



**Exploring the Causes and Psychosocial Impacts of Internal Administrative
Disputes Among the Leaders of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church on
its Believers: The Case of Selected Churches in Bole Sub city Area**

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Abstract

This qualitative case study explores the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church (EOTC) in Bole Sub city area. Using purposive sampling, 15 participants were selected from five churches in Bole sub city and data was collected through Semi-structured interview. The gathered data was transcribed and analyzed thematically. The findings show a common agreement that confirms the existence of disputes rooted in government interference, ethnic and political influences, corruption and mismanagement, spiritual and doctrinal issues, external influences and international factors and disrespect and personal conflicts. The disputes also have strong psychosocial effects on the believers of the church, including loss of faith and trust in church leaders, increased doubt and spiritual crisis, social division and fragmentation, psychological and emotional impact, and impact on church attendance and participation. Despite challenges, participants stated hope for church unity and spiritual improvement which are dependent on the repentance, spiritual renewal and transparent leadership. As a resolution measure for these disputes, the study findings pinpointed, government non-interference and structure, spiritual and educational approaches, accountability and responsibility, believer engagement and awareness, and structural and administrative reforms. In time, by addressing these disputes and challenges, and applying the effective resolution measures, the EOTC can come out stronger, preserving its faith and unity.

Key words:

Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC), internal administrative disputes, psychosocial effects, Believers, Leadership, Conflict resolution.

Chapter one

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Christianity is one of the major global religions around the world with more than 2 billion followers (Dawes Jr., 2023). It is one of the three Abrahamic religions starting with the life of Jesus Christ who is God incarnated in the flesh of man. (New King James Version, 1979, John 1:1-14). Christianity was accepted as a legal religion during the time of Constantine I (313 AD) who was the emperor of Roman Empire during (AD 280 - 337) (Frend, 2014). Christianity was officially declared as the state religion in Ethiopia during the reign of Abreha and Atsbeha on the 4th century (Ross, 2002). The Ethiopian orthodox Tewhahedo church (EOTC) was under the administration of the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox church for years and it gained its autocephaly in 1959 (Beckingham & Huntingford, 1961)

Ethiopia is a country of religions, having a long and historical connection with the religion followed by many around the world (Evason, 2018). Religion has been strongly influencing the country for many years with the majority of the population falling into the category of Christianity and Islam (Karbo, 2013). The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOTC), one of the six oriental orthodox churches globally has its own canons, rituals, practices and calendar which influenced the country and the people (Senbetu, 2022).

Over the years, the EOTC has faced internal and external disputes including doctrinal disputes like Qibat and Tsega which strained the church but hadn't split its synod. The formation of synod in exile in 1991 (Engedayehu, 2014), the formation of the synod in Tigray in 2021, and the formation of the synod of Oromia nations and nationalities in 2023 has divided the holy synod of the church. The official separation with the Synod in exile in USA was settled in a

peaceful manner in 2018. The case of Oromia Synod was claimed to be settled as well, but things doesn't seem to be fully at rest (Gebreamlak, 2024). In terms of Orthodox religion, the state of Tigray is officially separated with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church calling it-self "The Tigray Orthodox Church" (Heliso, 2023).

This thesis plans to study the causes behind and their psychosocial effects of the recent internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the EOTC. The problem is obvious and can be clearly seen by the believers and non-believers as well. The causes for these internal administrative disputes can also be anticipated and understood by believers. The most important part is, believers do not understand the depth of the psychosocial effect these disputes are causing and one of the main focuses of this study is finding out the psychosocial effects of these disputes.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The EOTC has passed through many problems and has withstood most of them. None of the struggles prior to 2023 has led to separation except during the case of the fall of the Derg regime and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) coming to power, which created a synod in exile at USA (Engedayehu, 2014). Engedayehu (2014) reported that the 25 years of separation of the synod in exile at USA and the EOTC was a time which divided the loyalty of the believers of the EOTC. The people's loyalty was truly tested as their willingness to conform to their faith teachings was tested by their desire to fall in line with their ethnic dominance in the government. Believers were strained and divided in affiliating with the home synod, affiliating with exiled synod and neutral ones. The study asserts the involvement of the government as the main source of the problem which led to the division.

The Oromia clerics' movement which originated in 2019, started with claims to establish

regional church administration in Oromia. The movement was spearheaded by clergy members stated a need for linguistic and cultural autonomy within the EOTC advocating worship in the Oromo language and representation by bishops from the Oromia region (Chala, 2019). Some of the raised causes include grievances among believers regarding different corruptions and administrative neglect with in the EOTC's leadership, leading to significant internal tensions and societal divisions. Despite different trials of resolution, recurring tensions posed a strong challenge to reconcile regional autonomy with the EOTC's centralized governance structure ("Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church," 2023).

Ethnic conflicts influenced by TPLF affected various aspects of Ethiopian society, including the church. Following the fall of TPLF from power, a two-year war broke out with the Ethiopian government which severely impacted the region of Tigray. The EOTC was accused by the bishops in Tigray for not condemning the war which they claimed was genocide. The EOTC was also accused of supporting the war which cost the lives of many. Efforts to reconcile the issue failed, leading to the Tigray diocese's break form the EOTC and establishment of Tigray Orthodox Tewahedo Church with a new leadership. This new establishment got a wide spread support in the region and there were strong demonstrations against the EOTC during the patriarch's visit in 2023 (Yohannes, 2023).

The approaches used as a solution for these recent internal disputes are leading nowhere, because the problems keep coming up repeatedly. The Holy Synod seemed to have found the solution in the case of Oromia church administration. But the same issue with the same questions came to light two times in two years. Even though the causes are different with the Tigray case, the results of these disputes eventually led to same result: A separate synod. These feuds in the church are affecting the believers strongly and it's creating a gap between the believers and the

leaders of the church. Considering the freshness of the issue, there isn't much information on the causes and the psychological and social effects on the believers. There are different reasons that are raised as the cause of the disputes and the effects on the people are not clearly known. This research planned to find out the causes and the psychosocial effects of these internal administrative disputes are causing on the believers.

This research aims to determine if believers are aware of these problems in the first place. To identify the reasons behind these disputes and to determine the effects the disputes are causing on the believers. Finally, to identify possible remedial measures that can be used in order to gradually reduce the continuing disputes and eradicate them eventually. Believers are aware of the problem but they are not aware of the deep effects these disputes are causing on them. This research aims to fill that gap. How are these internal disputes in the church affecting the believers regarding their religious view, their personal life, their worshipping habits, their feeling of peacefulness, how it affects their joy, their forbearance, their faithfulness, their kindness, how and what to teach for their children, and their perspective towards the government involvement on religious matter. Since the EOTC encompasses about 42% of the Ethiopian population (Chala, 2019), the psychosocial effects of these disputes should be studied so that the leaders of the church in the disputes know how their decisions are affecting the believers. Since the dispute is still recent and lacks extensive research, this thesis will open the door for future investigations and studies on the topic.

1.3 Objectives of the study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to evaluate the causes and the psychosocial effects of the internal administrative dispute among leaders of EOTC on its believers.

1.3.2 Specific Objective

The Specific Objectives of the study are: -

1. To assess the presence of internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC.
2. To identify the reasons for the recent internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC.
3. To examine the effects of the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC on the believers.
4. To provide possible remedial measures based on the findings of the research.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Are there any internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the EOTC?
2. What are the reasons for these internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC?
3. What are the psychosocial effects of the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC on the believers (lay people and clergy members included)?
4. What should be done to avoid such problems in the future?

1.5 Significance of the study

The main beneficiaries of this research are the leaders of the church and general clergy members of the EOTC. The study assessed the current disputes, their underlying reasons, the effects of the disputes on the believers, and gave recommendations for resolving these disputes based on the inputs of participants. The leaders who are directly involved in the disputes, will be able to understand what type of dispute is going on and why. They will also be able to

understand whether the dispute is affecting believers or not.

This research is also significant for peace building organizations that are working in interfaith communications. There have been different organizations and individuals that have tried to reconcile significant rifts between Christian churches. These organizations and individuals will be informed on the dynamics behind internal church disputes in EOTC that end in schisms and develop different kinds of pacification mechanisms.

The last but not the least beneficiaries of this research are, the believers and members of the church. Not many in our country are aware of psychosocial effects of religious disputes, even though we live through them every day. Believers face depression, insecurity, anxiety, strained relationships, loss of unity, stress, loss of faith but not many are aware of it. Believers will benefit by gaining awareness and work towards improving their physical and mental health.

1.6 Operational definitions of terms

- Priests – both deacons and priests are named priests in this research.
- Churches in the vicinity (አጥቢያ ቤተክርስቲያን) – the church an individual repeatedly goes to is considered as his church (አጥቢያ) in this research.
- Psychosocial effects – the combined psychological and social consequences that arise from internal administrative disputes within the EOTC. These effects include fear, emotional distress, loss of trust in church leadership, spiritual crises, and social fragmentation. They manifest as changes in personal faith, mental well-being, interpersonal relationships, and community dynamics, affecting both individual churchgoers and the broader religious community.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

2.1 Obstacles and disputes against the spread of Christianity in Ethiopia

During the early centuries, Christianity flourished in Ethiopia until the emergence of Judith, also known as Yodit Gudit. Her background is subject to various interpretations, with some suggesting she hailed from Damot while others claim she had Ethiopian Jewish origins (Negash, 2013). Enduring mistreatment by the Axumite government fueled her vengeful rise to power (Andersen, 2000). Although accounts vary, consensus holds that Judith played a significant role in the downfall of the Axumite Empire in the 9th century AD, reigning for a chaotic 40 years that greatly impacted the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC).

Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi, also known as Ahmed Geragn, posed a significant obstacle to the missionary efforts of the EOTC during the 16th century. Backed by the Turks, he sought to spread Islam in Ethiopia through violence and persecution. His actions included burning churches, killing priests, and coercing people to convert to Islam. This period marked another challenging chapter in the history of the EOTC (Adejumobi, 2006).

As a researcher, I advocate for the separation of state and religion. While politicians may personally have their own religious beliefs, their public roles should remain neutral to avoid favouring one religion over another. Orthodox Christianity historically enjoyed advocacy from Ethiopian emperors, but this intertwining of religion and state led to conflicts with the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and the nation itself. Regardless of an individual's agenda against the state, religion should not be used as a tool to further personal or political aims. Instead, religions offer essential spiritual practices that contribute to various aspects of human life, including peace, justice, humanitarianism, reconciliation, and moral values. These religious

agendas play a vital role in promoting peace and ethical values within society, making them invaluable for societal improvement.

King Gelawdios of Ethiopia sought Portugal's help against Ahmed Geragn. Portugal's aid came with a condition: converting Ethiopians to Catholicism. Despite resistance, King Susenyos converted and declared Catholicism the state religion, sparking a civil war (Pelletier, 1996; Netsere, 2020).

The Jesuits, aided by Portugal, introduced controversial doctrines like Qibat and Tsega, sparking ongoing debates about the nature of Jesus Christ (Kasse, 2018; Netsere, 2020). These doctrines, influenced by the council of Chalcedon, stirred significant theological discord in Ethiopian Christianity.

The initial assistance offered by the Portuguese to Ethiopia appeared humble, but their true intentions became evident when they attempted to impose Catholicism on the Ethiopian people. This shows the significant impact of external influences on Ethiopia's direction (Ademe & Ali, 2023). It serves as a cautionary tale about the importance of carefully considering the implications of decisions, particularly those with lasting consequences. While the Ethiopian emperor may have sought a solution to the immediate issue of Ahmed Geragn, the involvement of the Portuguese ultimately led to a five-year war and the emergence of religious controversies such as Qibat, Tsega, and Rebirth (Tehadiso), which stemmed from Jesuit missionaries (Ademe & Ali, 2023).

The Qibat teaching posits that Jesus Christ received his divinity through anointing by the Holy Trinity during conception, while the Tsega teaching asserts three births of Jesus, with divinity and grace conferred during the third birth (Woldegebrial, 2013). These doctrines, influenced by Catholicism, led to persecution of EOTC followers and prompted councils to

evaluate them, particularly Qibat, both during and after King Susenyos's reign (Netsere, 2020).

The EOTC houses of Bete Teklehaimanot and Bete Ewostatewos were influenced by Catholic heresies of Qibat and Tsega, respectively (Kasse, 2010). These houses debated Sabbath celebration until Zara Yakob settled the matter. Geographically, Qibat is associated with Gojjam, Tsega with Shoa and Gondar, and Tewahdo with Tigray (Kasse, 2018).

The Council of Boru Meda, convened on May 28, 1878, primarily addressed the debate between the Tsega or three birth heresy and Tewahdo teachings. While earlier councils focused on the Qibat-Tewahdo dispute, Boru Meda also condemned the Qibat heresy despite the absence of its representatives (Netsere, 2020). The Qibat heresy faced official defeat by Tewahdo during a council in Axum under the reign of King Yohannes IV. Although it seemingly disappeared afterward, it resurfaced in May 2002, when proponents sought federal recognition as "Ancient Orthodox Qibat." However, the EOTC Holy Synod countered with official opposition, ultimately resolving the issue (Kasse, 2018).

King Tewodros II succeeded in political unification, yet religious divisions persisted. Emperor Atse Yohannes, his successor, tackled these religious issues, notably convening the Boru Meda council. Atse Yohannes played a significant role in religious unity and the resolution of theological disputes (Netsere, 2020).

The religious controversies surrounding Qibat, Tsega, and Tewahedo represent significant doctrinal disputes within the history of the EOTC. As a researcher, I contend that such dogmatic controversies hold considerable validity and importance, as they pertain to beliefs that are central to the salvation of believers according to religious teachings. Resolving these controversies requires immediate discussions and interfaith dialogues, with decisions ultimately resting on the shoulders of church leaders. The efforts of emperors like Atse Yohannes IV in

convening councils such as Boru Meda are commendable and crucial for both the church and the country. In my view, reconciling religious doctrines is often more challenging than reconciling secular matters, necessitating a foundation of peace within the state to facilitate productive discussions on religious disputes. Consequently, the initiatives undertaken by King Tewodros II and Atse Yohannes IV toward state unity and religious harmony are noteworthy contributions to both spheres.

2.2 Disputes that led to the formation of Synod in Exile

Following the fall of the Derg regime, the TPLF intervened in EOTC affairs, leading to the removal of Patriarch Abune Merkorios. This sparked a split within the Holy Synod, with Abune Merkorios leading a synod in exile in the USA while Abune Paulos was elected as the new patriarch in Ethiopia. The legitimacy of each synod became contentious, resulting in three factions emerging within the church. Political affiliations further complicated matters, with TPLF supporters largely aligning with the Ethiopian synod. This division prompted a migration of believers to the synod in exile, which played a key role in facilitating the global expansion of the EOTC, particularly among Ethiopian diaspora communities (Engedayehu, 2014). After 25 years of separation, the two Holy Synods of the EOTC were finally united in 2018, thanks in large part to the efforts of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. Under the terms of reconciliation, the late Abune Merkorios was recognized as the spiritual patriarch, while Abune Matthias continued to serve in administrative matters. The church expressed gratitude to Dr. Abiy for his role in achieving this unity (Gebrehiwot, 2018).

As a researcher advocating for peace within religious organizations and the broader country, I find the TPLF's approach to be calculated and manipulative. It is imperative that political parties refrain from interfering in religious matters, yet such separation is challenging in

Ethiopia due to the long-standing intertwining of religion and state. The TPLF's strategy of divide and conquer, rooted in ethnic federalism, introduced a new dynamic that caused confusion among believers torn between ethnic and religious identities. The disputes instigated by the TPLF were primarily administrative rather than doctrinal, highlighting power struggles among individuals rather than genuine theological concerns. Such administrative disputes, in my view, lack justification for creating divisions within a religious organization, as they often overlook the impact on laypeople who are affected by the outcomes. This is evident in the 25-year division within the Holy Synod of the EOTC in Addis Ababa and among exiled factions.

2.3 Recent internal administrative disputes in the EOTC

The recent disputes within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church began in September 2019 when Kesis Belay Mekonnen initiated a movement to establish a clergy for the Oromia region, aligning it with the regional governmental administration. However, the EOTC operates without a regional administrative hierarchy. Claiming neglect of parishioners in Oromia and fearing the growth of Protestantism, Kesis Belay sought language-focused religious practices. Despite anticipation for support, the Holy Synod rejected his requests within 30 days and later suspended his priesthood, along with his three associates (Chala, 2019; Mideksa, 2020; Tura, 2017).

