we are expected to hear both sides and parties so that we could be able to give sound judgment and minimize bias.

The other key informant told that he usually teaches to respect other people and their religion, teaches them being role model regarding peace. Teaching the members to love one another and to avoid conflict is the way the other informant explained so as to control and resolve conflicts. Using the knowledge as a tool, members try to minimize their differences and solve problem. Round table discussion is one way of resolution propped by other informant while the researcher interviewed. He told the researcher that he plays a role of media so that he can identify the causes with the end result of apology from those identified as offenders. To make peace as the informant told the researcher better to teach members the negative effects that can be occurred by conflicts. In other way, magnifying and praising the importance of peace and its elements have to be worked on. So, the

informant added he refers to the God of peace that expects the same value from us. To approach peace in full situations, God gave us his Holy word called Bible. So, using the bible as per the direction of God, people in conflict will come to peace and resolve their issues very easily. Similarly, the other informant pointed out that God's word can shape person's behaviors and helps people to put on good manners or personality that of Christianity. Other group informant also summarized that in order to bring good result in members' life and make their teaching be acceptable in the members side, they have to show Christianity humility, respect and compassion for humanity, real tolerance for other's different way of living, and valuing the efforts that religious leaders are doing. According to him, followers always value what is being done over what is being taught. So, practice of leaders in our case the teaching of values of peace and elements of peace can be contagious to the rest of the members.

The other informant informed that teaching the members to live by Bible principles so that they could be flourishing in their entire life. To do so, we teach them together them in weekends. Doing so, their life be shaped and molded to fit to the standard of God. The members exercise God's love through Holy sacraments, getting Holy Baptism and taking Holy Communion.

4.2.3 Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the art of mending damaged relationships and learning to live with radical changes without resorting to violence. One could consider this the ultimate objective of conflict resolution. Deep peacemaking and cultural peace building are centered on reconciliation (Ramsbotham et al. 2005; 231). Openness, forgiveness, and bringing one's own needs and objectives into line with those of others are all necessary for reconciliation.

It is the recognition of victims' dignity. It gives the person back their ability to take charge and control their future. It restores the ability to coexist or coexist with the other person. When antagonistic groups engage in violence, religious organizations and leaders can be very helpful in bringing them together. "There is nothing more important than fostering peace and love in this constantly shifting outside world, which is why reconciliation is spiritual ethics" (Kefyalew, 2009, p.66).

In this way, religious institutions encourage their followers to make apologies with one another and to live in peace and love first. Without it, one cannot make amends with God or enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Because of this religious basis, the church has a greater opportunity of employing reconciliation as a method to resolve conflicts between people and promote peaceful coexistence in the society.

According to Matthew 5:23–25 and 18:23–35, humans must first make amends with one another before turning to God. In other words, this religious principle states that the church has a duty to make amends.

This suggests that in order to settle disagreements, conflicts, and animosity toward anyone, the church must establish order and cooperate with all members and leaders. These churches' local activities also contribute to the instillation of these significant religious principles in the community, ensuring that they endure as customs. On the other hand, this makes it easier for people to make amends with one another and with other members of their community.

In this context, it is clear that the EECMY has contributed to peacemaking and conflict resolution by resolving disputes between people and communities. According to an interview with the participants, the EECMY played a role in settling ethnic disputes within the research region. It helped to resolve the dispute that arose between the local administration and the people in Guduru woreda, specifically in the areas of Tulu Habib, Loya Malole, and other places.

There were conflicts and obstructions in these places. As a result, numerous infrastructures were destroyed and many lives were lost. The church organized the populace to promote peace and harmony. As a result, this church's efforts help to ease stress. Social services, particularly the provision of electricity in every Guduru woreda kebele, are made possible by this. Additionally, it facilitates joint support for those whose property has been damaged. The daily operations of other commercial businesses and blocked transportation flows continued.

4.2.4 Forgiveness

The church also employs forgiveness as a conflict resolution technique. Forgiveness is the choice to let go of the desire for revenge, retaliation, and unfavorable sentiments toward an offender in order to be free of bitterness and anger. This approach can facilitate interpersonal reconciliation and encourage healing and inner peace restoration.

