

WOMEN, CHURCHES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN

BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

By

ANGEL NDLOVU

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DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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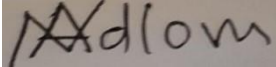
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DECLARATION

I, ANGEL NDLOVU (Student number: 67124623), hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis entitled: **WOMEN, CHURCHES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE** is the product of my own original work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA, or at any other higher education institution, for another qualification.

Signature 

Date : 14 December 2022

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty for providing me with resources to complete this thesis and for keeping me alive, especially during this difficult period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the contribution that women in churches make towards community development. The concept of development of the community by the community has gained prominence in development literature. In addition, churches as institutions that exist within communities have been recognised as most appropriate in steering community development initiatives. However, the role of churches has not been significantly researched or socio-scientifically analysed. The efforts of women in churches towards community development have not been sufficiently recognised and researched either. Women dominate in terms of church membership, and they are actively involved in church activities. This study sought to understand the contribution that women in churches make to community development and to expose barriers that hinder their full participation. Contemporary research has proven that meaningful community development cannot be achieved without the active participation of women.

This thesis contributes to the body of knowledge by recognising women as an important nexus in community development and by providing a detailed perspective of their role in churches and the obstacles that hamper their meaningful participation in community development. The spiritual contribution of women in churches to community development is scarcely documented and has largely been undermined – as evidenced by the scarcity of research on how spirituality could be integrated into community development. Therefore, this study provides insight into the importance of spirituality in community development, with special reference to women in churches. The study unveils and acknowledges the significance that the voluntary, non-paid activities of women in churches have for community development.

This qualitative research study was guided by the GAD theory and has followed a constructivist epistemological stance. A case study research design was adopted to explore the intersection of women, churches, and community development. Thematic data analysis was the data analysis method adopted for this research and the sample size was 58. The key findings of this study have indicated that women in churches are mainly affected by a patriarchal system that prevents them from participating meaningfully in community development initiatives. The patriarchal structures within churches are maintained through incompatible doctrines. Thus, there is a need for transformation of church leadership and decision-making structures.

Key words

Community development, churches, women in churches, gender, development, religion, faith-based organisations, women empowerment, women emancipation, patriarchy, participation of women, inclusion of women, Bulawayo

OPSOMMING

In hierdie studie is ondersoek ingestel na die bydrae wat vroue in kerke tot gemeenskapsontwikkeling lewer. Die konsep van ontwikkeling van die gemeenskap, deur die gemeenskap, het bekendheid verwerf in ontwikkelingsliteratuur. Kerke as instellings wat in gemeenskappe bestaan, is ook erken as die geskikste vir die bestuur van gemeenskapsontwikkeling-inisiatiewe. Die rol van kerke is egter nie wetenskaplik nagevors of sosiaal-wetenskaplik ontleed nie. Die ywer waarmee vroue in kerke tot gemeenskapsontwikkeling bydra, is ook nie genoegsaam erken en nagevors nie. Vroue voer die botoon as dit by kerklidmaatskap kom, en hulle is aktief by kerk-aktiwiteite betrokke. Hierdie studie poog om die bydrae wat vroue in kerke tot gemeenskapsontwikkeling lewer, te verstaan en om struikelblokke te onthul wat hul volwaardige deelname kniehalter. Hedendaagse navorsing het bewys dat betekenisvolle gemeenskapsontwikkeling nie bewerkstellig kan word sonder vroue se aktiewe deelname nie.

Hierdie tesis dra tot die kenniskorpus by deur vroue te erken as 'n belangrike skakel in gemeenskapsontwikkeling, en deur 'n uitvoerige perspektief te bied van hul rol in kerke en die struikelblokke wat hul betekenisvolle deelname aan gemeenskapsontwikkeling bemoeilik. Die geestelike bydrae wat vroue in kerke tot gemeenskapsontwikkeling lewer, is skaars gedokumenteer en is grootliks ondermyn – soos blyk uit die gebrek aan navorsing oor hoe geestelikheid in gemeenskapsontwikkeling geïntegreer kan word. Hierdie studie gee dus insig rakende die belangrikheid van geestelikheid in gemeenskapsontwikkeling, met besondere aandag aan vroue in kerke. Die studie erken en werp lig op die belangrike rol wat die vrywillige, onbetaalde aktiwiteite van vroue in kerke, in gemeenskapsontwikkeling speel.