The issue persisted for about a year until a peaceful resolution was reached between the EOTC Holy Synod and Kes Belay Mekonnen's movement. Speculation arose regarding potential support from the recent governmental administration (*Ethiopian orthodox tewahedo church holy synod to deliberate on hijacked agenda this week*, 2019). A year later, an official announcement declared a collaborative effort to address issues within the general clergy. Both parties acknowledged existing problems in Oromia's churches and agreed to establish a dedicated group

within the general clergy to tackle them (*The problems raised by the committee established as the Oromia Church have been resolved by the archbishopric*, 2020).

Archbishop Abune Yosef emphasized that divisions within the EOTC not only disrupt its unity but also threaten the unity of the country itself (Mahibere Kidusan, 2019). Despite previous agreements, another issue arose when three archbishops ordained 26 monks as bishops in southwest Shoa, violating church canons (*Ethiopian Orthodox Church Excommunicated three subversive Archbishops*, 2023). Responding to allegations, Archbishop Abune Nathnael defended the church against claims of language preference bias, stating that the church does not impose Amharic and Geez on the Oromo people (*Ethiopian Orthodox Church Excommunicated three subversive Archbishops*, 2023). The group ordained intended to form a Holy Synod of the Oromia nations and nationalities, sparking controversy and leading to their excommunication by the EOTC Holy Synod (*Orthodox Synod declares faithful to wear black for Fast of Nineveh to protest against "illegal group,"*, 2023). The irony of the situation was, the newly formed Oromia synod excommunicated the 12 archbishops of the EOTC Holy Synod (*A rift in Ethiopia's Orthodox Church has been healed, but tensions remain*, 2023).

The ongoing internal disputes in Oromia are acknowledged by both sides as administrative rather than doctrinal, which I find disproportionate in causing such chaos and confusion. It's essential for people to worship in a language they understand, as otherwise, they may gradually disengage from the EOTC. While Ge'ez is the liturgical language of the EOTC, its comprehension is limited in many regions, including among people of Amhara descent. Thus, addressing the language barrier is crucial not only for Oromo speakers but also for others who struggle with Ge'ez understanding.

There is also significant concern regarding the appointment of bishops, stating that

individuals from outside the region were being selected, and that the Holy Synod was predominantly comprised of individuals from the Amhara region (Plaut, 2023). Looking at this from a professional standpoint, this issue highlights the importance of understanding tradition and competence. A bishop consecrated by the Holy Synod should possess a thorough understanding of the traditions of the diocese they serve, as well as the necessary qualifications to fulfil their duties effectively. Inability to meet criteria that are essential for success of the work can be an obstacle for the bishop to do his duty.

There was strong conflict because the government wasn't willing to help or stand with the legally recognized body of the EOTC. Despite legal recognition, the government aided illegal factions within the church, resulting in violence and deaths (*Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church should consider suing the government of Ethiopia, imminently*, 2023). The EOTC excommunicated those involved but remained open to reconciliation. Initially considering it an internal matter, the Prime Minister's stance faced opposition, prompting the church to protest and seek legal action. Things escalated quickly and strongly until the intervention of the prime minister which led to a peaceful end in February 15, 2023. 2023 (A rift in Ethiopia's Orthodox Church has been healed, but tensions remain, 2023; EPO, 2023).

It has become a challenge for the government in order not to intervene or remain neutral towards religious institutions, especially towards the EOTC since the importance and influence of the church is strong in the history of the country. While it's essential for the government to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the EOTC, there are practical instances suggesting governmental support for breakaway bishops. Despite the prime minister's statement indicating the government's intent to stay uninvolved, evidence suggests otherwise. If the government chooses to intervene, Ethiopian civil law dictates that it must align with the Holy

Synod of the EOTC to facilitate the reconciliation process. These complexities persist alongside valid claims raised by individuals on both sides of the dispute.

There were strong tensions between the federal government of Ethiopia and TPLF after the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power. Tensions escalated and war broke out which lasted for two years until a peace treaty was signed in Pretoria. After the war ended the bishops in Tigray accused the EOTC for turning a blind eye to the war which devastated the Tigray people and the region in general and the bishops formally established the Tigray Orthodox Church. Despite an apology from the EOTC to the five archbishops in Tigray, the newly established synod refused reconciliation, leading to further discord (*Synod Secretariat sends letters to five Tigray Archbishops seeking “reconciliation”, blames “political conspiracy” for rift*, 2023). Abune Mathias attempted to visit Tigray, but received no welcome from clergy members. Instead, he was greeted by political leaders (*Orthodox Patriarch, delegation return to Addis without meeting Tigray religious leaders*, 2023). Following this, the newly established Tigray synod ordained six archbishops, prompting the EOTC to excommunicate the synod and its orchestrators (*Renegade archbishops uncanonically ordained six bishops in Axum, Tigray*, 2023). Despite the excommunication, the Tigray synod appealed for reconsideration for future positive relations (*Tigray religious leaders denounce excommunication by Orthodox Synod*, 2023).

The war between the Ethiopian government and TPLF is the main reason of separation between the EOTC and Tigray Orthodox church. As an investigator, I believe this issue still needs further investigation before drawing any conclusions. A huge amount of information came from the both sides of the dispute while the issue was ongoing. The EOTC was accused of openly supporting the defence force which was on war with the TPLF. The defence force was

accused of looting religious institutes, gangrape, and unlawful killings during the war in Tigray (Gebremariam, 2021). On a video recorded and released by Dennis Wadley (2021), The patriarch of EOTC, Abune Mathias, condemned the war on Tigray; calling it a genocide even though the Holy Synod did not stand by his comments (*Ethiopia's Orthodox Church patriarch condemns Tigray 'genocide.'*, 2021). There has also been evidences of the TPLF using orthodox churches as a storage for weapons (Gebremariam, 2021). Given the complexity and conflicting nature of these reports, it is challenging to ascertain a definitive narrative. However, with the cessation of hostilities and the signing of a peace agreement, there is an opportunity for reconciliation between the leaders of both factions. Admitting mistakes, forgiving each other, and working for a better future in unity is the message of Christianity after all.

2.4 International studies on internal Church disputes

Fr. Cherian George Poothicote Zachrias Mar Nicholovos conducted a survey on the 1912 schism in the Malankaran Orthodox Church, attributing it to a disagreement over the handling of church treasury keys by Mor Dionysius VI, leading to his excommunication by the patriarch of Antioch. Mor Dionysius VI colluded with a deposed patriarch, Mar Abdul Masiah, leading to a split in the church, with Mor Dionysius VI's faction forming the Syrian Orthodox church of Malabar. Fr. Cherian blames Mor Dionysius VI for the schism, citing his autocratic leadership and inability to transcend national and ethnic limitations. The dispute led to prolonged court battles, wasting church resources and hindering its witness. Fr. Cherian's study delves into Mor Dionysius VI's background and upbringing in Anglican Protestantism, concluding that his desire for power and uncompromising character fueled the schism. (Poothicote, n.d.)

As a researcher who appreciates unity and peace, what Mor Dionysius VI did was wrong and his stubbornness led to the division of the Malankaran Orthodox community. Holding a key

for a church treasury shouldn't have been a source of controversy of this magnitude. This is a great example of how a mistake of a single person who holds a higher office creates chaos which lasts for a long time. The environment which Mar Dionysius VI was raised in, his stubbornness, his unwillingness to submit to the rules of the church, and his inability to consider the rest of the community were the main reasons that divided the Malankaran Orthodox Church.

Reverend Fr. V.V. Paulose advocates for peace and unity amidst the church dispute within the Malankaran Syrian Orthodox Community. He asserts that the prolonged dispute isn't rooted in matters of true faith but rather revolves around the pursuit of power and privilege. According to him, the majority of believers are not in favor of perpetuating the conflict; it is only a few leaders benefiting from it. Fr. V.V. Paulose emphasizes the urgency of ending the dispute, as it is causing the church to lose souls. He places responsibility on certain leaders for perpetuating the conflict, leaving the majority unsure of how to proceed. Fr. V.V. Paulose calls upon the faithful to mobilize and persuade church leaders to prioritize unity with the Patriarch of Antioch. He advocates for the establishment of a platform to counsel the patriarch and the Holy Synod on spiritual matters. Additionally, he urges the excommunicated factions to retract their condemnations and withdraw legal disputes, opting instead for Christian reconciliation. Fr. V.V. Paulose concludes by invoking Martin Niemöller's famous words, calling for peace, unity, and solidarity within the community. (Paulose, n.d.)

The Malankaran dispute is an administrative dispute which is similar to the current dispute in the EOTC. I completely agree with Reverend Paulose in the idea that, administrative disputes are not dogmatic disputes which define the ultimate salvation of a person, rather just a pursuit of power which is an advantage for the few individuals on power. In the meantime, believers will suffer the consequences of their leaders. Just as Reverend recommended the

believers in the EOTC shall mobilize and help their leaders see the bigger picture which is advantageous for the many.

Matthew Chacko clarifies that the disputes leading to the schism of the Malankaran Syrian Orthodox Church originated at the clergy level, with the laity subsequently following the lead of the clergy. Therefore, Chacko suggests that peace talks should commence at the clergy level, as the laity will follow the guidance of their spiritual leaders. Chacko emphasizes that if the clergy cannot set an example for the laity, then there is little reason for the people to be concerned about the ongoing conflicts. This perspective underscores the influential role of clergy leadership in guiding the faithful and resolving internal disputes within the church community. (Chacko, n.d.)

It is the same with the EOTC, the laity follows the clergy without question. I believe it is appropriate to submit to the orders of the church; but a spiritual generation which rightly and appropriately questions its leaders is essential for the internal peace and prosperity of EOTC. Believers shall rightfully question their leaders before following them into a decision which separates them from their brothers and sisters. It is true that, a change of heart among the leaders and willingness of reconciliation is essential for these disputes to settle down, but believers should also help out in any way they can starting from prayers for their leaders.

In his proposal to resolve the dispute within the Malankaran Syrian Orthodox Church, Rev. Fr. V.V. Paulose highlights the failure of civil courts in Kerala to provide a solution to the longstanding conflict. Advocating for a Christian approach to conflict resolution, he suggests withdrawing cases from secular courts, implementing spiritual fasting, seeking advice from other churches, educating the community about legal proceedings' implications, using science and technology for temporary matters, resolving spiritual issues with guidance from responsible

individuals, revoking excommunications, and committing to refraining from involving civil courts in faith-related matters. These measures aim to foster reconciliation and unity within the church community, promoting transparency and accountability. (Paulose, n.d.)

Just as Reverend Paulose tried to show the Malankaran community, the EOTC is also wasting resources that can be used to spread the gospel. I believe leaders shall stop going to federal secular courts rather settle their differences within the church itself. Each side shall be considerate of the demands of the other to come up with solutions that benefits the parishioners of the church. Prayer, fasting, seeking help from other churches, withdrawing cases from secular courts, and revoking excommunications can be essential methods of resolving the ongoing conflict.

Fr. Jerry Kurian Kodiatt delves into the multifaceted challenges confronting the Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church (JSCC), acknowledging the inevitability of change in a rapidly evolving society. Among these challenges, language discrepancies pose a significant barrier, with English emerging as a dominant language in India while traditional languages may fade into obscurity, creating a gap in understanding during liturgical practices. Additionally, he critiques the church's role as a mere event venue, urging for a shift towards fostering genuine dialogue and mutual support among members, facilitated by clergy and leaders. (Kodiatt, n.d.)

Language challenges and lack of open dialogue in the church are the two of the nine challenges in JSCC raised by Fr Cherian that are similar to the case at hand. The request of the Oromia clergy about language is justified and appropriate. A person shall always be able to understand what is going on inside the church otherwise he will disengage from it eventually. There is also lack of genuine dialogue among church leaders of EOTC and also between leaders and believers. Frequent and authentic dialogue among leaders, as well as between leaders and

believers, is essential to prevent the emergence of gaps within the church community. This platform will provide a chance for believers to stay aware of the churches business and to ask appropriate questions that require explanations on the issues of the church.

Finke and Scheitle (2009) identify five key factors contributing to organizational schisms: Country Context: State regulations can either encourage or suppress schisms. Lax regulations may foster schisms, while stricter ones can deter them, promoting internal conflict resolution.

The current Ethiopian context is suitable to accept religion formations which are can come from divisions or are established by individuals. As we have seen in the case of EOTC, when the conflict of the Oromia clergy case occurred, the government shouldn't have physically supported the renegade bishops even if their claims were legitimate because they were not legal bodies unlike EOTC. This fosters divisions among religious institutions violating the credential of the EOTC.

Religious preferences: Diverse religious preferences within an organization can lead to conflicts as it grows larger, making it challenging to meet all members' needs.

Religious niche (religious preference) is also an essential element which leads to division among leaders. Besides other causes, the preferences of the leaders inside EOTC are what is causing conflicts and schisms in the church. Hence, most of the time, the orchestrators of the movements are few individuals leading the many blindly. When their needs are fulfilled, the leaders forget their claims despite the claims being legitimate.

Resource Exchange: Disparities in resource distribution, centralized or decentralized, often lead to conflicts that may escalate to schisms due to bureaucratic delays or lack of central mediation.

Religious resources are also one of the main reasons of disputes and divisions in the EOTC.

This may be not admitted out in the open and there may be no evidence to corroborate it; but I believe this is highly likely one of the main reasons of disputes in the EOTC. Religious resources include lands, money, legitimacy and power. As it is known, the EOTC as an organization follows the centralized approach, meaning everything has to go through the central power (Holy Synod) before it reaches different parishes around the country. If one wants to control a resource of the church, he or she has to share or take the power of the Holy Synod: hence, the current disputes and divisions that led to establishment of Holy synods. As its stated by the Oromia movement leaders, their requests have been repeatedly ignored until they fade away. This is one of the disadvantages of centralized approach, bureaucracy issues will keep a complaint from being heard and it will be ignored until it fades away.

Inimitability: Organizations with unique characteristics are less prone to schisms as members are hesitant to lose these distinctive traits, preserving the organization's identity.

Inimitability and religious professionalism are two of the reasons which keeps people from disengaging from the EOTC. This last two reasons are some of the main reasons which kept the unity of EOTC though out the years. The church has unique and exceptional tradition which lasted for more than 2000 years. Hence, both Tigray and Oromia did not declare dogmatic separation rather called themselves, Tigray and Oromia orthodox Tewahedo church respectively. However, as of late this inimitability character of the church is being tarnished due to the continues disputes divisions which will leave the church in danger of more divisions.

Religious Professionalism: Training and integrating clergy members professionally within the organization reduce the likelihood of schisms, as they are invested in the organization's success and seek to enact change from within.

Believers are trained spiritually and professionally and embedded within the church which

strengths the church continually. This approach creates strong religious professionalism within the church which in turn reduces conflicts and divisions among leaders and members.

These factors highlight the complex dynamics involved in managing conflicts within religious organizations. (Finke and Scheitle, 2009)

According to Radulovic Igor (2021), the disputes that culminated in the Great Schism of 1054 had roots beyond theological controversies. These included disagreements over papal infallibility, preferences for ecclesiastical capital based on wealth, competing spheres of influence among churches, and a lack of civil discourse within the church community. The Eastern Church, centered in Constantinople, contested Rome's claim to ecclesiastical authority, viewing it as merely a small territory compared to the wealthy Constantinople, which justified its claim as the ecclesiastical capital. Both the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches sought to expand their spheres of influence, leading to disputes in various regions. However, their unwillingness to compromise and engage in productive dialogue ultimately resulted in mutual excommunications on July 16, 1054. (Igor, 2021)

This analysis of Igor on the greatest division in Christianity coincides with the analysis of Reverend Paulose, Matthew Chacko, and Finke and Scheitle in religious disputes and divisions. Of course, the great schism had theological controversies but it was also due to power, legitimacy and religious resource disputes which started at the clergy level. In my opinion, these are also the main sources of disputes in the EOTC, clergy members seek power in order control religious resources. However, they will not be legitimized immediately and that poses a problem for them to achieve their agenda, meanwhile creating division among the people.

According to reports from the East-West Church & Ministry, many schisms within the Eastern Orthodox churches stem from government involvement to advance political agendas and

churches meddling in the affairs of other churches. In a report released in the spring of 1997, the organization details and narrates several schisms that occurred in Estonia, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, former Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Romania. These schisms are attributed to external pressures from governments seeking to exert influence over religious institutions for political purposes, as well as internal conflicts arising from churches interfering in the affairs of sister churches. (Broun, 1997)

Desta Heliso (2023) states the current disputes and divisions are due to the intertwining of religion with politics and ethnicity. Heliso traces how the fusion started and he strongly raises the role of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in using the EOTC for its own political agenda. The government back then instrumentalized the EOTC and promoted its own principles and perspectives and that was against the message of the church which was unity and solidarity. He contends that the current disputes are primarily administrative and language-related, driven by political and ethnic agendas rather than doctrinal differences. Heliso identifies political groups behind the schismatic movements, including those attempting to establish a separate synod based on ethnicity. To address these issues, Heliso suggests acknowledging mistakes, engaging in constructive dialogue, and emphasizing unity over division within the church leadership. He also calls for government intervention to prevent politicians from exploiting religious affairs for political ends. (Heliso, 2023)

Heliso's analysis in my opinion is detailed and exceptional work. Ethnicity, politics and religion have been intertwined and that is the main reason for these ongoing disputes in EOTC. I completely agree with Heliso's analysis and also methods of resolution that should be used to deescalate the situation. The disputing factions in EOTC should take the initiative and solve the problem for the sake of the common good and the government should also stay away and stop

exploiting the situation for progressing its agenda.