Furthermore, it's critical to define forgiveness precisely. Forgiveness does not entail forgetting, ignoring, or supporting injustice. Forgiveness does not necessarily entail reconciliation because it can be risky or unattainable at times. It is a process that may take a while to complete. Regarding to forgiveness, the holy Bible says, "And when you stand in prayer, forgive whatever you have against anybody, so that your father in heaven may forgive your failings too." (Mark 11:25). "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you don't forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father will forgive your trespasses" (Mathew 7:14-15). Promoting forgiveness, at both the personal and the social levels, is the main function of the church's teaching. According to her teaching, forgiveness is a gift from God and a way to find peace. Without forgiveness, there is no way to get past the past; instead, a change of heart is necessary to enable future relationships to be peaceful. On the other hand, it gives wrongdoers, in particular, a chance to seek forgiveness, which is important for lowering tensions and fostering community cohesiveness (Faith and Order Commission, 2005).

Moreover, Colossians 3:13 Forgive those who have wronged you and accept each other's shortcomings. Keep in mind that you must forgive people because the Lord forgave you.

4.2.5 Public Pray

In situations where the majority of the community is facing significant difficulties, the Church organizes and asks for a widespread public prayer. The EECMY is a key coordinator, even though all religious institutions took part in this public prayer. The Church calls worshippers, fathers, and religious leaders to a public prayer. The reason for this is as the Bible states, "You are the Shine of the earth." According to this perspective, Christians should be able to pray for God to provide them with answers to their issues. Occasionally, the Church commands its adherents to fast while praying.

Along with asking God to end major conflicts, civil unrest, and war, this public prayer also aims to prevent other man-made or natural disasters like starvation, drought, epidemic sickness, etc. Although asking God to solve the problem is the primary objective of this prayer program, it also has the ability to draw attention to constructive ideas, calling for a peaceful conclusion and hope for them. As a result, there are fewer crises, devastation, and conflicts between the parties involved. Accordingly, in this study area, even the government bodies (woreda leaders) also uses this public pray as a solution and offer the Church to conduct this public pray. The EECMY has been called the people (believers), her religious officials and fathers for this kind of public pray.

For many years, this religious practice has been used to alleviate problems. When violent situations arose, the EECMY called on its followers to pray in public in order to contribute to a peaceful resolution of the conflict and to protect the nation and its citizens from future crises.

During public prayers, religious leaders and officials frequently preach about peace, love and ask the concerned stakeholders to respect public dignity and respond appropriately. The public prayer had a beneficial effect in this sense by focusing attention on serene moments during crisis situations.

Public pray as a means of conflict resolution mechanism was employed in Mozambique, Sierra Leon and Nigeria. The Mozambican Catholic church called to pray for peace on Friday during the Civil war between FRELIMO and RENAMO parties. This public pray holds public attention and fighting groups to assist negotiation which helps to move them forward to the negotiation table for peaceful settlement (Serapiao, 2004).

Similarly, in Nigeria, they had employed public pray as one important instrument. They prepared public pray for true peace to end the violence and bloodshed that deny the right to life and dignity. This was significantly changed the conflicting communities towards close contact and peaceful

negotiations and brought successful resolution and peace among the conflicting communities (Smock, 2006)

This shows that public pray has the power hold public attention, smoothing violent conflicts and tensions among contrasting parties for peace negotiation and conflict resolution. Likewise, the EECMY has been experienced in employing and using public pray as a means to resolve violent conflicts in our country as well as in the study area.

4.2.6 Facilitation

Facilitation is another method the church uses to resolve disputes and promote peace. In order to facilitate conversation and agreements between the disputing parties, the church works. In this sense, the church's main goal is to reduce tensions and threats between the parties involved in the conflict by collaborating with the relevant stakeholders to provide forums for discourse.

As to Jeong (2010), facilitation is a conflict resolution strategy that involves a neutral third party acting as a facilitator and establishing conditions that allow the parties to interact with one another. Therefore, it is one of the things that the church may do during times of conflict and stress by employing her religious resources and values through her impartial involvement.