Hierdie kwalitatiewe navorsingstudie is gerig deur die GAD-teorie, met 'n konstruktivistiese, epistemologiese standpunt as vertrekpunt. 'n Gevallestudie-navorsingsontwerp is gebruik om die kruispunt van vroue, kerke en gemeenskapsontwikkeling te bestudeer. Tematiese data-ontleding was die data-ontledingsmetode wat vir hierdie navorsing ingespan is, en die steekproefgrootte was 58. Die sleutelbevindings van hierdie studie toon aan dat vroue in kerke hoofsaaklik beïnvloed word deur 'n patriargale stelsel wat hulle verhoed om op betekenisvolle wyse by gemeenskapsontwikkeling-inisiatiewe betrokke te wees. Die patriargale strukture in kerke word deur onverenigbare doktrines gehandhaaf. Daar is dus 'n behoefte aan transformasie van kerkleierskap en besluitnemingstrukture.

Sleutelwoorde

Gemeenskapsontwikkeling, kerke, vroue in kerke, geslag, ontwikkeling, godsdienste, geloofgebaseerde organisasies, bemagtiging van vroue, emansipasie van vroue, patriargaat, vrouedeelname, insluiting van vroue, Bulawayo

ISIFINQO

Lolu cwaningo luhlale igalelo elenziwa abesifazane emasontweni ekuthuthukiseni umphakathi. Umqondo wokuthuthukiswa komphakathi ngumphakathi uthole ukugqama emibhalweni yentuthuko. Ngaphezu kwalokho, amasonto njengezikhungo ezikhona emiphakathini aqashelwe njengafanele kakhulu ekuqhubeni izinhlelo zokuthuthukisa umphakathi. Nokho, indima yamasonto ayizange icwaningwe kakhulu noma ihlaziye ngokwenhlalohle-yesayensi. Imizamo yabesifazane emasontweni ekuthuthukiseni umphakathi ayikaqashelwa ngokwanele futhi yacwaningwa. Abesifazane bayabusa ngokwemibandela yobulungu bebandla futhi bamatasatasa emisebenzini yebandla. Lolu cwaningo belufuna ukuqonda igalelo elenziwa ngabesifazane emasontweni ekuthuthukisweni komphakathi kanye nokudalula izithiyo ezivimbela ukuhlanganyela kwabo ngokugcwele. Ucwano lwesimanje selukhombisile ukuthi ukuthuthukiswa komphakathi okuphusile ngeke kuzuzwe ngaphandle kokubamba iqhaza kwabesifazane.

Le thesis inikela endikimbeni yolwazi ngokubona abesifazane njengesixhumanisi esibalulekile ekuthuthukisweni komphakathi nangokuhlinzeka ngemininingwane yeqhaza lalabo abaya emasontweni kanye nezithiyo ezithikameza ukuhlanganyela kwabo okunengqondo ekuthuthukisweni komphakathi. Igalelo elingokomoya labesifazane emasontweni ekuthuthukisweni komphakathi libhalwe phansi futhi liye labukelwa phansi - njengoba kufakazelwa ukushoda kocwaningo lokuthi ingokomoya lingahlanganiswa kanjani nokuthuthukiswa komphakathi. Ngakho-ke, lolu cwaningo lunikeza ukuqonda ngokubaluleka kwengokomoya ekuthuthukisweni komphakathi, kubhekiselwa ngokukhethekile kwabesifazane emasontweni. Lolu cwaningo lwembula futhi luvuma ukubaluleka kokuthi imisebenzi yokuzithandela, engakhokhelwa yabesifazane emasontweni anayo ukuze kuthuthukiswe umphakathi.

Lolu cwaningo lwesimo lwaluholwa yithiyori ye-GAD futhi lulandele isimo esiphakeme nesakhayo sepehstimoloji. Idizayini yocwaningo lwecala yamukelwa ukuhlola ukuhlangana kwabesifazane, amasonto, nokuthuthukiswa komphakathi. Ukuhlaziya kwemininingwane eyinqikithi kwakuyindlela yokuhlaziya iminingwane eyamukelwa kulolu cwaningo futhi usayizi wesampula wawungama-58. Imiphumela eyinhloko yalolu cwaningo ibonise ukuthi abesifazane emasontweni bathinteka kakhulu ohlelweni lwenzalamizi olubavimbela ukuba babambe iqhaza ngendlela enenjongo ezinhlelweni zokuthuthukisa umphakathi. Izakhiwo zezinzalamizi ngaphakathi emasontweni zigcinwa ngezimfundiso ezingahambelani. Ngakho, kunesidingo sokuguqulwa kobuholi bebandla nezinhlelo ezithatha izinqumo.