In her article for The Washington Post, Kathrine Houreld attributes the current disputes and schisms within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) to political changes instigated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. She contrasts this with the previous EPRDF government's more restrained governance, suggesting that such upheavals would have been less likely under their rule. Similar to Desta Heliso's perspective, Houreld characterizes the conflicts as primarily linguistic rather than doctrinal, citing the grievances of figures like Abune Sawiros and Hailemichael Tadesse. She views these disputes as power struggles, possibly with tacit support from the government. Houreld underscores the underrepresentation of the Oromo people in the church and Holy Synod, referencing statements from Lisanework Desta, an aide to Abune Matthias. She recounts a liturgical ceremony in Ambo conducted in the Oromo language, which some locals dismissed as a sham. Houreld concludes by highlighting the split within the Tigray church and the broader devastation caused by the previous war in the region, but does not offer specific solutions to de-escalate the situation. (Houreld, 2023)

I agree with Katherine, especially on her ideas that the conflict in EOTC is not dogmatic rather administrative. The language issues as she stated are essential and that should be addressed quickly. However, in the name of a democracy there is a request that Oromo people is underrepresented in the Holy synod. It is true that a bishop who knows their culture shall serve them but that bishop shall be qualified as well. If a bishop is not qualified enough to serve the people in that region, then he shall not be named as a bishop just because he is Oromo or speaks that language.

Emily Durkheim states that religion is system of beliefs towards something which is considered sacred (Taves, 2009), whereas Max Lynn describes it as an accepted world view

because it is assumed as something which is true but cannot be proved or disproved (Nelson, 2010).

2.5 Psychosocial effects of religious disputes

Back in the days, mental health professionals used to believe religion affected mental health of individuals for the worst by creating emotional instability. However, recent researches have shown that religion is better for mental health of individuals (Dein, 2010). Because of the dogmas and cannons integrated with in it, religion reduces suicides, substance use and alcoholism. Religion creates unity with others of the same belief and provides belongingness. Religion also helps to cope with difficult life situations because of a belief on a higher power who has created and sustains. Religion instils thankfulness, compassion and forgiveness in a community through its teachings (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2016). These shows that religion has a central value and strong influence on the lives of many. Leading us to realize, negative issues like disputes and conflicts will deprive of a person form those values. Fear, anxiety, depression, doubt, and stress are some of the results of religious disputes. Coping mechanisms like alcohol and other substances, thoughts of suicide and self-harm have been discovered as ways to deal with religious issues. Religious trauma syndrome (RTS) was officially introduced in 2011 by Dr. Marlene Winell in order to determine and help individuals which experienced hurts due to religious issues (GoodTherapy Editor Team, 2019). Disagreements on religious issues can also bring loss of hope on religious institutions, continuous conflicts, controversies and sometimes even death. Given the fact that religion is a focal point in existentialism, wrong approaches due to wrong perspectives lead to alienation and suicide (Exline et al., 2000).

In their research, Caluori et al. (2020) show that conflicts change how people see God,

they will understand God as more than a punishing type than a loving one. Social chaos, intergroup distrust are some of the main effects of conflicts. Ideological tensions between political and ethnic groups, if left unresolved, can contribute to an increase in authoritarianism. (Caluori et al., 2020)

As Heliso stipulated the fusion of politics, ethnicity and religion are the causes of the disputes in EOTC and this can lead the believers to understand God as more punitive and also it may also end up in tyranny according to Caluori, Jackson, Gray, Gelfand. This is a day to day worry of every Ethiopian orthodox, stating that the current chaos in both the country and the religion is the punishment of God for our sins.

According to Moreira-Almeida et al. (2006), frequent religious involvements are related with decreased levels of hopelessness, suicidal ideations, and substance dependence. In addition to that, religious involvements are also linked with positive psychological well-being, these includes contentment, pleasure, optimism, and confidence. And when there are religious conflicts, people tend to be tired of the issues and eventually decrease their religious involvements (Cragan & Wright, 1993). And based on that, I can say that, when people decrease their religious involvements, they will be exposed to depression, substance abuse and suicidal thoughts. This disengagement from religion also decreases gratification, joy, motivation and enthusiasm.

Continuous internal religious conflicts also create loss of trust on leaders, emotional exhaustion, feeling of instability in the organization, spiritual disconnection, and loss of sense of unity and belongingness (Cragan & Wright, 1993). I believe this is an accurate description of the believers of EOTC, believers are exhausted about church dispute related issues, they are losing sense of unity and losing hope on their leaders and the EOTC. Many others agree with Cragan

and Wrights assessment of positive influence of religious involvements (Morales, Hudlicka, & Vergani, 2020).

Different to the analysis of the above researchers, some see the positive side of religious conflicts. They state that, even if many focus on the negative sides of religious conflicts, they also have a positive outcome if navigated accordingly. Religious conflicts provide enhanced clarity and purpose, strengthened community, improved practices and structures Chaves (1993); adaptive strategies, and increased engagement and participation (Van Gelder & Zscheile, 2011).

2.6 Theoretical Frameworks

As a theoretical frame work, the researcher has considered, conflict theory, organizational behavior theory, human relations theory, social identity theory, cognitive dissonance theory and psychosocial theory.

Conflict theory states society is always in a constant state of conflict because there are limited resources that aren't enough for everyone. The core concepts of conflict theory are, competition, power, lack of resources, and marginalization (Resnick, 2024). Gebreamlak (2024), points out how the marginalization of the Oromo people led them to seek power when the political situation was stable for them to do so. Religious issues intertwined with ethnicity, politics and economic downturns fueled the recent conflicts in the EOTC. (Gebreamlak, 2024)

Organizational behavior combines principles of anthropology, sociology and psychology to in order to understand human behavior in an organizational setting. It explores interactions in an organization in three levels; individual, group and organizational. Organizational behavior theories included for this research are: contingency theory, organizational culture theory and human relations theory.

Contingency theory shows the best way of managing an organization is based on situational factors (Shonk, 2024). As Gebreamlak stipulated the EOTC leadership style doesn't consider the historical, political and cultural contexts. He brings the historical grievance between the EOTC and the Oromo people in relation with king Menelik, and also the current political situation of the country where the Oromos are holding the palace. The leadership style of the church should consider the situations at hand, otherwise the disputes will be never ending. (Gebreamlak, 2024) This can also be related with change management theory, because the EOTC is currently facing pressures both internally from members who are influential leaders and also externally from the government. unless the church comes up with ways to cope up with the changes that are ongoing, problems will keep showing up continuously.

Organizational culture theory explains the identity of an organization and members behavior are guided by beliefs, attitudes, systems and rules that are shared within the organization (Wong, 2024). The main organizational cultures valued by the EOTC include traditions and rituals, canons and orders, practical adherence to doctrines and authorities with hierarchies. These cultures unite the believers from different backgrounds: anyone or anything that shows even a tendency of being against it, will face a strong condemnation from leaders and the believers as well. Currently ethnicity has taken more value than the previous organizational cultures which is leading to continuous disputes and schisms. (Heliso, 2023)

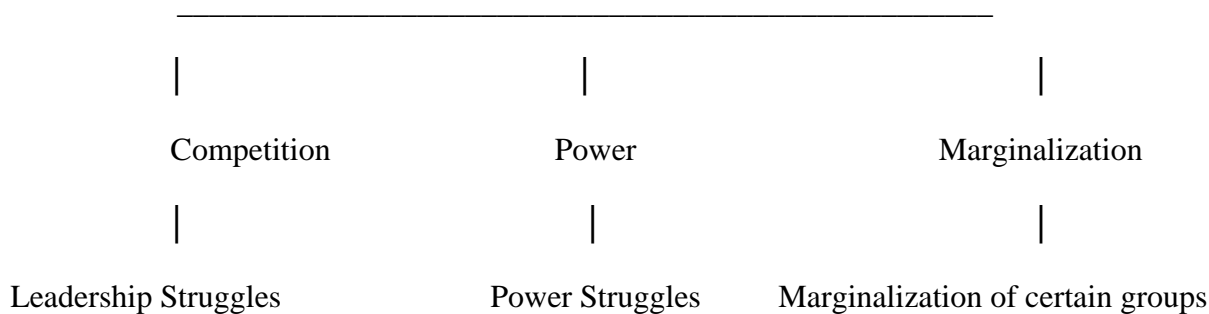
Human relations theory focuses on social relationship among members of an organization in teamwork and cooperation which is essential for success of the organization (Gordon, 2023). Currently the high ranking EOTC members are accused of high corruption and a hostile work environment based on ethnicity and discrimination (Yohannes, 2023). Unless the church gets rid of these corruption and hostility based on ethnicity, human relation within the church will keep

on deteriorating leading to more schisms in the future.

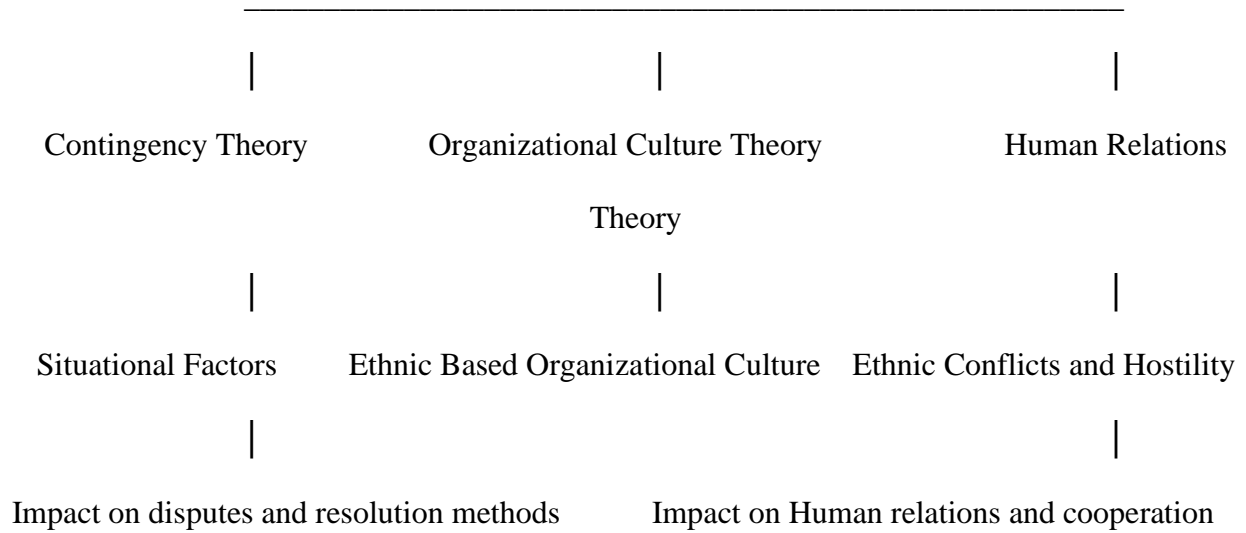
Social identity theory proposes, individuals derive their self-concept based on their membership in different social groups. Once individuals identified with a specific social group, social categorization and social comparison will follow (Mcleod, 2023). In relation to social identity theory, cognitive dissonance theory also explains; individuals face psychological discomfort when their behavior is in conflict with their thoughts and beliefs (Fetsinger, 1957). In the EOTC, a leader's perception of his own identity is categorized by ethnicity and interactions with other leaders has been difficult to manage due to that. Hence, unending disputes until there are schisms that separate the categorized groups (Ademe & Ali, 2023).

Psychosocial theory states the interaction between social influences and individual psychological processes shapes human behavior. This theory by Erik Erikson explains 8 stages of human development, where there are conflicts which must be solved in order for a person to develop psychological strengths of wisdom, love, care, purpose, confidence, will, fidelity and hope (Cherry, 2022). In relation to the issue at hand, a believer's level of development will determine how he reacts to the administrative disputes at hand. In addition to that, a person's level of development will determine if he wants reconciliation between disputing factions, and what successful ways should be applied for the reconciliation process.

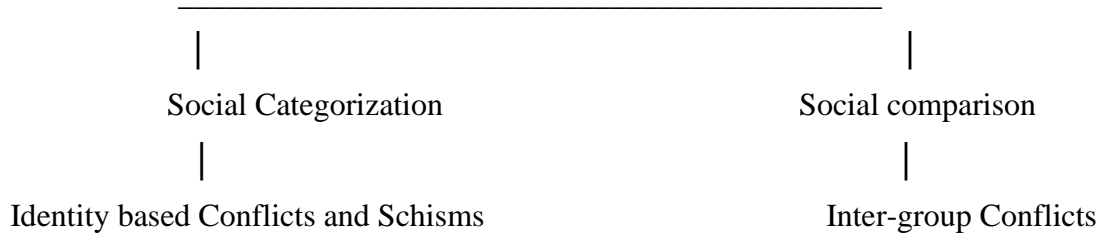
Conflict theory



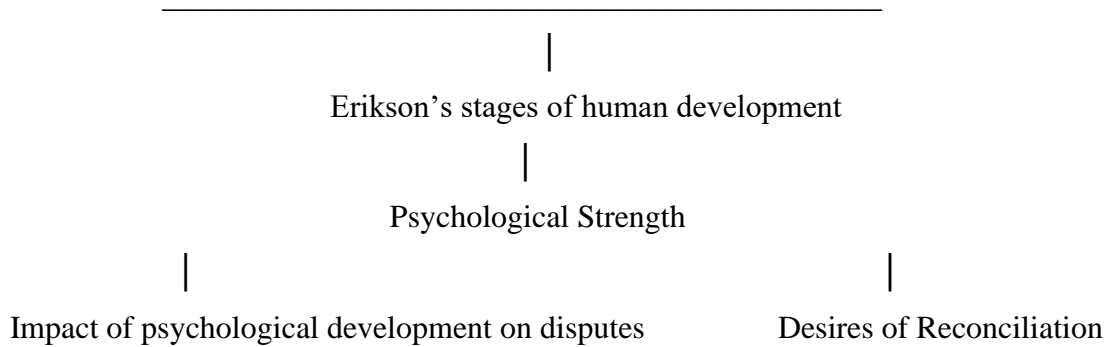
Organizational Behaviour theory



Social Identity theory



Psychosocial theory



Chapter Three

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research basically aimed to determine the causes, psychosocial effects and possible solutions for the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC on the believers. In order to gather data and determine on the causes and the psychosocial effects on the believers, I needed to have data on the subjective experiences of the people. Qualitative research is the best way to gather data on subjective experiences of people, including dynamics such as religious disputes (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Charmaz, 2014). I used in depth interviews to gather data on the feelings, opinions and perceptions of the participants of the research. This research took me further than knowing about the internal disputes within EOTC. It has helped me understand how people feel about what is going on, how they are interpreted it and how it is affected their lives.

3.2 Population and Sampling

3.2.1 Source Population

The source population for this project was the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church believers in Addis Ababa region.

3.2.2 Study Population

The study population for this research were five churches in Bole sub city area, namely Gerji Giorgis Church, St. Urael Church, Bole Debre Salem Medhanialem Cathedral, Bole Hohte Birhan St. Mary Cathedral and Bole Mirafe Sematat Wedebre Bisrat St Gabriel and St. Arsema Church.

These five churches were chosen because they were convenient for the researcher to gather the essential data for the research. This did not lead the researcher to the two main disadvantages of convenience sampling method (sampling and selection bias) because the participants selected from those convenient churches were chosen randomly, mitigating the biases associated with convenience sampling and enhances the richness of data collected (Patton, 2015). In addition to that, the issue was still at hand and fresh at the time the research was being conducted: some people chose not to participate in the interview in order not to get into unnecessary trouble with both the government and the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church.

3.2.3 Sample Size

From the five conveniently chosen churches, three individuals were chosen from each church. This gave us a total of fifteen people that made up the total sample size for this research. The aim of this research was to develop an initial understanding on the current dispute at hand, hence, non-probability sampling method was used. It is also the preferable sampling method in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013).