In relation to this, one can see how religious institutions can facilitate platforms for dialogue and reconciliation to build channels for peace and national unity in Mozambique (Lamb, 2008). In Nigeria, Quakers were involved in mediating conflicts in 1967-1970 between the warring parties during the Biafran war. In Sudan the all African conference of Churches mediated between the Southern and Northern Sudan of 1972 Addis Ababa peace agreement. In South Africa, Christianity lead negotiation between Nelson Mandela of ANC and William de clerk of national party and Aparthied came to an end.

In this regard, the FGD and key interview participants in the study stated that the EECMY plays its own role in conflict resolution and peace activities. The significant role that the EECMY played is related to the violent conflicts that occurred between government soldiers and the community in Tulu Habib in 1997 and 1998 E.C. Guduru Woreda, one of the forefront Woredas where violent conflicts occurred in Horo Guduru Woreda. The EECMY has also carried out some facilitation activities and worked for peace and peaceful conflict resolutions by establishing temporary Committees to facilitate grounds for discussion. Particularly, Tulu Habib area where violent conflict was occurred due to fraud made to the result of the vote of the national election. In this area unprecedented violent conflict was breakout. Religious leaders and officials represented from Guduru Woreda Parish went to the conflict area to mitigate the crisis and to save the people from harms. The church officials, religious fathers request

and plead the people, government officials and security forces to look for solutions peacefully. In addition to this, religious officials and fathers also made personal contacts with the government officials and the people to discuss for solutions and to facilitate grounds for discussion. This made them to prepare for dialogue. They also forwarded recommendations. In this regard, the church played significant role to cool down the situation and has worked in smoothing down the violence and facilitated the situation to make open dialogue with the people. Accordingly, discussions had been held, relative peace has been maintained and the more destructive measures were mitigated.

4.3 Challenges of EECMY in Conflict resolution

The Church has many opportunities, but it also faces obstacles that hinder EECMY's ability to operate and resolve conflicts effectively. In this regard, participants in focus group discussions and key informant interviews note that throughout its long history, the EECMY has encountered and resolved a number of issues. While the church has continued to engage in peace initiatives on various levels using its Christian values and resources, its capacity to resolve conflicts and advance peace is limited, as some FGD and interviewees have stated, because opposing individuals and groups are unwilling to cooperate in resolving their differences.

Because of it is occasionally carried out without paying for the murder. The majority of FGD participants and a few interviewees believe that the church is impacted politically. They contended that there are instances when religious leaders and higher authorities are ordered to act only in accordance with the political intent of the government and media consumption (tension between government and religious organizations). Some government representatives attempt to meddle in religious affairs, which is contrary to the secularism ideal. This makes certain religious officials and leaders politically reliant. These circumstances had some effects on the church's ability to maintain public acceptance of her operations, either directly or indirectly.

According to the responses of the majority of FGD and certain key informant participants, political disagreements and violent conflicts pose a further challenge to the church, especially when it comes to its conflict resolution initiatives. Religious authorities, spokesmen, and leaders are hesitant to get actively involved in these matters. This stems from their skepticism about the government's and the public's ability to carry out the church's mission with assurance and dedication.

Moreover, unwillingness and lack of commitment from the government to correct its faults and their attempt to push problems towards the people rather than taking sufficient corrective measures create doubt upon the church officials and leaders.

On the other hand, due to the lack of understanding regarding the mission of religious institutions in conflict resolution activities, some community members do not accept in a positive way. They also accept that the Church supports the government and abandons public affairs. Such views on a segment of the population weakened and worsened the church's acceptance and popular support. This has a detrimental influence on how well the church resolves disputes and promotes peace. Also, inaccessibility of materials, like vehicles to travel for her peace activities creates difficulties to the church to easily address everywhere. Financial and transportation constraints are also challenges that affect the church's effectiveness in conflict resolution activities.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to analyze the effectiveness role of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus church in conflict resolutions. Accordingly, the researcher had tried to assess the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus church's role in conflict resolution in Guduru Woreda where violent conflicts had been frequently occurred.

As the church widely exists in the area, the church is highly linked with the people. The church's values and teachings are also strongly embedded in the community traditions. As the majority of the participants point out, the church's praying, preaching and teaching about peace, love, unity and equality has a considerable role to prevent conflict occurrences by minimizing hatred among individuals, community members or diverse interest groups. These religious activities have also valuable impacts on actual conflict occurrences by smoothing situations for further resolutions.