Limited time, budget, and also inaccessibility of participants helped us determine the sample size of the research. Another determining factor of our sample size was the research methodology by itself. Qualitative methodology is recommended for an in-depth exploration of participants beliefs, perspectives and experiences: interview was a method of gathering data from the participants. Considering the specific phenomena at hand which was considered on the research and the in-depth information needed from the participants, a total number of 15 people for the research was sufficient and recommended sample size for this research (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Charmaz, 2014; Sandelowski, 1995). Data saturation is also one of the sample-size determining factors in qualitative research (Bowen, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). If data

saturation was not reached, additional participants would have been added to increase the sample size. However, there was a strong data saturation after the interview of the twelfth participant.

3.2.4 Sampling Technique

As explained in the study population, convenient sampling technique was used for the selection of churches in the bole sub city area. Purposive sampling was the most reasonable and important sampling method that was used in selecting the participants of the research (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007; Flick, 2018). From the total of 15 participants, 10 of them were purposively chosen to be individuals who have the rank of priesthood. This was done because members of clergy with that rank were the ones who have exposure to many parishioners and it is their preaching that they will pass onto their spiritual children and the mass in general. Four from each church and a total of 20 priests were chosen and 10 of them were selected based on the criteria of having more than 200 spiritual children and a service year of at least 10 years in the church. Files from each church were selected and checked in order to confirm service time of the priests and the number of spiritual children's they have. That gave me a wide exposure the priests have on their spiritual children. The rest five participants were believers who are respected elders in the community of that church, theologians, Sunday school teachers and individuals who are currently serving in the church in different manners. These people were chosen because they have the educational quality, the experience and exposure in wide range of issues in relation to the church.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview which was developed by the researcher and 4 additional people. The semi structured interview was prepared in both Amharic and English language. This method was selected because it offered increased

adaptability, enabled the researcher to delve deeply into topics and helped on pursuing further inquiries based on participants' responses. This approach prompted participants to expand on their answers, resulting in more comprehensive and detailed information. Semi-structured interviews are important tools when one wants to understand people's emotions, experiences and perspectives in complicated situations (King and Horrocks, 2010). The internal administrative disputes in the EOTC and their effects are personal to each participant. Their emotions, their experiences and their perspectives needed to be explored. The semi-structured interview questions were developed, analyzed, and accurately translated with the help 4 peoples with two of them having a master's degree in theology and two of them bachelor degree holders in theology. In preparation for the main study, the interview questions were pretested with a small sample of 5 participants. This pretesting aimed to evaluate the clarity and relevance of the questions and to ensure they effectively captured the intended information. Feedback from these participants led to minor revisions of the interview protocol to improve its effectiveness.

3.4 Data Collection procedure

Data collection interview process was done in a private office the researcher. Voice recorder was used with the consent of each participant. However, with the participants wish, the location for the interview session was changed to the participants location of preference which included church grounds. All the participants were native Amharic speakers and their responses were all translated and transcribed by the researcher.

Informed consent form was prepared by the researcher for the participants to sign before the interview. While using the voice recorder participants were also given the chance to state their consent on being part of this research. This ensured that participants understand the interview's objectives, the use of their data, and their rights. While verbal consent was also an

option, obtaining a signed consent form offered a more formal acknowledgment of their willingness to participate.

It took the researcher a full month and four days in order to gather data using the interviews. Participants gave an interview lasting an average time length of 45 minutes.

3.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis procedure that was used in this research was thematic data analysis method. The objective was to investigate the root causes of internal administrative conflicts within the EOTC and to produce initial observations regarding the psychological and social impacts of these disputes on adherents. Therefore, thematic research analysis was appropriate for this purpose. The specific data analysis method used from thematic approach was an inductive thematic analysis approach. This method was chosen to allow themes to emerge organically from the data without imposing predefined categories or theories. By immersing myself in the data through repeated reading and coding, I was able to identify patterns and themes that accurately reflected the participants' experiences and perspectives.

By conducting thematic analysis on the gathered data, I uncovered recurring themes, trends, and root causes of administrative conflicts, while also gaining understanding of their effects on the psychological and social aspects of believers' lives. Additionally, narrative analysis method was also used in interpreting and organizing the data. Narrative analysis helped me delve deeper into the stories or narratives shared by participants, aiming to comprehend their experiences and viewpoints. When used together, these approaches offered a holistic insight into the research subject (Riessman, 2008; Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013).

3.6 Ethical consideration

The data collection of this research was fully anonymous and voluntary. There was strict

ethical consideration in place in order to ensure freedom and confidentiality of the research participants. The gathered data was not and will not be used to harm the participant and the church. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant authorities at Addis Ababa University to ensure compliance with guidelines. The analyzed data was utilized solely to provide valuable insights for church leaders and believers, helping them understand internal dynamics, identify areas of focus, avoid potential pitfalls, and work towards strengthening the unity of the church in the future.

Chapter Four

4. Findings

Under this section the findings from the semi structured interview are presented based on the order of the research questions. The respondent's answers were analyzed and themes were developed based on their answers and the respective themes are presented after the specific research question, followed by their specific voice.

4.1 Are There Any Internal Administrative Disputes Among the Leaders of the EOTC?

This question aimed at making sure whether participants believe there is a dispute among the leaders of the EOTC. As per their answers, all participants acknowledge the presence of internal administrative disputes within the EOTC. This includes both priests and believers, indicating a broad recognition of the issue across different roles within the church community. The only point that differs is the level of affirmation the participants used to address the question. Hence, only two themes can be developed which are highly affirmative response and moderate affirmative responses on the existence of internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC.

4.1.1 High Affirmative Responses

This theme includes participants who often used strong affirmations such as "yes, there is," "Yes, I believe," "absolutely," and "strongly and fully."

Participant 4, priest: *"Yes, I believe."*

Participant 5, Believer: *"Yes, I believe."*

Participant 6, priest: *"Yes, I believe there is."*

Participant 7, priest: *“Yes, absolutely.”*

Participant 10, priest: *“Yes. There is.”*

Participant 11, Believer: *“Yes, there is. I believe.”*

Participant 15, Believer *“Yes, there is strongly and fully.”*

4.1.2 Moderate Affirmative Responses

This theme includes participants who often used moderate affirmations such as "yes," with additional words of explanation based on their experiences and understandings.

Participant 1, priest: *“Yes.”*

Participant 2, priest: *“Yes.”*

Participant 3, priest: *“Yes.”*

Participant 8, priest: *“Yes.”*

Participant 9, Believer: *“I don’t know the details of the administration but as a believer who sees from the outside, it seems so, yes.”*

Participant 12, Believer: *“Yes.”*

Participant 13, priest: *“Yes, it is visible. It’s what kind of dispute that is the question. It is better we use the word disagreement.”*

4.2 Underlying Reasons Behind the Internal Administrative Disputes

This question aimed at determining the internal and external reasons which caused the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC. Participants repeatedly raised six main points which are presented as themes. These include government interference, ethnic and political influences, corruption and mismanagement, spiritual and doctrinal issues, external influences and international factors, and disrespect and personal conflicts.

4.2.1 Government Interference

Participants consistently pointed out that government interference is a significant factor in the internal disputes within the EOTC. This interference is seen in how political agendas have started to influence ecclesiastical decisions, with some suggesting that the government's involvement disrupts traditional practices and administrative processes. Such interference often leads to conflicts between political and religious priorities, complicating the church's internal dynamics and contributing to disputes. The following are the direct statements recorded from the participants:

Participant 1, Priest: *"The main reason for this dispute is the involvement of the government in the internal affairs of the church... the reason the government is involved in the church is in order to control the EOTC and the believers. [...] The previous government hasn't been that much been deeply involved in the church. But the main reason for these disputes is the interference of politics and the government in the internal affairs of the church. [...] Another proof for the involvement of the government in these disputes is seen in the case of the establishment of the Synod of Tigray."*

Participant 2, Priest: *"The government definitely interferes with the internal affairs of the church. The current interference is too strong and too out in the open."*

Participant 4, Priest: *"The government doesn't respect the decisions of the church fathers; the government interferes in religious decisions."*

Participant 5, Believer: *"The external reason is politically motivated reason. The current and the previous governments always wanted to break the strength, values and influence of the EOTC."*

Participant 11, Believer: *"Externally the current government in my opinion places strong political pressure on the EOTC."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"Externally, the current disputes are mainly due to the fact that the church administrators are not professionals equipped with the scientific knowledge essential for the administration process. The external reason is the politics and the involvement of the government. All the governments who ruled in Ethiopia want to put its hand on the EOTC, who is one of the most influential institutions in the history of the country. Hence, during the time of the monarchs, the church smelled like the monarchy; during the time of Derg regime, the church smelled like Marxism and Leninism; and starting from the time of EPDRF the church smells of ethnicity."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"The government interferes in the internal affairs of the church in the name of mediators who are trying to mediate between conflicting parts. This is not the way of the church; conflicts may arise but issues are settled according to the canons and dogmas of the church. The government also interferes in the name of looking after the church and her leaders. We have seen that in the case of Oromia clergy chaos, the governmental forces helped and looked after the illegal bishops and also broke into church grounds in different cities. This is not looking after the church and her believers; rather what they are doing is partisanship because they are helping the illegal factions."*

4.2.2 Ethnic and Political Influences

The impact of ethnic and political factors on the church was a recurring theme.

Participants noted that the introduction of ethnic federalism by the Ethiopian government has infiltrated the church's administration and appointment processes. This ethnic-based approach to

leadership and church roles has led to a focus on ethnic backgrounds rather than merit or spiritual qualifications, causing tensions and contributing to internal divisions within the church.

Participant 1, Priest: *"The naming process of bishops has stopped being about education, knowledge and age rather about ethnical background. [...]Bishops have been named in to office without skill, potential but based on ethnicity."*

Participant 3, Priest: *"Ethnical politics is infiltrating its way into the church. The ethnic federalism approach followed by the government has made its way into the church."*

Participant 8, Priest: *"This is the effect of the ethnic federalism approach of the Ethiopian government."*

Participant 9: *"These issues create openings towards the church and this will lead to different individuals or organizations to infiltrate the church and push their agendas. These include political parties and the government."*

Participant 10, Priest: *"The ethnical based administrative style has infiltrated the church and is hurting the church currently."*

Participant 14, Priest: *"Ethnical differences are also another reason."*

4.2.3 Corruption and Mismanagement

Corruption and mismanagement within the church were frequently highlighted as key issues. Participants described how corruption, poor management practices, and lack of proper education among church leaders have negatively affected the church's functioning. This mismanagement includes inadequate use of resources and a lack of professional competence,

which undermines the church's effectiveness and exacerbates internal conflicts.

Participant 1, Priest: *"The naming process has stopped being about education, knowledge and age rather about ethnical background."*

Participant 10, Priest: *"Corruption in the church; corruption in relation to the church is deeply affecting the administrative process of the church. [...] Knowledge problem, many are not properly educated and poor in practical life of the church."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"The educational statuses of most of the current church administrators are spiritual education and not an additional education that is essential for church administration. [...] When those administrative individuals who either are not professionals or not spirituals are named in power, they will do all they can in order to stay in power. [...] The church is in short of these kinds of individuals and these leads to high amount of human resource waste, high amount of finance waste and high amount of resource waste."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"Administration wise, I believe there is something wrong in the administrative structure of the church... The church's resources are not properly divided among the churches in the country. [...] The church doesn't use her children professionally... A job is done perfectly when it is done by professionals and that has hurted the church strongly."*

4.2.4 Spiritual and Doctrinal Issues

Spiritual and doctrinal disagreements were also mentioned as contributing factors to the church's disputes. Participants noted that doctrinal differences and a decline in spiritual commitment among church leaders and members have led to internal strife. The inability to maintain and uphold traditional spiritual practices and teachings has created divisions and

weakened the church's unity.

Participant 3, Priest: *"Doctrinal differences and canonical differences have been one the causes of internal disputes among the leaders and believers of EOTC. [...]Faith and love have decreased and those are the main attributes of Christianity and that is also one of the reasons which led to the internal disputes of the EOTC."*

Participant 4, Priest: *"The devil tempts the believers, the church fathers and high-ranking leaders. [...]The temptation of the devil is the other reason... The EOTC is one of the strongest means of influence in the country; therefore, weakening the EOTC will also weaken the spirituality of the people."*

Participant 6, Priest: *"The first one is inability to see the spiritual governing structure separately from the secular governing structure."*

Participant 7, Priest: *"The spreading of worldliness in the church, aligning one-self with the government, surrendering the church for a personal prosperity and Simonian priesthood."*

Participant 12, Believer: *"The reflection of our upbringing process which led us to selfishness and not being able to say "it is enough"."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"The second internal reason is the fact that there is no spirituality in the administration stuff. [...]Spiritual administration principles intertwined with scientific administration principles are essential for church administration. [...]The church leaders are not living a proper spiritual life that is expected of them."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"Priests used to run away from authority of bishop-hood, but as of late*

we are seeing priests fighting over a single authority of bishop-hood."

4.2.5 External Influences and International Factors

External and international factors were cited as influences on the church's internal conflicts. Participants suggested that international organizations and foreign agendas play a role in shaping the church's issues, either by directly supporting certain factions or by influencing the broader socio-political context in which the church operates. This external pressure adds another layer of complexity to the church's internal struggles.

Participant 2, Priest: *"I believe there are also other international organizations which support these entities with their respective agendas. Internationally there is an agenda against the EOTC which is being pushed through the church by the government and other missionary organizations. I feel like there is a strong anti-orthodox agenda that is strategized against the structural integrity of EOTC."*

Participant 4, Priest: *"There is also another international secret agenda by many developed countries around the world. They want to create numbness on the society and prosper their country and secure their progress. The EOTC is one of the strongest means of influence in the country; therefore, weakening the EOTC will also weaken the spirituality of the people. The well-developed countries want to weaken the church in order to push their new agenda; homosexuality is a main example for that."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"The government is currently displacing people from their vicinities in the name of greenery and prosperity... This is leaving churches without believers."*

4.2.6 Disrespect and Personal Conflicts

Personal conflicts and disrespect among church leaders were identified as significant issues. Participants observed that personal ambitions, disrespect among leaders, and a focus on individual gain rather than collective well-being have driven conflicts within the church. These personal issues often overshadow the church's spiritual mission and contribute to a fractured and contentious environment.

Participant 4, Priest: *"The church leaders giving precedence for their own personal prosperity instead of the believers of the church."*

Participant 14: *"The first reason is internal one and it is disrespect among the leaders of the church... There is strong disrespect among the leaders of the church and this is pushing the believers away from the church. [...]Desire for Money is also the reason which interferes in the service of the church."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"Believers do not show ownership towards the church. [...]Priests do not realize their calling and their purpose. But believers should respect the church fathers even if those church fathers are seen in inappropriate deeds..."*

4.3 Underlying Reasons Behind the Divisions of Tigray Orthodox Church and Oromia Orthodox Church

In addition to the previous question, this question aimed at determining the reasons which caused the divisions of Tigray Orthodox Church and Oromia Orthodox church. Participants repeatedly raised five main points which are presented as themes. These include Political interference and ethnic federalism, corruption and personal ambitions, spiritual weakness and

doctrinal confusion, external influences and Western interference, and inadequate church administration and leadership.

4.3.1 Political Interference and Ethnic Federalism

A significant portion of the responses highlight the influence of political interference and the ethnic federalism approach of the Ethiopian government as central reasons for the divisions within the EOTC. Participants argue that the government's ethnic federalism policy has infiltrated the church, fostering divisions along ethnic lines rather than maintaining religious unity.

Participant 1, Priest: *"Government's interference is the main reason. If the government wants to separate regions into a country, then it has to divide one of the uniting organizations of the country which is the EOTC. [...] The church has not worked in practical faith application on the lives of the people, whereas the enemies of the church have worked on it. Enemies of the church have pushed the people to ignore their faith and take the politics as their faith."*

Participant 2, Priest: *"The governmental leadership style which is ethnic federalism has affected the mindset of the people and that way of thinking has infiltrated the EOTC. The people give precedence towards ethnic background rather than religion which requires unity despite infinite differences."*

Participant 3, Priest: *"Ethnic federalism is the main reason for the current disputes and divisions inside the EOTC. [...] When the country was affected by ethnic federalism; the church also fell under this and brought the church to the current state of being."*

Participant 4, Priest: *"The main reason for this is the influence of ethnic centered politics on the church fathers. [...] The religion has conformed to the politics of the time."*

Participant 5, Believer: *"The leaders of the movement hoped they would get support from the government because the current government is Oromia centered. [...]The church is not about race, therefore claiming our race is not represented in a synod is a bit inappropriate."*

Participant 7, Priest: *"The racial division idea came from the government structure which is based on ethnic federalism. It's not an ideology that goes along with Christianity or the Holy Bible in general."*

Participant 11, Believer: *"The political situation takes the main responsibility for what happened in this division and chaos. [...] The current Ethiopian government in my opinion is Anti-Orthodox."*

4.3.2 Corruption and Personal ambitions

Several participants identify corruption and personal ambition among church leaders as factors contributing to the divisions. They suggest that the desire for power, money, and personal gain has overshadowed spiritual responsibilities and led to factionalism within the church.