The church had made a contribution to the settlement of disputes. For example, when the violent conflict erupted in the area of Tulu Habib, Loya Malole, and other places, church leaders and religious leaders went right away to preach, educate, and beg the violent participants, government stakeholders, and security forces to cease their destructive and inappropriate actions that put the public at risk.

In Guduru Woreda and other parts of the region, the church played a role in mediating violent conflicts and serving as a facilitator for dialogues. In order to provide forums for dialogue and negotiation between the disputing parties and stakeholders, the church also played a facilitative role.

The church has used preaching and teaching as a means of resolving disputes. In essence, as preventative measures, these mechanisms were very important. To get people's attention and start the process of resolving conflicts, the church has also used public prayer, reconciliation, facilitation, negotiation, and other religious principles and resources.

During her participation, there were certain limitations that posed a challenge to the efficiency of the church's operations. Among the most significant are the following: The unwillingness of the disputing individuals and organizations to cooperate and settle their issues (differences), Government officials' inference into religious matters, the political impact on the Church (tension between the government and religious institutions), Conflicting parties' unwillingness and lack of commitment to make amends, some people's ignorance of the role of religious institutions in conflict resolution efforts, material accessibility issues, budgetary and transportation limitations, and other issues

Based on the data analysis and the major findings, the following conclusions were made.

- ❖ The Church had played an effective role in conflict resolution activities in Guduru Woreda.
- ❖ The church's regular praying, preaching and teaching about peace, love, unity, and equality has been instrumental in preventing and cooling down violent situation for further resolutions by minimizing hatred and enmity among individuals, groups, community members and other interest groups.
- ❖ The combinations of preaching, teaching, praying, reconciliation, facilitation, personal conversation and other religious assets were employed as mechanisms to resolve the conflict occurrences.
- ❖ But particularly, connecting to the recent phenomenon in the study area and others there are Contradictory views. Accordingly, for some participants, the church didn't involve effectively in settling conflicts as far as it was expected from it. Thus it implies that the church didn't work as the potentials it constitutes in this regard.

5.2 Recommendations

In the course of this study, attempts have been made to analyze the role of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus church in conflict resolution activities, conflict resolution mechanism and the challenges faced while the church made endeavors in this regard. The finding shows that the church has significant role in preventive activities, smoothing violent situations for further resolutions and in facilitating platforms for negotiation, reconciliation and discussions. However, there is a lack of participating the Church in conflict resolution activities. There are also attempts of government impositions on the church that would affect the existing trust between the people and the church. Therefore, based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded.

- ❖ Since the church's regular praying, preaching and teaching about peace, love, unity and equality has the power to capture public attention and bring attitudinal change; it must be encouraged and supported for further works and more effectiveness.
- ❖ The interaction between the church and the government should be further strengthened. However, there shouldn't be improper imposition of the government on the activities of the church. In this regard, the constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom rights should be properly implemented.
- ❖ As a religious institution, there shouldn't be any distrust on the part of the people in her activities either in facilitating platforms for discussion, negotiation, reconciliation or other efforts of the church. The church should attempt to do in full commitment and confidence as per its capacity and religious assets it constitutes. This makes the church to hold and increase public trust on her activities.
- ❖ The church should work more to advance the religiosity of all sections of her followers.
- ❖ It is better, if the church has an established structure or department that coordinates and follows up peace and conflict resolution activities. It also enables the church to easily manage and facilitate situations to solve problems that would disturb the normal peaceful life of the people by establishing better networks with higher religious officials, government and community members.
- ❖ It is better if there is an established different religious institutions to work together in a collaborate on conflict prevention and resolution activities.
- ❖ Lastly, as conflict had been frequently observed in the study area, it needs to work with different segments of the society, institutions and stakeholders. Since, religious institutions can contribute significant role, the contributions, experiences in peace and conflict resolution need to be studied, explored more in detail and initiates for more studies.

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Appendix

Basic questions prepared to conduct the research

First of all I would like to thank you for your willingness to participate on the interview. Questions are prepared at Jimma University College of Law and Governance, department of Civics and Ethical Studies to collect data and conduct a Research for the partial fulfillment of MA degree.