Participant 2, Priest: *"These peoples are politicians covered in religious cloths that are out to push their agenda and not the prosperity of the church."*

Participant 5, Believer: *"The first reason in relation to Oromia case is, they stated that they weren't fully represented in the synod. Just because of that, priests were named in church authority even though they are not qualified for the seat."*

Participant 6, Priest: *"The love for money has become an obstacle on church leaders responsible for shepherding the herd."*

Participant 7, Priest: *"It may be claimed that the state and religion are different but now many leaders in the general church clergy are people who work with the government. The people of the government also interfere on the issues of the church. Individuals are using religiosity or spirituality for a means of gaining money and authority instead of serving the church."*

Participant 10, Believer: *"The strongest test is the preferring one's own advantage over everything. Deacons and priests are asked to pay money in order to be employed in some church. There is also preference based on ethnicity and race."*

Participant 11, Believer: *"The church fathers are not truly standing for the advantage of the religion and the faith; rather they are out for their personal advantage and to serve only their ethnicity."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"They have no spiritual knowledge and spiritual life, if they truly had it, then we wouldn't have seen all these bishops and priests running around for power like this. They are burning by the desire for power and personal prosperity."*

4.3.3 Spiritual Weakness and Doctrinal Confusion

Participants discuss the erosion of spiritual discipline and doctrinal confusion as underlying issues exacerbating the church's divisions. They note that lack of strong spiritual leadership and clear doctrinal guidance has led to disputes and factionalism.

Participant 1, Priest: *"Believers not practicing and living their faith is the other reason. Believers do not go to church, do not learn, do not pray; and even if they do those things, they do not practice their faith rather they are habitual Christians who does not focus on the true fruits of Christianity."*

Participant 3, Priest: *"Doctrinal or dogmatic difference that has been passed down through the ages. (Qibat, Tsega, Kara) and these came after the coming of Jesuit missionaries, especially the approach of Qibat has been a source of controversy for many years."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"The views of the peoples who are leading the Oromia and Tigray clergy movement have their views about Christianity is twisted and turned from the true way of Christianity. They have no spiritual knowledge and spiritual life, if they truly had it, then we wouldn't have seen all these bishops and priests running around for power like this."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"The first reason is inability to understanding the true meaning of priesthood and Christianity. Christianity is humbling oneself so that one can be honored. [...] There is strong misunderstanding of Christianity by the current society of EOTC."*

4.3.4 External Influences and Western Interferences

Some participants believe that external forces, particularly from Western organizations and philosophies, are influencing and undermining the EOTC. They argue that these external influences are part of a broader strategy to weaken traditional institutions and promote secular or anti-orthodox agendas.

Participant 1, Priest: *"External secret societies have also agenda against the Ethiopian government and the EOTC. They want to disregard the authority of the Ethiopian government*

and then destroy the EOTC. They have been fabricating histories in order for political parties to target the EOTC and weaken her influence in the country."

Participant 3, Priest: *"There are external western organizations or forces that work against the EOTC. We are victims of western thinking approaches postmodernism, individualism, globalization and the like."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"There are also organizations which secretly facilitate the failure and destruction of EOTC. There are hidden agendas in order to destroy the EOTC by swaying away believers in to other religious institutions."*

4.3.5 Inadequate Church Administration and Leadership

Several responses point to flaws in church administration and leadership as contributing to the ongoing disputes. They argue that inadequate administration, lack of proper governance, and ineffective leadership have exacerbated the internal conflicts within the church.

Participant 2, Priest: *"The internal reasons are leaders which are on the administrative staff of the church. These people are not named based on appropriate criterions by fulfilling the requirements. These peoples are politicians covered in religious cloths that are out to push their agenda and not the prosperity of the church."*

Participant 8, Priest: *"The administrative structure of the church needs to be revisited. [...]Authority is still the reason of the dispute; the believers are ignored and not considered at all. [...]The church also does not have a pre-equipped approaches that help us study our problems."*

Participant 10, Priest: *"The administrative part is strongly affected or swallowed by the love of money. [...] Accurate decisions are not being taken even if problems and mistakes are recognized directly. [...] The other main reason is the eyes of the administration are blinded by ethnicity."*

Participant 12, Believer: *"We are worshipping the same God, therefore dividing in the name of Tigray, and Oromo is pointless. This shows the issue is not the faith rather other issues related to budget. This shows the focus has shifted from worshipping God towards ethnic issues. Believers should worship God based on their languages and understanding but their focus should always remain on worshipping God."*

4.4 Do you Believe the Internal Administrative Disputes are causing Psychosocial effects on the believers?

This question aimed at making sure whether participants believe the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the church are causing psychosocial effects on the believers. As per their answers, all participants acknowledge the internal administrative disputes within among the leaders are causing psychosocial effects on the believers. This includes both priests and believers, indicating a broad recognition of the issue across different roles within the church community. The only point that differs is the level of affirmation the participants used to address the question. Hence, only two themes can be developed which are highly affirmative response and moderate affirmative responses on the existence of internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC.

4.4.1 High Affirmative Response

This theme includes participants who often used strong affirmations such as "yes, there is," "Yes, I believe," "Yes, truly," "Yes, it has a huge effect" and "Yes, strongly."

Participant 3, Priest: *"Yes, I believe so."*

Participant 4, Priest: *"Yes, I believe."*

Participant 5, Believer: *"Yes, I believe."*

Participant 6, Priest: *"Yes, there is."*

Participant 7, Priest: *"Yes, I believe."*

Participant 9, Believer: *"Yes, I believe. The believer always watches and follows the administration especially as churches as EOTC. It's a custom to look at and follow the ways of the fathers. And when problems occur there is definitely affect the believers."*

Participant 10, Priest: *"Yes, truly."*

Participant 11, Believer: *"Yes, truly I believe."*

Participant 12, Believer: *"Yes, I believe."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"Yes, it has a huge effect."*

Participant 14, Priest: *"Yes truly, truly."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"Yes, strongly."*

4.4.2 Moderate Affirmative Response

This theme includes participants who often used moderate affirmations such as "yes," with no additional words of explanation.

Participant 1, Priest: *"Yes."*

Participant 2, Priest: *"Yes."*

Participant 8, Priest: *"Yes."*

4.5 Psychosocial Effects of Internal Administrative Disputes Among the Leaders of the EOTC

This question aimed at determining the psychosocial effects of the internal administrative

disputes among the leaders of the EOTC on its believers. Participants repeatedly raised five main points which are presented as themes. These includes, loss of faith and trust in church leaders, increased doubt and spiritual crisis, social division and fragmentation, psychological and emotional impact, and impact on church attendance and participation.

4.5.1 Loss of Faith and Trust in Church Leaders

The internal disputes among church leaders have significantly eroded believers' faith and trust in their spiritual leaders. Believers, who traditionally view church leaders as exemplary figures and conduits to divine guidance, find themselves questioning the integrity and spiritual authority of these leaders due to their public conflicts.

Participant 1, Priest: *"When church leaders are seen in futile issues like this, people will be filled with hopelessness... doubting the leaders in general thinking a lay man maybe better than the bishops named into office."*

Participant 4, Priest: *"The mistake of a church leader will be considered the mistake of the church... This will bring persecution on the good church fathers and the believers in general which leads to many believing the church as false organization."*

Participant 8, Priest: *"The situation has tarnished the believers' hope and trust in the church fathers."*

Participant 11, Believer: *"The disputes decrease the respect, honor and value we have for the church fathers."*

4.5.2 Increased Doubt and Spiritual Crisis

The disputes have led to a spiritual crisis among believers, manifesting as increased doubt about their faith, the church's teachings, and their personal connection with God. This crisis is compounded by a sense of betrayal and confusion regarding the role and conduct of church leaders.

Participant 2, Priest: *"Individually it creates insecurity in believers. Doubting they wouldn't find a true religion and place of worship... leaving its true essence and push towards division based on race."*

Participant 9, Believer: *"When someone sees the bridge that leads to God in trouble, he or she will doubt that he or she will arrive at the kingdom of God."*

Participant 12, Believer: *"Most change their religions and most are unwilling to go to church... This leads to believers to think their connection with God is in question."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"Believers are called out from the world to the heavenly kingdom but these disputes are not enabling believers to see further than the earthly life."*

4.5.3 Social Division and Fragmentation

The disputes have exacerbated social division both within the church and the wider community. This fragmentation is seen in the emergence of new churches, ethnic divisions, and increased societal discord, reflecting a broader impact on social cohesion and unity.

Participant 1, Priest: *"These disputes have caused division and hate among the people of the same church who receive the same Holy Communion. [...] Strong social division has been seen in*

the society. These has even led to creating a different church in abroad based on the names of their regional state."

Participant 2, Priest: *"As a society the religion will be divided based on ethnicity, leaving its true essence and push towards division based on race. [...]Division based on language and ethnicity will occur and in due time, this will lead to canonical and dogmatic differences. And finally, division of the church's unity."*

Participant 11, Believer: *"Socially, this created a social doubt among believers, decreases social communication, division based on ethnicity in relation to religion."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"The church provides strong social stability for the society... Losing the church means losing all these benefits."*

4.5.4 Psychological and Emotional Impact

The disputes have had a profound psychological impact on believers, including feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, and moral degradation. This impact extends to individual and collective mental health, influencing how believers perceive their place in the world and their spiritual well-being.

Participant 1, Priest: *"When these people are seen in futile issues like this, people will be filled with hopelessness. [...]People will start to question themselves 'where am I?' and 'how will I be tomorrow?' and have a hard time accepting the services provided by those bishops and archbishops."*

Participant 2, Priest: "Individually it creates insecurity in the believers. Doubting they wouldn't find a true religion and place of worship. [...]Believers will have fear and doubt that there will be true religious fathers that are out to serve the people."

Participant 4, Priest: "There is a high tendency to change religion by comparing internal peace with other religious institutions. [...]The mistake of a church leader will be considered the mistake of the church. That leads to a person looking for a truth elsewhere."

Participant 7, Priest: "When believers are in loss of exemplary individuals or leaders this will lead them into hopelessness."

Participant 9, Believer: "When someone sees the bridge that leads to God in trouble, he or she will doubt that he or she will arrive at the kingdom of God. [...]A believer will think that he has no one to rely on and he also cannot rely on his spiritual life."

Participant 13, Priest: "Loneliness, confusion, individual unrest or anxiety, anger, depression, stress will be decreased due to the presence of the church in one's life, and losing the church will expose a person to all of that."

Participant 15, Believer: "It kills the hope of believers and makes their wishes and dreams small. [...]It creates doubt on the hearts of believers. This also creates faithlessness among the society. [...]Believers are also leaving the religion and joining other religious institutions."

4.5.5 Impact on Church Attendance and Participation

The internal conflicts have led to decreased attendance and participation in church activities. Believers are increasingly distancing themselves from church services, which impact

both the spiritual and communal aspects of church life.

Participant 5, Believer: *"This led to the church losing believers spiritually and physically... Believers go to church to find God, but when believers see these disputes, it will create hate and doubt in their hearts. A believer will eventually stop going to God."*

Participant 7, Priest: *"Some believers also pulled themselves away from the church because they believed it is not trustworthy."*

Participant 10, Priest: *"Believers follow the fathers and leaders of the church... Now believers are ignoring their knowledge and the leadership of God. [...]Doubting the church in general. [...]Bored-ness towards the church and not willing to go and attend the church service."*

Participant 11, Believer: *"Believers will tend to stay away from the church and all church related activities."*

Participant 12, Believer: *"Most change their religions and most are unwilling to go to church and be involved in the church services."*

Participant 14, Priest: *"Believers will stay out from the church; they may flee by changing their religion."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"People are staying away from the church and not willing to help out the church in any way. Believers refuse to give their tithe thinking the administrative staff will steal it away."*

4.6 Psychosocial Effects of Internal Administrative Disputes Among the Leaders of the EOTC on the Participants themselves

In addition to the psychosocial effects of the internal administrative disputes observed and experienced by participants, this question aimed at determining the psychosocial effects the participants faced themselves. Participants repeatedly raised five main points which are presented as themes. These include emotional distress and doubt, impact on trust and belief in church leadership, social division and community impact, Personal Reflection and Growth, and perceived corruption and mismanagement.

4.6.1 Emotional Distress and Doubt

Many participants expressed emotional distress such as sadness, fear, hopelessness, and irritation resulting from the administrative disputes within the church. This theme captures how these disputes affect personal emotions and faith in the institution.

Participant 1, Priest: *"This has brought sadness and distress on me as a member."*

Participant 2: *"The first thing that this affected me in a way is, it put fear in me. It eroded my trust and I lost my trust."*

Participant 4, Priest: *"When I see church leaders make mistakes, I start to doubt the church fathers . . . and also doubting my faith."*

Participant 5, Believer: *"It made me mad and irritated. I was truly saddened and irritated that the church didn't find support from anyone."*

Participant 7, Priest: *"I felt like there no body is to be trusted out there. There is no exemplary*

individual in the church; no priest can be trusted so it led me to hopelessness."

Participant 11, Believer: *"Personally, I lost the place and respect I have for my religion. I started having hate for the religion and I also started blaming the church fathers."*

4.6.2 Impact on Trust and Belief in Church Leadership

Participants discussed how their trust in church leaders and the institution as a whole has been affected. This includes feelings of betrayal and disillusionment with church authorities.

Participant 2, Priest: *"I fear the church will be structurally destroyed since the government is involved in a strong manner."*

Participant 3, Priest: *"Some of the psychological effects on myself include: - Negligence in faith. - Hate for the other members. I'm Being emotional and forgetting the true mission of the church and wanting not to cooperate with others."*

Participant 4, Priest: *"When I see church leaders make mistakes, I start to doubt the church fathers . . . and also doubting my faith. [...]The love and patriotism of many Christians is intertwined with the church. The love I have for the church has helped me to love my country and vice versa. And these disputes led me to want to flee from my country in order to live in abroad."*

Participant 6, Priest: *"The fact that I can't do anything to help solve the situation creates sorrow. It's saddening not being to provide solutions when believer's opinions towards the church change continuously."*

Participant 7, Priest: *"I felt like there no body is to be trusted out there. There is no exemplary individual in the church, a priest who can be trusted so it led me to hopelessness."*

Participant 8, Priest: *"One side believes it won and the other side believes it has lost and getting ready to avenge its agenda. This personally happened to me and this shows there is still social division among the society. This shows that there is no peace and agreement between the divided factions, despite what is spread around in the social media."*

Participant 10, Priest: *"I feel deeply sad when the private issues of the church are blown out in the open."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"Staying silent is not comfortable. It's sad to see believers fall away from the true way. Knowing the price that is paid for them, this leads me to anger, sorrow, and kills my initiative to work."*

Participant 14, Priest: *"I have seen some tempting and very saddening things inside the church and this pushed me out of the church."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"When I discuss with peoples from other religions, I am forced to blame my church fathers as the core source of the problem because they are truly the source. "It is very sorrowful to see what is happening. We are forced to miss the old times."*

4.6.3 Social Division and Community Impact

Some participants noted that the disputes have caused or exacerbated social divisions within the church community and society at large. This includes ethnic, social, and organizational divisions.

Participant 3, Priest: *"I haven't excluded anyone based on their ethnicity but if this dispute and division continues then I eventually will fall on the hate group because I'm also a human and I*

may stay strong for a while but there is a definite chance I will go towards hate and division."

Participant 9, Believer: *"It showed me that it is possible that our church can be destroyed as well. We have seen many churches being divided and destroyed around the world like the Church of Rome and Syria. It made me fear that we are going towards that as well. The church is like a refuge that a generation will rely on and I fear that we may be losing that refuge."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"Knowing the price that is paid for them, this leads me to anger, sorrow, and kills my initiative to work. You start to think even if I write, even If I teach, it will be of no use. Even if you speak the truth, and that truth somehow touches them, then they will publicly come out and state it's not the stand of the church. They will hang you out to dry."*

Participant 14, Priest: *"I certainly do not want to get close to the church and leaders because I do not want to find out further things that lead to more sorrow. I believe the deeds of the fathers are pushing out the believers and also due to our deeds God has also forsaken us and our prayers are not being heard."*

4.6.4 Personal Reflection and Growth

Some participants found that, despite the negative impact, the disputes led them to reflect on their own beliefs, deepen their understanding of the church's teachings, or even re-evaluate their personal connection to the church.