I want to assure that the data collected will be only for the academic purpose. Again, I would like to appreciate you for your participation on the interview and the data you give me. So that data can be collected; the following basic questions are prepared.

1. Have you experienced any conflicts in this area?
2. Does the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus have been participated in resolving conflicts that happened in different areas?
3. What kind of Conflict resolution strategies are established and used by Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekene Yesus to resolve conflicts that arise in the community?
4. What kind of exemplary role that Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekene Yesus had played recently to resolve conflicts that arise in different areas of the country to have a healthy social relation as well as social and government relation?
5. What types of conflicts that Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekene Yesus had participated in resolving?
6. To what extent government invite religious institutions to participate in resolving conflicts?
7. What are the obstacles face the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekene Yesus during resolving conflicts?

Questions prepared for Focus Group Discussion

1. What is the role of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekene Yesus in resolving conflicts that happened in around these areas?
2. Does the Ethiopian Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus have been participated in resolving conflicts that happened in different areas?
3. What kind of exemplary role that Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekene Yesus had played especially recently in resolving conflicts that arises in different areas to build a healthy social with social and social with government relation?
4. What kind of Conflict resolution strategies are established and used by Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekene Yesus to resolve conflicts that arise in the community?
5. What are the obstacles face the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekene Yesus during resolving conflicts?
6. You can add if you have additional point.

Thank you!

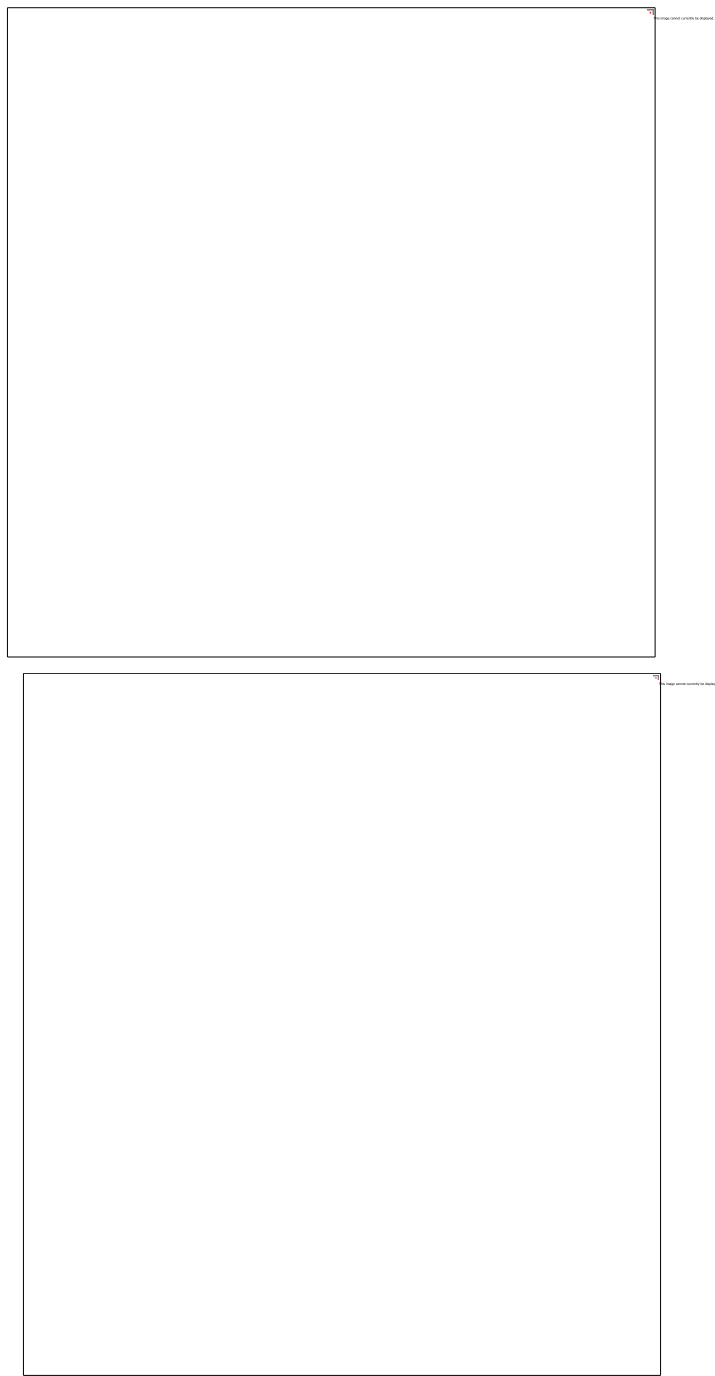


Figure 2 some of the key informant interview

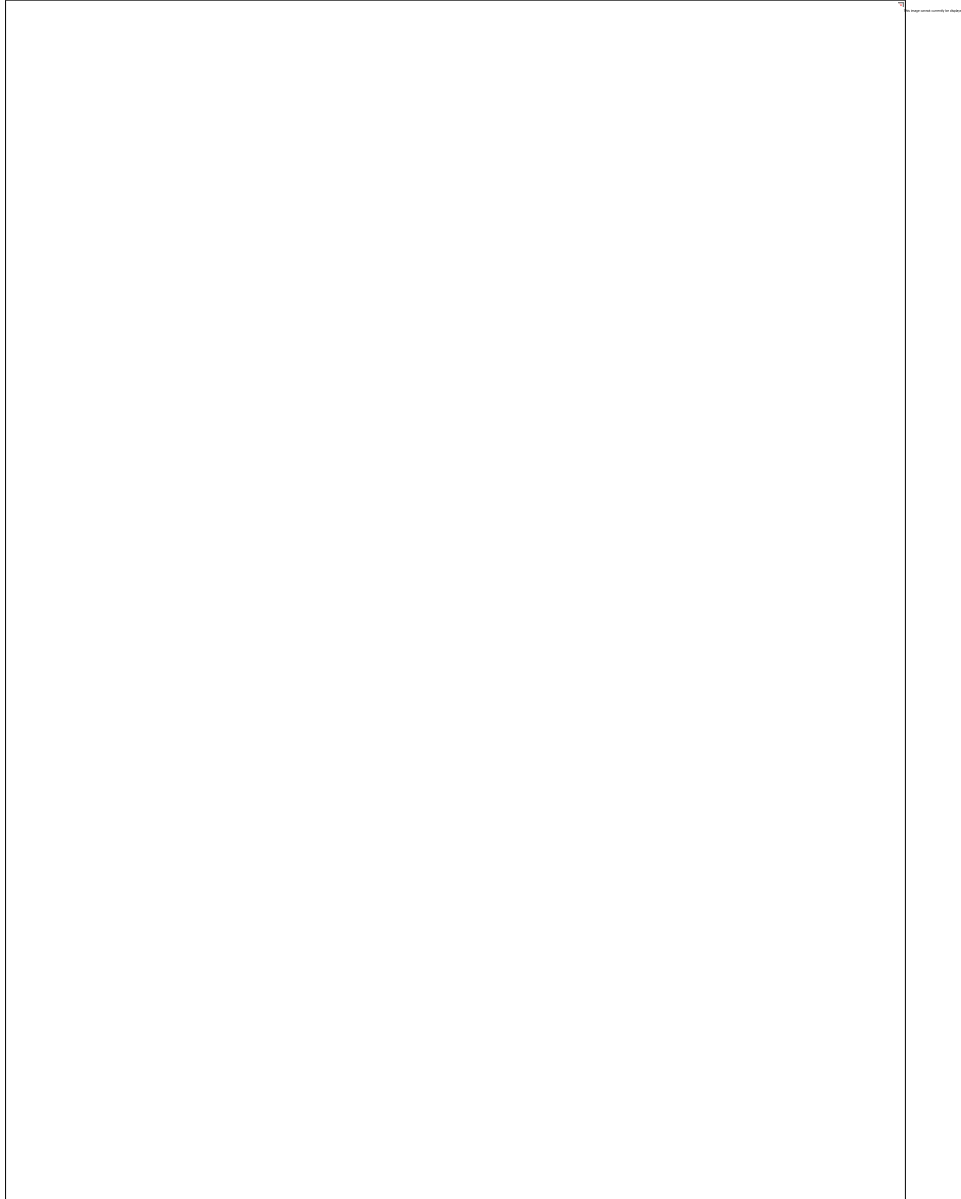