Participant 5, Believer: *"This issue led me to know the details of establishment of priesthood of the church and its lineage. This also helped me to push myself to the spiritual life of the church."*

Participant 6, Priest: *"If one is raised inside the church learning the word of God, there is a definite chance to learn situations like this may happen and help us believe solutions are also available."*

Participant 12, believer: *"I have a father who has awareness and religiously strong on his spiritual life; therefore, this thing hasn't made that much effect on my psychological or social life."*

4.6.5 Perceived Corruption and Mismanagement

Several participants perceived the internal disputes as symptoms of deeper corruption and mismanagement within the church. This theme involves witnessing or suspecting unethical behavior among church leaders.

Participant 14, Priest: *"During our conversation (a conversation with a church administrator in order to be employed) I told him of my education in theology and other achievements I have, and requested to serve in that church he is leading. He pointed out to some deacons that were walking by and told me that these people have requested to serve here and worked for a more than 15 years but they haven't got employment yet. Then he officially asked me to pay a large sum amount of money (300,000 ETB). I heard about things like this being done in the church but this was the first time I saw it happen in my own life. [...] Church leader get their seats in two ways, the first one is by appropriate way which God chose them to lead his herd. The second one is secretly via the help of the evil spirits even though that part of their live is hidden and not officially out in the open."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"I was pushed out of the church and forced to serve on the outside because*

of the administrative failure of the church."

Participant 15, Believer: *"I was asked to pay 1500 ETB for some personal service in the church and I paid and received my receipt but later on they asked me to add additional 8500 ETB because the price has been increased to 10,000 ETB. How do I explain that except as corruption? [...] I am forced to defend the faith, and that is not an easy challenge hanging church leaders out to dry."*

4.7 Future Effects of the Internal Administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC

In addition to the psychosocial effects of the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the EOTC, this question aimed at determining the possible future outcomes of the disputes. Participants repeatedly raised six main points which are presented as themes. These include, Impact of government involvement, potential for division and disintegration, spiritual and moral decline, role of ethnicity and racial tensions, and historical and comparative perspectives.

4.7.1 Impact of Government Involvement

Participants express concern about the government's interference in church matters. They believe that deeper continues involvement by the government could exacerbate the existing disputes, potentially leading to further division and detrimental outcomes for both the church and its followers.

Participant 1, Priest: *"If the government goes deeper then it will be worse and dangerous for the people, believer and the church. If the government continues to openly take out the legal bishops of the church while naming the bishops it prefers, the church may be fully divided."*

Participant 15, Believer: *“If the believers and priests don’t walk spiritually and accordingly, if the influence of the government doesn’t die down, then as a human there is no reason the church won’t be destroyed. We have seen the churches of India divide and officially separate.”*

4.7.2 Potential for Division and Disintegration

Many participants foresee the possibility of the church splitting into factions, leading to long-term disunity and fragmentation. This theme includes concerns about regional divisions, canonical differences, and the loss of unity that could undermine the church’s integrity and mission.

Participant 2, Priest: *“It will lead to division of the EOTC. For the time being the churches may divide among regions and it may stay that way for a while. But a little further down the road, there will come canonical and dogmatic differences will and the church will never be united again. [...] International organizations which are out to destroy the EOTC will target the smaller factions which are divided from the mother church and lead the smaller churches further down the road toward further division.”*

Participant 6, Priest: *“This will lead the church towards anarchy. [...] It may lead to dogmatic chaos as well.”*

Participant 7, Priest: *“This will lead many to faithlessness and without religion. [...] This will lead to a total division of the church.”*

Participant 12, Believer: *“The negative part is, the other 80 something nations and nationalities may also come to ask for their own holy synod. This may lead to further strong division and chaos.”*

Participant 9, Believer: *"This will lead to a church losing her people and the people losing the church."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"If things go like this, the EOTC will be destroyed and remembered in history and visited in a museum like Hagia Sophia. Family destruction leads to social disintegration. [...] If things go like this, people look for further smaller issues to divide further."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"If the influence of the government doesn't die down, then as a human there is no reason the church won't be destroyed. [...] We have seen the churches of India divide and officially separate."*

4.7.3 Spiritual and Moral Decline

Several participants worry that the disputes will lead to a decline in spiritual and moral standards among believers. They foresee an increase in faithlessness, heresy, and moral degradation, which could have both spiritual and societal repercussions.

Participant 4, Priest: *"This will lead the unsettled Christians towards faithlessness and heresy. [...] Division means there is an opening for the devil, and the devil will continue to inflict both physical and spiritual suffering on the believers."*

Participant 6, Priest: *"This will lead the church towards anarchy."*

Participant 7, Priest: *"It will cost us many people and lead many to faithlessness and without religion."*

Participant 9, Believer: *"The people will definitely lose the church and that leads to the believers losing the spiritual blessings that come from the church."*

Participant 10, Priest: "The doctrine of the church will be swayed and deformed as we continue through these disputes."

Participant 11, Believer: *"The event also decreased the value and honor the church had on the eyes of other religious institutions and followers. [...] Many believers converted their religion due the doubt and shame that came from this dispute and division."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"The first thing that will attack the believers due to these disputes is moral degradation. [...] Family destruction leads to social disintegration."*

4.7.4 Role of Ethnicity and Racial Tensions

Some responses highlight the impact of ethnicity and racial tensions on the church's internal conflicts. They argue that these factors exacerbate the disputes and contribute to further division and chaos within the church.

Participant 1, Priest: *"If the leaders of the church and mainly the members of the Holy Synod return to the appropriate ways, regretting what they did and to life of repentance, leadership of God, then the influence of the government may not that be significant as it is now. The bishops who have desire for power, fused with ethnicity, named into office without competence are the main reason of success for the involvement of the government."*

Participant 5, Believer: *"The fact that these things are racial make it a lot worse than they are and it's also hard to return things back to the normal state."*

Participant 8, Priest: *"The political setting brought the church towards this state. The political setting has formally intertwined with the church setting. In my opinion, the fathers are already*

named based on their ethnical background and if this continues to go like this, bishop's numbers will rise and be as the same as the total number of nations and nationalities in Ethiopia."

Participant 14, Priest: *"Believer will fall and struggle due to those disputes and fall into ethnic conflicts which is currently creating chaos in the church."*

4.7.5 Potential for Positive Outcomes

Despite the negativity, some participants see potential for positive outcomes from the current disputes. They suggest that the challenges may lead to a deeper understanding of the church's apostolic origins and encourage believers to engage more critically with their faith.

Participant 8, Priest: *"Positively, this will be useful for believers to know and understand the apostolic origin of the church. If things keep going like this, this will help us understand the responsibility of the administrative officers of the church and the believers as well."*

Participant 12, Believer: *"The positive part is, people are coming to recognize and learn about their religion."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"Temptation always has two ends; one is failure and the other is success. If one thrives over a temptation then it will make him stronger."*

4.7.6 Historical and Comparative Perspectives

Some participants draw comparisons between the current situation and historical precedents or other religions, suggesting that similar conflicts have led to significant changes or decline in other Christian contexts.

Participant 13, Priest: *"As we have heard of the other churches, the destiny of the church will be*

falling to the hands of others which aren't of the children of the church. [...] You can see the northern Africa and Asia Minor who were great destinations of Christianity but are now taken by Muslims and others. [...] There is no such thing as the church will not be destroyed, if we are not working for it, the church will definitely be destroyed. This is empty pride and this is hypocrisy. [...] The church of St John Chrysostom is now of no more, it is taken over by the gentiles. The church of great Egyptians is now 10% Christians, even now, look at the EOTC, 20 and 30 years back she had a lot of believers but now how many does she have? How many of her believers leave and join other religions yearly?"

Participant 15, Believer: *"We can raise the church of Syria as an example, now she is no more but she was a residence of the famous scholars like Ephrem the Syrian. [...] If the believers and priests don't walk spiritually and accordingly, if the influence of the government doesn't die down, then as a human there is no reason the church won't be destroyed."*

4.8 Possible Measures that Should be done to Prevent such Disputes and Divisions in the Future

This question aimed at determining the possible preventive measures which the participants suggested should be used to diminish and eventually avoid the current internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC. The participants repeatedly raised five main points where are presented here as themes. These include government non-involvement and structure, spiritual and educational approaches, accountability and responsibility, believer engagement and awareness and structural and administrative reforms.

4.8.1 Government Non-Interference and Structure

Many participants argue that reducing government interference in church affairs and restructuring the church's administrative and leadership frameworks are crucial for resolving and preventing disputes. This includes separating church administration from political influence and ensuring that church leadership is appointed based on merit rather than ethnicity or politics.

Participant 1, Priest: *"The government should take out its hands from the affairs of the church... The naming of bishops shall be free from the influence of ethnicity."*

Participant 11, Believer: *"The government should lift its hand of influence from the EOTC... The government should do its work and not put its hands of influence inside religious issues."*

Participant 14, Priest: *"There needs to be a strong structure that should be formed accordingly in order to clear out partisanships, ethnicity, and other obstacles."*

4.8.2 Spiritual and Educational Approaches

There is a consensus on the importance of deepening spiritual education and practice among believers. This includes proper teaching of the gospel, living according to church teachings, and fostering a strong prayer life. Many participants emphasize the need for both leaders and believers to be well-versed in spiritual matters and to practice what they preach.

Participant 3, Priest: *"Spiritual education... Living what we learn... Prayer for the unity of the church."*

Participant 6, Priest: *"We shall live what we preach, that is the solution for these disputes."*

Participant 10, Priest: *"Believers should give precedence to God and be zealous in their prayer"*

life... Teaching the gospel is one of the ways to eradicate the problem."

4.8.3 Accountability and Responsibility

Participants frequently mention the need for increased accountability within the church. This includes holding leaders responsible for their actions, penalizing past perpetrators of disputes, and ensuring that church officials are genuinely committed to their roles.

Participant 11, Believer: *"Everyone has a part to bring to solution for these disputes and divisions starting from a believer up to the patriarch. [...] Believers have a big part in bringing up solutions for these things. Believers should start questioning why decisions and protest against decisions which are out of the ordinary."*

Participant 12, Believer: *"The perpetrators of the past issues should be penalized accordingly. This should be a lesson for them and for everyone. It is true that forgiveness is essential in Christianity but penalties also keep a person from behaving the same way as before. People should take responsibilities for their actions; and if appropriate, they shall also be removed from their positions."*

Participant 11, Believer: *"Leaders should take care of the herd... Leaders shouldn't be subjected to their own desires or ethnicity."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"There needs to be strong priest training that empowers priests so that they can relate and understand the time accordingly. [...] They need to know that they are owners of the church with rights and responsibilities."*

4.8.4 Believer Engagement and Awareness

Several responses highlight the need for greater involvement of believers in church matters. This includes educating believers about their roles and responsibilities within the church, encouraging them to participate in decision-making processes, and increasing their awareness of church issues and administration.

Participant 4, Priest: *"We as believers should take incentive and be responsible for issues in the church like this."*

Participant 7, Priest: *"The believers shall be able to detect the true voice of the church and the main thing for that is education. Believers shall learn and detect the true voice of the church. [...] The believers shall be able to participate in the naming of authorities in the church."*

Participant 9, Believer: *"The church should work on teaching and bringing out servants who serve from their deep and true spiritual need to serve the church of God."*

Participant 11, Believer: *"Believers should start questioning why decisions and protest against decisions which are out of the ordinary."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"There needs to be strong awareness creation on the believers. It's the believers of the church who have kept and sustained the church this far. We servants should teach the true and strong-rooted teaching of the church for the believers to create strong awareness among the believers."*

4.8.5 Structural and Administrative Reforms

There is a call for re-evaluating and modernizing the church's administrative structures. This includes revisiting the church's organizational setup, ensuring that leadership roles are filled

by qualified individuals, and implementing systems for effective management and accountability.

Participant 1, Priest: *"The church shall place a structured mechanism on the relationship of believers and their father confessor. Just like a secular organization, the church shall take inventory of her priests and their spiritual children, and the goals of the spiritual fathers and the spiritual children."*

Participant 8, Priest: *"We should modernize our administrative structures. The Egyptian churches have different sectors inside the church... we should modernize the structure of the church and use the manpower of the bishops to lead those sectors."*

Participant 13, Priest: *"The church should have consultants on each and every sector of the administration. The church needs strong professionals who have an eagle eye view on things that matter and affect the life of the many. [...] Students should strengthen their spiritual life starting from their early ages. Sunday schools and spiritual colleges should be strengthened and restructured to work towards eternal goal."*

Participant 14, Priest: *"There needs to be strong structure that should be formed accordingly in order to clear out partisanships, ethnicity and other obstacles."*

Participant 15, Believer: *"The church should use her children and strengthen the structure of the church... This structure and administration may have worked properly 100 years ago but it needs to be revisited."*

Chapter Five

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses the results presented in the previous chapter by incorporating them with the literature review and focusing on the themes that surfaced from the data.

5.1 Underlying Reasons Behind the Internal Administrative Disputes

Government interference, ethnic and political influences, corruption and mismanagement, spiritual and doctrinal issues, external influences and international factors, and disrespect and personal conflicts were the frequently mentioned reasons behind the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC. For the reasons underlying the divisions of Tigray and Oromia Orthodox church, Political interference and ethnic federalism, corruption and personal ambitions, spiritual weakness and doctrinal confusion, external influences and Western interference, and inadequate church administration and leadership were the frequently mentioned reasons.

5.1.1 Government Interference

As per Engedayehu, the division of synods and formation of the synod in exile in 1992 is attributed to the actions of the government that interfered in the issues of the church (Engedayehu, 2014). Different sources also show the current government is helping illegal factions within the church which is exacerbating the dispute within the EOTC (*Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church should consider suing the government of Ethiopia, imminently*, 2023). Heliso attributed the disputes to a fusion of politics, ethnicity, and religion, while Houreld suggests that political changes instigated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed have exacerbated these disputes (Heliso, 2023; Houreld, 2023). This aligns with participants frequent response of

government interference. The idea of Government involvement in internal church issues leading to disputes and divisions is also corroborated by Broun, who explained the divisions of churches in different European countries (Broun, 1997). Country context which is explained by Finke and Scheitle decides whether divisions in a country are encouraged or not. If the country context is allowing establishment of new religions, then divisions will keep occurring (Finke & Scheitle 2009); and as we have seen in the frequent response of participants, government involvement is raised as one of the main reasons behind the disputes. The government was explicitly stated to be responsible for taking sides and helping the legally unrecognized factions. This shows that the country context is directly or indirectly encouraging divisions within the church.

5.1.2 Ethnic and Political Influences

Sources show current disputes and divisions being the result of the intertwinement of religion with politics and ethnicity. The individuals in the governmental office not only interfered in the church business but they were instrumentalizing the church for their own ends. Synods were also created based on ethnicity (Heliso, 2023). The ethnic federalism approach of the government strongly affected the church, because leaders within the church wanted the same approach of the government to be practiced within the church (Chala, 2019). All these ideas brought by different sources were strongly corroborated and repeatedly mentioned by the participants of the research. As per the principle of Human relation theory, positive human relation of members of an organization is essential for the success of the organization. As we are witnessing per sources and proven by participants, leaders are seen giving precedence for their ethnical background and other personal needs before the common good and success of the church which is leading the church to disputes and divisions.

5.1.3 Corruption and Mismanagement

Desta Heliso's analysis reveals that political interference has similarly led to corruption within the EOTC. The EPRDF and the current government exploited the church for political purposes, resulting in corrupt practices and administrative inefficiencies. This political interference exacerbated conflicts and led to poor management of resources, contributing to ongoing dissatisfaction and bureaucratic delays, particularly affecting regional factions like Oromia and Tigray (Heliso, 2023). Additionally, Fr. Cherian George Poothicote Zachrias Mar Nicholovos's study highlights that the schism within the Malankaran Orthodox Church was partly due to the misuse of church resources, particularly under the leadership of Mor Dionysius VI, whose autocratic and corrupt behaviour, including collusion with a deposed patriarch, led to significant disputes and legal battles. This mismanagement diverted resources away from the church's spiritual mission, causing financial strain and weakening its witness (Poothicote, n.d.). Participants also stated the need and a competition for authority, money, and different kinds of personal advantages and resources among the administration staff; which is unexpected and unethical especially considering these individuals are leaders of a religious institute. Leaders are also stated to lack both education and spirituality which reduces the professionalism in the administration; supporting Finke and Scheitle, who raised religious professionalism as one reason that strengthens an organization (Finke & Scheitle, 2009).

As it is postulated by the conflict theory, conflicts in an organization are due to limited resources (Resnick, 2024). It is also stipulated by the participants, there is unequal distribution of resources among the churches of the EOTC which is leading to the disputes confirming Finke and Scheitle idea of resource exchange as one of the reasons for disputes and divisions (Finke & Scheitle 2009).

5.1.4 Spiritual and Doctrinal Issues

History shows there weren't that many doctrinal disputes within the EOTC except the case of Qibat and Tsega doctrines which were implanted by the Jesuit missionaries (Ademe & Ali, 2023; Kasse, 2018; Netsere, 2020). Recent internal conflicts have consistently been characterized and identified as administrative rather than doctrinal, according to various sources (Heliso, 2023; Houreld, 2023). Participants also supported the idea of recent disputes not being doctrinal; however, as per some participants if these disputes continue like this, in time leaders of disputes will look for doctrinal grounds to support their claim and further the disputes.

Giving precedence to political affiliations like in the case of formation of synod in exile (Engedayehu, 2014), focusing on regional administrative issues that were initiated by Kesis Belay (Chala, 2019; Mideksa, 2020; Tura, 2017), different conflicts in relation to bishop selections (*Ethiopian Orthodox Church Excommunicated three subversive Archbishops, 2023*), continuous refusal for reconciliations (*Synod Secretariat sends letters to five Tigray Archbishops seeking "reconciliation", blames "political conspiracy" for rift, 2023; Orthodox Patriarch, delegation return to Addis without meeting Tigray religious leaders, 2023*), all show there is strong spiritual deterioration within the church. In the Malankaran Orthodox Church, Mor Dionysius VI's autocratic leadership and focus on personal power over spiritual growth led to a decline in the church's spiritual vitality (Poothicote, n.d.). Fr. V.V. Paulose further noted that the Malankaran Syrian Orthodox dispute was driven more by power and privilege than by genuine faith (Paulose, n.d.). Doctrinal disputes are legitimate means of dispute and even divisions; and the fact that these disputes aren't doctrinal shows that leaders are giving precedence to other things beside their doctrine and their spiritual obligations. Participants also stressed on the point of lack of spirituality among the leaders and laity. The beliefs, attitudes and rules within the

EOTC currently lack spirituality which is disrupting the identity and culture of the EOTC; aligning with the views of organizational culture theory.

5.1.5 External Influences and International Factors

Sources show the EOTC faced notable external international influences from the Portuguese in the 16th century. Portugal, while offering military support against Ahmed Geragn, sought to convert Ethiopians to Catholicism, leading to significant theological disputes (Ademe & Ali, 2023; Pelletier, 1996). The Jesuits, backed by Portugal, introduced controversial doctrines such as Qibat and Tsega, which further deepened the theological rifts within the church and sparked a prolonged conflict (Kasse, 2018; Netsere, 2020). Participants similarly stated strong anti-orthodox agendas against the EOTC; claiming there are institutions that are out to destroy the church and its traditions. Additional ideas entertained by the participants include, agendas against the country will be successful if the EOTC is unstable and in chaos.

5.1.6 Disrespects and Personal Conflicts

The Removal of Patriarch Abune Merkorios and the creation of a rival synod in exile (Engedayehu, 2014; Gebrehiwot, 2018), administrative disputes initiated by Kesis Belay Mekonnen over Oromia's clergy (Chala, 2019; Mideksa, 2020; Tura, 2017), and the formation of the Tigray Orthodox Church and its subsequent excommunication by the EOTC highlighted a significant rift influenced by political tensions (*Synod Secretariat sends letters to five Tigray Archbishops seeking “reconciliation”, blames “political conspiracy” for rift, 2023; Renegade archbishops uncanonically ordained six bishops in Axum, Tigray, 2023*) all show disrespect and personal conflicts among leaders which is inconsiderate of the mass. The schism of Malancharan orthodox church due to the actions of Mor Dionysius VI (Poothicote, n.d.), and Chackos

reflection on conflicts instigated by clergy leaderships (Chacko, n.d.), also show the conflicts of among the administrative staff comes from disrespect among themselves and giving precedence to their personal ambitions. In line with that fact, participants also stated there is strong disrespect among the administration staff and also believers are currently losing respect for their leaders. Human relations among all members have deteriorated and as per the principles of human relation theory, this is also a failure for the EOTC as an organization. Members are giving precedence to their ethnicity and personal prosperity, Hence, their social identity developed from different things besides their religion is killing the progress of the church by exacerbating the disputes.

5.2 Psychosocial Effects of the Internal Administrative Disputes

All participants believe the internal administrative disputes are causing psychosocial effects on the believers of the EOTC. Loss of faith and trust in church leaders, increased doubt and spiritual crisis, social division and fragmentation, psychological and emotional impact, and impact on church attendance and participation were the frequently mentioned psychosocial effects due to the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC. The participants themselves admitted to be affected by the on-going disputes. Emotional distress and doubt, impact on trust and belief in church leadership, social division and community impact, Personal Reflection and Growth, and perceived corruption and mismanagement were the frequently mentioned psychosocial effects that were faced by the participants themselves. Participants also reflected on the possible future effects of these disputes. Participants stated future effects are dependent on government involvement, and role of ethnicity and racial tensions. Additionally, they discussed potential for division and disintegration, spiritual and moral decline, and historical and comparative perspectives.

5.2.1 Loss of Faith and Trust on Church Leaders

Sources show continuous internal religious conflicts create loss of trust on leaders, feeling of instability in the organization, loss of sense of belongingness (Cragan & Wright, 1993). Exline et al., (2000) also added disagreements on religious issues can also bring loss of hope on religious institutions. Similarly, the participants repeatedly stated losing trust on their leaders and on their church in general. When leaders are caught in fault publicly then this will give wrong message to the laity telling them it is okay transgress as per the example of their leaders. The practice of the leaders also reflects on the deity they are preaching and that will lead believers to doubt and have wrong understandings about God; that aligns with Caluori, et al., (2020) discussion about how conflicts change how believers see God, understanding him to be the punitive type. Social Identity Theory also explains how religious conflicts can erode faith and trust in church leadership by highlighting the impact of group dynamics on individual beliefs. When conflicts arise within a religious group, they can disrupt the sense of belonging and identity that members derive from their faith community. If church leaders are seen as failing to manage these conflicts effectively or as acting contrary to the group's values, it can lead to disillusionment and a loss of trust. This is because individuals' self-concepts are closely tied to their religious group, and perceived failures by leaders can undermine their faith in both the leadership and the institution itself (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

5.2.2 Increased Doubt and Spiritual Crisis

As per Cragan & Wright (1993), continuous religious conflicts create spiritual disconnection. The mental health benefits of religion and spirituality (2016) also stated disputes and conflicts in religion loads to doubt and stress. Aligned with that fact, participants repeatedly stated doubting their religion is the true way to the kingdom of God. They stressed on the point

that believes are questioning their connection with God and that they are unable to see beyond their earthly life. Religious conflicts, such as doctrinal disputes or disagreements with religious authorities, can indeed lead to significant spiritual distress. According to Wuthnow (2007), such conflicts often result in increased doubt as individuals grapple with inconsistencies and tensions within their faith. This discord can provoke a spiritual crisis, where the individual questions the validity and coherence of their beliefs, undermining their sense of spiritual security. Wuthnow's work highlights how both internal and external religious conflicts can contribute to profound existential and spiritual questioning. These dynamics align with broader theories of social identity which collectively explores conflicts impacting identities and leading to personal doubt and crisis of faith.

5.2.3 Social division and fragmentation

Religious conflicts can lead to significant social division and fragmentation, as seen in various historical and contemporary contexts. For example, the Portuguese imposition of Catholicism on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) triggered a civil war and theological discord, deepening existing divisions (Pelletier, 1996; Netsere, 2020). Similarly, the TPLF's removal of Patriarch Abune Merkorios caused a schism within the EOTC, leading to rival factions and affecting diaspora communities (Engedayehu, 2014; Gebrehiwot, 2018). Recent disputes over clergy and administrative issues within the EOTC highlight how internal and ethnic tensions can further fragment religious institutions and society at large (Chala, 2019; Mideksa, 2020; Tura, 2017). The 1912 schism in the Malankaran Orthodox Church, driven by internal conflicts, also exemplifies how religious disputes can result in enduring social divisions (Poothicote, n.d.). These instances collectively demonstrate how religious conflicts can destabilize communities and create lasting fragmentation. Social Identity Theory explains how

religious conflicts cause social division and fragmentation by highlighting that individuals derive their identities from their membership in religious groups. When these groups are in conflict, such as with the EOTC's internal disputes or historical schisms, the perceived threat to one's religious identity can intensify divisions, leading to fragmented communities and deepened social rifts. This theory underscores how religious affiliations can exacerbate societal splits and contribute to enduring fragmentation (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

5.2.4 Psychological and Emotional Impact

Religious conflicts can lead to significant psychological and emotional impacts. Internal conflicts within the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC) have had profound psychological and emotional effects on its followers. For instance, the TPLF's removal of Patriarch Abune Merkorios and the subsequent split within the Holy Synod caused significant distress and disillusionment among the faithful (Engedayehu, 2014). Similarly, disputes over administrative issues, such as the establishment of a clergy for the Oromia region and controversies surrounding language preferences, have exacerbated feelings of marginalization and anxiety. These conflicts illustrate how administrative disagreements can escalate into broader spiritual and emotional crises, leading believers to experience a sense of neglect and disruption in their religious identity and well-being (Chala, 2019; Mideksa, 2020; Gebreamlak, 2024). As per the Mental health benefits of religion and spirituality (2016), negative issues in religion deprives people from thankfulness, compassion and forgiveness; and lead them to fear, anxiety, depression, doubt and stress. As conflicts persist, individuals may turn to negative coping mechanisms such as substance abuse and self-harm to manage the resulting psychological distress (Caluori et al., 2020). Prolonged disputes often erode trust in religious leaders and institutions, causing a loss of hope and a sense of disillusionment, which contributes to emotional

exhaustion and instability (Cragan & Wright, 1993). Additionally, ongoing conflicts can create a sense of spiritual disconnection, leading individuals to feel detached from their faith and community, which increases feelings of isolation and despair (Moreira-Almeida et al., 2006)

Similar to those sources, participants stated witnessing hopelessness, insecurity, fear and doubting their religious establishment and looking for truth elsewhere. In addition to that, loneliness, confusion, individual unrest, anxiety, depression, stress and faithlessness were some of the psychological and emotional impacts the participants witnessed and also faced themselves. According to Erikson's psychosocial development theory, disruptions in social relationships and support networks can undermine psychological stability and lead to a range of emotional difficulties (Erikson, 1950). When conflicts arise over doctrines, practices, or leadership, they can disrupt individuals' social support networks and sense of belonging, which are crucial for psychological health (Sarason et al., 1990). The resulting loss of community support and identity can lead to heightened feelings of loneliness, confusion, and anxiety (Thoits, 1995). Prolonged exposure to such conflicts often exacerbates stress and may contribute to deeper issues like depression and hopelessness (Gergen et al., 2001), illustrating how social discord directly influences emotional well-being and psychological health.

5.2.5 Impact on Church Attendance and Participation

According to Moreira-Almeida et al. (2006), frequent religious involvements are related with decreased levels of hopelessness, suicidal ideations, and substance dependence. And when there are religious conflicts, people tend to be tired of the issues and eventually decrease their religious involvements (Cragan & Wright, 1993). Participants also repeatedly raised the idea of staying away from the church in order not to deal with these issues which are against the principles of their faith. Changing religions by looking for the truth elsewhere is also one of the

impacts which was discussed by participants. Inimitability is one of the main reason which kept members of the church from disengaging from the religion and that principle is true as per Finke & Scheitle (2009). Cognitive dissonance theory, as outlined by Leon Festinger, provides a valuable framework for understanding how religious conflicts can affect church attendance and participation. When individuals encounter conflicts within their religious community—such as disagreements with church doctrines, leadership, or practices—they experience cognitive dissonance due to the inconsistency between their beliefs and their experiences. To alleviate this psychological discomfort, individuals might alter their behavior by withdrawing from the church, reducing their participation, or even seeking alternative religious affiliations that align more closely with their values. By distancing themselves from the source of dissonance, they can resolve the conflict and restore a sense of internal consistency.

5.2.6 Personal Reflection and Growth

Some sources have shown few positive effects of religious conflicts. Chaves (1993) stated religious conflicts provide enhanced clarity and purpose, strengthened community, improved practices and structures. Religious conflict can also help organizations come up with adaptive strategies, and increased engagement and participation (Van Gelder & Zscheile, 2011). There haven't been that much participants who stated a positive outcome from these internal administrative disputes; except one who discussed gaining enhanced clarity about the order and practice of the church and also growth in spiritual life. In addition to that, some others added how their surrounding and the way they were brought up has helped them navigate this dispute accordingly.

5.3 Possible Measures that Should be done Prevent such Disputes and Divisions in the Future?

Participants discussed different approaches that can be used to diminish the effects of these disputes and to prevent them from happening in the future. These include government involvement and structure, spiritual and educational approaches, accountability and responsibility, believer engagement and awareness and structural and administrative reforms.

5.3.1 Government Non-involvement and Structure

As shown in the findings and discussions, government involvement has been one of the main reasons for the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the EOTC. TPLF interference in the church led to division of synods and establishment of synod in exile (Engedayehu), surprisingly it was the government which helped unifying these synods 25 years later (Gebrehiwot, 2018). This shows interference is not always about negative interference, there are ways the government can help out the church given its power and influence it has over the country. The government again interfered with the disputes and divisions which occurred recently in Oromia and Tigray (*Ethiopian orthodox tewahedo church holy synod to deliberate on hijacked agenda this week*, 2019; Gebremariam, 2021). The government is seen exacerbating these issues instead of helping settle them (*Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo church should consider suing the government of Ethiopia, imminently*, 2023; Plaut, 2023). Similarly, participants repeatedly stated of the government meddling in the issues of the church. Government needs to stay out and let the church settle her issues as per her rules and regulation. Participants also stated the government should stay away from nomination of bishops; meaning different partisanships which come due to ethnicity and race will also be kept away. Additionally,

participants recommended forming a strong legal structure that keeps away the government from meddling in the business of the church.

Contingency theory suggests that organizational effectiveness, including conflict prevention, depends on adapting to specific contextual factors. By reducing government interference, the church can better align its structure with its unique needs and dynamics. Change management theory also supports this by emphasizing the importance of well-managed transitions and clear processes. Structuring the church thoughtfully, with minimal external interference, can create a more stable and cohesive environment, reducing the likelihood of internal conflicts and fostering a more harmonious organizational culture.

5.3.2 Spiritual and Educational Approaches

In his paper to advocate for peace and unity on the dispute within the Malankaran Orthodox Community, reverend Paulose recommends establishment of platforms to counsel the Patriarch and the Holy Synod on spiritual matters. He opts for ways of Christian reconciliation instead of legal disputes before governmental court (Paulose, n.d.). He also suggests implementing spiritual fasting, seeking advice from other churches, educating the community, using science and technology for temporary matters, and resolving spiritual issues with guidance from responsible individuals (Paulose, n.d.). Similarly, participants also suggested both spiritual and professional educations for both the believers and the administration staff should be provided in order to save wastage of resources. Lack of spirituality, corruption and mismanagement have been raised as the causes for the disputes. Providing spiritual education for and help pushing towards practice and secular educations to help professionalizing the clergy (Finke & Sheitle, 2009) were the main points discussed by the participants.

Psychosocial theory, which explores how psychological factors and social environments interact to shape human behavior, supports the idea that a spiritual and educational approach can effectively prevent internal religious conflicts. This theory emphasizes the importance of understanding individual and collective psychological needs and the role of social support systems in addressing conflicts. By integrating spiritual practices and educational initiatives, organizations can foster emotional resilience, enhance interpersonal communication, and build a shared sense of purpose. This holistic approach not only addresses the psychological and emotional well-being of individuals but also strengthens social bonds and promotes a collaborative environment, thereby reducing the potential for conflicts and improving overall organizational harmony.