Figure 3 Focus Group Discussions

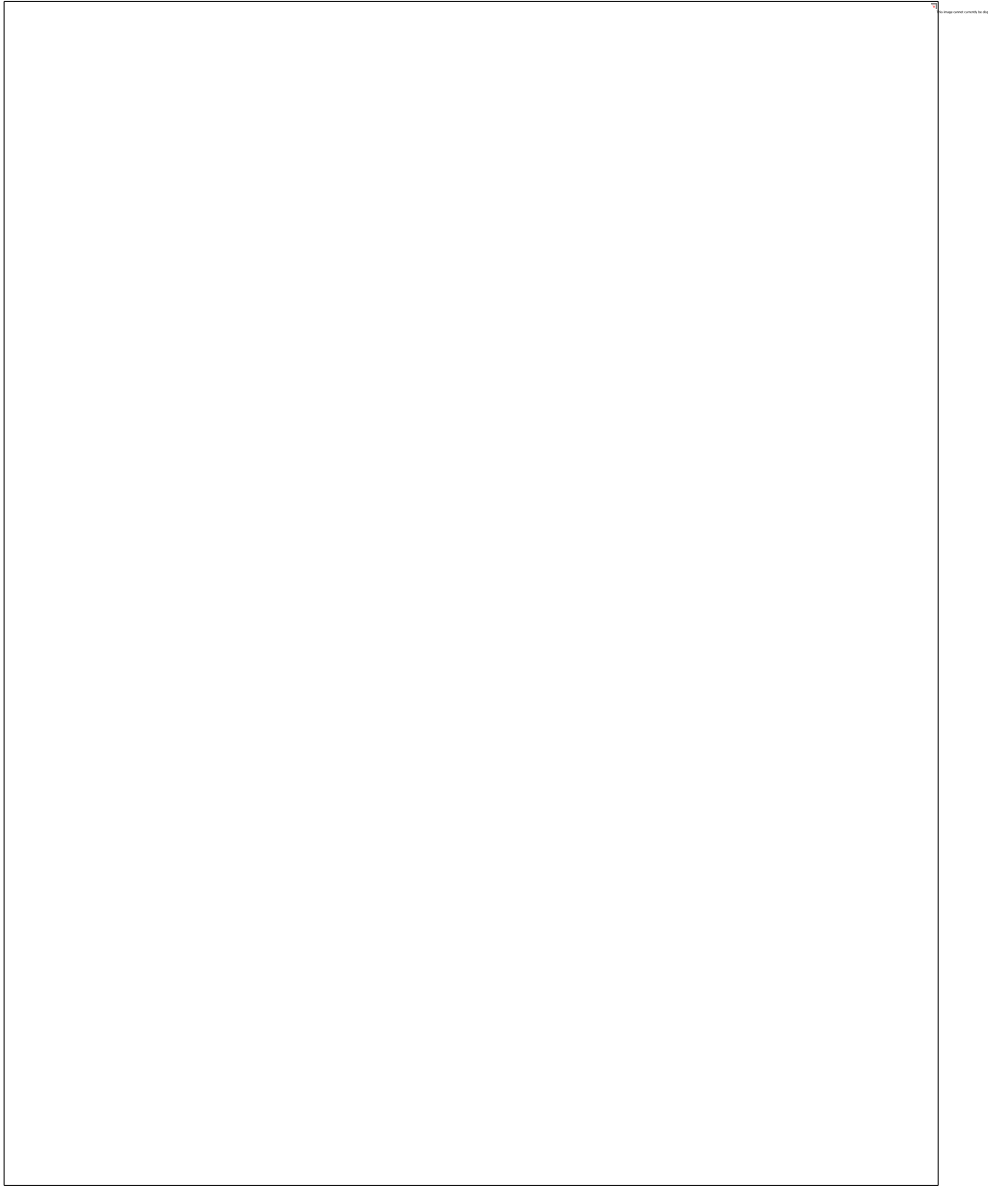


Figure 4. Kombosha EECMY