5.3.3 Accountability and Responsibility

To prevent and resolve religious conflicts, it is crucial for church leaders to embrace responsibility and accountability. Peace efforts should begin at the clergy level, as they set the example for the laity and guide the community towards unity (Chacko, n.d.). Leaders must prioritize internal resolution over secular interventions by retracting excommunications and addressing disputes within the church (Paulose, n.d.). Constructive dialogue and a focus on reconciliation are essential, with leaders acknowledging mistakes and working towards mending relationships (Heliso, 2023). Archbishop Abune Yosef's emphasis on the impact of internal divisions on national unity underscores the critical role of religious leaders in fostering cohesion within the church and, by extension, within the country (Mahibere Kidusan, 2019). Additionally, investing in the professional development of clergy ensures they are equipped to handle conflicts effectively and uphold the organization's integrity (Finke & Scheitle, 2009). Participants also discussed perpetrators should be accountable for their actions before peace talks between

factions. Despite the idea of forgiveness being a central issue in religion, participants stressed on the point of leaders being accountable and responsible for their actions. Organizational Behavior Theory underscores the role of leadership and organizational culture in managing conflicts. By applying this theory, religious leaders can enhance conflict prevention and resolution within their communities. Leaders who model accountability and responsibility set a standard for behavior, encouraging a culture of transparency and open communication. This helps in addressing grievances internally rather than resorting to external legal disputes. Effective leadership fosters a supportive environment where constructive dialogue is prioritized, promoting unity and resolving conflicts amicably. Thus, Organizational Behavior Theory supports the idea that responsible leadership and a positive organizational culture are crucial for maintaining harmony and preventing religious conflicts (Robinson & Judge, 2019).

5.3.4 Believer Engagement and Awareness

Educating the faithful about theological doctrines, administrative processes, and the implications of legal proceedings helps mitigate confusion and dissatisfaction, fostering a more informed and cohesive community (Chala, 2019; Mideksa, 2020; Tura, 2017; Paulose, n.d.). Ensuring inclusivity in worship practices and addressing diverse linguistic and regional needs can prevent marginalization and promote unity (The Problems Raised by the Committee Established as the Oromia Church Have Been Resolved by the Archbishopric, 2020). Furthermore, upholding strong leadership with transparent and fair decision-making processes builds trust and stability within the church (Ethiopian Orthodox Church Excommunicated Three Subversive Archbishops, 2023). Engaging believers actively in conflict resolution and educating them about the intersections of politics, ethnicity, and religion can lead to more effective and harmonious solutions, reducing the likelihood of disputes (Heliso, 2023; Paulose, n.d.).

Similarly, participants stressed the church educating her believers in order to reasonably question the decisions made by the administration. Believers' engagement on issues like bishop nominations have also been discussed by participants. Instead of ignorance and disengaging from the church, believers should strongly engage in the issues of the church considering the church as their own.

Social Identity Theory and Human Relations Theory both underscore the importance of inclusivity and effective communication in maintaining harmony within groups. Social Identity Theory highlights how individuals derive a sense of belonging and self-worth from their group affiliations, which can lead to in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination if not managed properly (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This emphasizes the need for awareness and engagement among believers to prevent feelings of marginalization and division. Human Relations Theory, on the other hand, focuses on the significance of interpersonal relationships and the impact of supportive leadership on group cohesion (Mayo, 2003).

5.3.5 Structural and Administrative Reforms

Structural and administrative reforms are vital preventive measures for mitigating religious conflicts within organizations. Establishing clear and effective regional administrative structures can address local needs and prevent feelings of neglect, as illustrated by the EOTC's efforts to resolve disputes over clergy appointments in Oromia (Chala, 2019; Mideksa, 2020; Tura, 2017). Addressing language barriers in liturgical practices ensures inclusivity and prevents marginalization. Transparent and equitable processes for appointing leaders are crucial to maintaining trust and stability, as demonstrated by controversies surrounding bishop appointments (*Ethiopian Orthodox Church Excommunicated Three Subversive Archbishops, 2023; Orthodox Synod declares faithful to wear black for Fast of Nineveh to protest against*

“illegal group,” 2023). Formal mechanisms for reconciliation and dialogue, such as those historically convened by leaders like Emperor Atse Yohannes IV and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, facilitate constructive conflict resolution (Netsere, 2020; Gebrehiwot, 2018). Additionally, managing and mitigating external influences and avoiding secular legal entanglements in church disputes can prevent exacerbation of conflicts (Ademe & Ali, 2023; Paulose, n.d.). Strengthening internal communication and ensuring political neutrality within religious governance further enhance unity and reduce the likelihood of divisive issues (Kodiatt, n.d.; Heliso, 2023). Participants likewise shared their idea of reforming the administrative structure of the church, starting from; taking inventory of priests and their spiritual children, overlooking every sector in the church using bishops, using professional consulting on each sector, a structure that clears out partisanships based on ethnicity and politics, and using believers’ qualities and profession for the church accordingly.

Change Management Theory emphasizes the importance of effectively managing transitions and transformations within organizations to prevent and resolve conflicts. Structural and administrative reforms, such as implementing clear regional administrative structures, addressing language barriers, and ensuring transparent leadership appointments, align with this theory by facilitating smoother organizational adjustments. These reforms help prevent conflicts by addressing underlying issues that contribute to dissatisfaction and division. By strategically managing these changes, organizations can enhance inclusivity, maintain stability, and promote unity, thereby reducing the likelihood of disputes and fostering a more cohesive environment (Kotter, 2012; Lewin & American Psychological Association, 1997).

Chapter Six

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1 Conclusion

All participants acknowledged the existence of disputes which gives concrete evidence on the presence of internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the EOTC. These disputes are stated to arise from government interference, ethnic based administration, lack of spiritual leadership, external influences, and internal church issues and misunderstandings were the frequently mentioned reasons. All participants also agreed that the internal administrative disputes have psychosocial effects on the believers of the church. These psychosocial effects of these disputes include, loss of hope and trust in church leadership, loss of faith and moral degradation, psychosocial impact and doubt, social division and disrespect, and impact on worship and spiritual practice. These effects determine the future destiny of the church. If the disputes have no solutions in the near future, then all these effects will add up to potential division and decline, liability to government and external interference, and societal and spiritual consequences. However, believers are hopeful for a better tomorrow, stating hope for restoration and resilience which depends on the efforts of spiritual renewal of every member of the church. Despite all these challenges, some of the participants stated a positive out come from all these; increased awareness of faith and a life towards spirituality and God. That adds up to the inputs of existing literatures on positive outcomes of internal church disputes which state cultivating unity and collaboration among believers. Participants proposed the following solutions: government non-interference, spiritual education and practice, believer's active participation in the church, and renewing the administrative structure of the church. Relating the proposed solutions with the underlying reasons of the disputes, the solutions directly concerned with the members of the

church should be given precedence. If the internal integrity and solidarity of the church is ensured by the members, then all the external problems against the church will eventually decline.

6.2 Recommendation

According to the results government interference, ethnic influences, spiritual decline and corruption of leaders and internal church issues are the main and frequently raised reasons behind the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the EOTC.

The church should develop a legal framework that keeps the government at bay. This may include coming up with a legislation that guarantees that. This can be done by involving the government officials in an open dialogue in order to ensure the autonomy of the church. The leaders of the church should also eradicate ethnicity based administrative approach by promoting inclusivity and diversity. Balanced representation is always a preferred mechanism but that is not accepted in the church as raised by the participants. Therefore, the church should be transparent about her bishop nominees and put out official qualification for a position that requires both spiritual and professional understanding. Spiritual self-examination and renewal of believers and leaders are one of the main things that should be done. If everyone examines himself and pass-through repentance and absolution, then that will push the church towards love and solidarity. The church also shouldn't stand alone in order to resist different external agendas against her. She should have a formal external affairs department which makes sure she forms strategic partnership with different religious and secular organizations. Transparency is also the main thing the church should promote. It will help avoid different kinds of misunderstandings and help believers have adequate understanding about what is going on inside the administration. Certified professionals are also extremely helpful by improving the management, conflict

resolutions and training leaders.

According to the results the psychosocial effects of the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the EOTC include, loss of hope and trust in church leadership, loss of faith and moral degradation, psychosocial impact and doubt, social division and disrespect, impact on worship and spiritual practice.

There should be strong transparency from the administration in order to restore hope and trust. There should also be accountability measures which should be put in place that keeps the administrators of the church from misusing their authority. Spiritual support groups and counselling should be done for the believers in order address the loss of faith and moral degradation. The EOTC is an organization with huge magnitude, therefore she should provide therapies and counselling for the believers in order to mitigate and eradicate the different psychosocial impacts that are happening on the believers. The church should strongly promote unity and inclusivity to mitigate the social division and disrespect. This can be done by preparing events that bring together different groups within the church. The church should also train her subjects in conflict resolution. Active participation in the church should be encouraged along with improving the church environment so that believers are willing to come and reconnect with their faith and their church. Participation of the believers should include decision making processes like naming of a bishop. Promoting positive role models by using different media and outreach programs can change the negative perceptions the believers have developed for the church.

According to the results, the resolution approaches for the internal administrative disputes include government non-interference, spiritual education and practice, believer's active participation in the church, and renewing the administrative structure of the church.

There should be strong comprehensive spiritual education and training that is organized by the church. That will help believers and leaders overcome their individual struggles and grow in their personal spiritual practices. There also should be a strong administration reform which includes decision making process, improving transparency and accountability. Leadership training and development programs are also essential for the administrative reform by stressing ethical leadership, conflict resolution skills and improved management skills.

This research is done in Bole sub city of Addis Ababa region, however, there are currently about 12 regions in Ethiopia and the EOTC has believers in each and every one of them. Further researches should be done in a broader scope with strong fund from the church herself. This will provide a rich and wide scope of data for the church in order to come up with solutions based on different perspectives from different areas.

Further research should also include high ranking church officials, mainly bishops who are responsible for looking after wide range of areas or dioceses. This will provide a rich data from the general church clergy at Addis Ababa, the Holy synod itself and the diocese the bishop is assigned to.

Internal church conflicts are not the problem of the EOTC only, there are different religious institutions which are troubled by it. Hence, comparative researches should be done in other religious organizations and that could provide valuable insight and potentially transferable solutions that can be used accordingly.

There is a high chance this research is a pilot study, because it was difficult to find literatures while reviewing documents that can relate with the issue. Therefore, longitudinal study should be done a while later, in order to track the evolution of the disputes and their results over time. This could offer dynamic view over the issue and the effectiveness of the solutions

over time.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

The issue of the internal administrative dispute within the leaders of the EOTC is current and strong one, hence, many people were unwilling to participate in the research. They express their willingness at first, but later on they used different kinds of ways to be left out from the research. This is seen mostly by the clergy members of the church, meaning the deacons and priests. Some priests and deacons were unwilling to participate which made the data collection take longer than expected. This may be to secure their employment status or keep their social desirability.

This research area is limited to Bole sub city. Bole sub city is a small area considering the magnitude of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo church and the number of believers it incorporates in its hold all over the country. The research included 15 participants, this is a small number considering everything, however, there was a strong data saturation during the interview of the twelfth participant.

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Appendix

Annex 1 – English Version of the Instrument

This interview is prepared in order to gather data on the internal administrative disputes which has been occurring inside the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church (EOTC) for the last few years (starting from 2019 to be exact).

This interview is prepared for a research project; therefore the identity of a participant will remain anonymous. The data gathered is only used to determine the casues and psychosocial effects of the internal administrative disputes inside the EOTC and to provide possible solutions, i sincerely ask you to provide your honest opinion. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

By signing here you acknowledge your willingness to be a participant in this research.

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1. (R.Q 1) First of all, do you believe there are internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC)? (If your answer for this question is “Yes”, then we can continue to the next question)
 2. (R.Q 2) What do you think can be the main internal and external reasons for the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC on the last few years?
 3. (R.Q 3) Do you believe the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC for the last few years is causing psychosocial effects on the believers?
 4. (R.Q 3) In your opinion, what are the psychosocial effects which the internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC are causing on the believers?
 5. (R.Q 3) Are there any psychosocial effects the recent internal administrative disputes among the leaders of EOTC have caused on you as a believer? If so, can you please explain?

6. (R.Q 3) Where do you think the recent internal administrative disputes among the leaders of the EOTC will lead the church and the believers?
7. (R.Q 2) As we have seen in the last few years, the EOTC has faced a division named The Tigray Orthodox Tewahedo Church and The Oromia Orthodox Tewahedo Church.
Where do you think these divisions come from and what are the reasons behind them?
And what do you think will be their end?
8. (R.Q 4) As a believer, what do you think should be done in order to prevent such disputes and divisions in the future?

(R. Q – Research question 1, 2, 3, 4)

Annex 2 – Amharic Version of the Instrument

ይህ ቃለ መጠይቅ የተዘጋጀው ባለፉት ቅርብ አመታት (እርግጠኛውን ለመናገር ከ2012ዓ.ም. ጀምሮ) በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን ውስጣዊ አስተዳደራዊ አለመስማማት ወይም ግጭት ላይ ከምዕመኑ መረጃ ለማግኘት ነው።

ይህ ቃለ መጠይቅ ለጥናት የተዘጋጀ በመሆኑ በቃለ መጠይቁ የሚሳተፍ ሰው ማንነት እንዲታወቅ አይደረግም። መረጃው የሚውለው በቤተክርስቲያኗ ላይ እየሆነ ያለው ውስጣዊ አለመስማማት ወይም ግጭት በምዕመኑ ስነልቦናዊ ሁኔታ ላይ እያደረሰ ያለውን ውጤት ገምግሞ የመፍትሄ ሀሳቦችን ለማመጣት ስለሆነ ትክክለኛ ሀሳብዎን በመስጠት እንዲተባበሩን በትህትና እጠይቃለሁ። ለሚሰጡኝም ሀሳብ አስቀድሜ አመሰግናለሁ።

እዚህ ጋር በመፈረም በዚህ ጥናት ውስጥ ተሳታፊ ለመሆን ፈቃደኛ መሆንዎን እውቅና ይሰጣሉ።

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1. (የ. ጥ 1) በመጀመሪያ በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን መሪዎች መካከል ውስጣዊ አስተዳደራዊ አለመስማማት ወይም ግጭት አለብለው ያምናሉ? (ለዚህ ጥያቄ መልስዎት አዎ ከሆነ፤ ወደ ቀጣይ ጥያቄዎች እንሄዳለን)
 2. (የ. ጥ 2) ባለፉት ቅርብ አመታት በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን መሪዎች መካከል እየሆነ ላለው ውስጣዊ አስተዳደራዊ አለመስማማት ወይም ግጭት መንስዔ ናቸው ብለው የሚያምኑባቸውን ዋና ዋናዎቹ ውስጣዊም ሆነ ውጫዊ ምክንያቶች ምን ምን ናቸው?
 3. (የ. ጥ 3) ባለፉት ቅርብ አመታት በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን መሪዎች መካከል እየሆነ ያለው ውስጣዊ አስተዳደራዊ አለመስማማት ወይም ግጭት በምዕመኑ ስነልቦናዊና ማህበራዊ ሁኔታ ላይ ተጽእኖ እያደረሰ ነው ብለው ያምናሉ?
 4. (የ. ጥ 3) በእርስዎ አረዳድ በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን መሪዎች መካከል እየሆነ ያለው ውስጣዊ አስተዳደራዊ አለመስማማት ወይም ግጭት በምዕመኑ ስነልቦናዊና ማህበራዊ ሁኔታ ላይ እያደረሰ ያለውን ተጽእኖ በዝርዝር ቢያስቀምጡልን?

- 5. (የ. ጥ 3) በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን መሪዎች መካከል እየሆነ ያለው ውስጣዊ አስተዳደራዊ አለመስማማት ወይም ግጭት እንደ አንድ አማኝ በእርስዎ ስነልቦናዊና ማህበራዊ ሁኔታ ላይ ያደረሰው ነገር አለ? ካለ በዝርዝር ቢነግሩን።
- 6. (የ. ጥ 3) በኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን መሪዎች መካከል እየሆነ ያለው ውስጣዊ አስተዳደራዊ አለመስማማት ወይም ግጭት በተጨማሪም መከፋፈል ቤተክርስቲያኗን እንዲሁም ምዕመኑን ወዴት ይመራዋል ብለው ያስባሉ?
- 7. (የ. ጥ 2) ባለፉት አመታት እንዳየነው የኢትዮጵያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን ፤ የትግራይ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያንና ፤ የአሮሚያ ኦርቶዶክስ ተዋህዶ ቤተክርስቲያን የሚሉ የመከፋፈል ክስተቶች ገጥመዋታል። በእርስዎ አስተሳሰብ እነዚህ መከፋፈሎች ከየት እና በምን መንስዔነት መጡ ብለው ያስባሉ? መጨረሻቸውስ ምን ሊሆን ይችላል ብለው ያስባሉ?
- 8. (የ. ጥ 4) እርስዎስ እንደ አንድ አማኝ ወደፊት እንደነዚህ ያሉ የመከፋፈል ክስተቶች እንዳይገጥሙ ለመከላከል፤ ቢገጥሙም በሰላም ለማለፍ ምን ቢደረግ መልካም ነው ብለው ያስባሉ?

(የ. ጥ – የጥናቱ ጥያቄ 1, 2, 3, 4)