Amagama abalulekile

Ukuthuthukiswa komphakathi, amabandla, abesifazana emabandleni, ubulili, intuthuko, inkolo, inhlanganiso zezenkolo, ukuthuthukiswa kwabesifazana, ukukhululwa kwabesifazana, inzalamizi, ukuphatheka kwabesifazana, ukufakwa kwabesifazana, koBulawayo.

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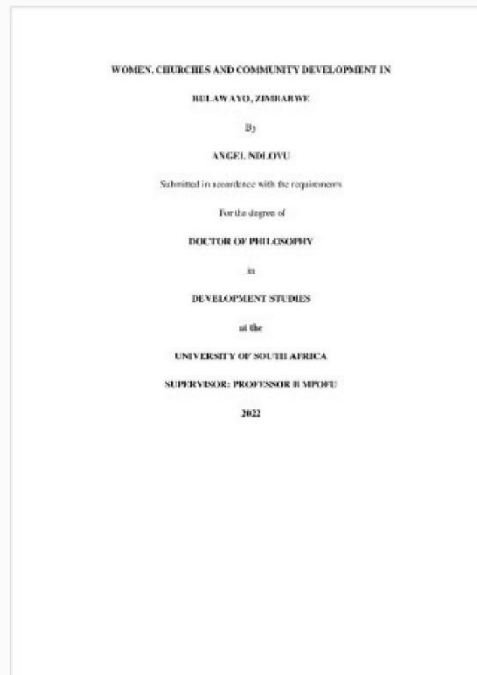


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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADEMCA	Association of Community Women of Awakatan
AIC	African Independent Church
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCC	Bulawayo City Council
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
CAFOD	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CDW	Community Development Worker
CEDAW	Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CIB	Churches in Bulawayo
COE	Council of Europe
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DSS	Department of Social Services
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
FGDs	Focus group discussions
GAD	Gender and Development
GIF	Graphics Interchange Format
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies

ILO	International Labour Organisation
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCAN	National Coalition of American Nuns
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
WAD	Women and Development
WADCO	Ward Development Committee
WHO	World Health organisation
WID	Women in Development
ZIDERA	Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Churches have been recognised as important institutions in leading community development initiatives since they exist within the community (Nogueira & Schmidt, 2022; Magezi, 2017; Foster, 2010; Magezi, 2008). Churches influence people's day to day decisions, weekly patterns, and key life choices (Williams, 2018). However, research has paid negligible attention to churches and only scant attention has been given to religious voluntary groups affiliated to churches (Krystin & Grys, 2018; Magezi, 2017; Mati, 2013; Samuels *et al.*, 2010). Very few African scholars have invested in research on the interaction of religion and development, as well as on other aspects of religion in Africa (Chitando, 2020).

There are varied explanations in academic literature as to why churches are generally ignored in development literature. For some, the differences in doctrines make churches too fragmented to effect any meaningful changes in community development (Mabborang, 2022; Magezi, 2017), while for others, churches utilise religious beliefs that are detrimental to the societies they should be assisting (Samuels *et al.*, 2010). Concerns are that churches and church affiliated organisations lack a holistic perspective which incorporates insight on how to negotiate tensions and navigate partnerships to realise community change (West *et al.*, 2015; Freudenberg & Tsui, 2014; Tomalin, 2014).

However, contemporary research has established that meaningful community development cannot occur without the active participation of women who approximately constitute 60% to 70% of the church population (Gyan, *et al.*, 2022; Walter, 1990). In the same vein, Crabtree (1970) advanced that besides women being the majority of the active church members they are also the sustaining force in almost every church congregation. In Christianity, right from Biblical times, women played several prominent roles recorded in the Old and New Testaments. For example, Deborah was a judge in Israel as recorded in Judges chapter 4 verse 5. Therefore, the contribution of women in churches to community development cannot be ignored. In this study, both men and women were active participants, since men's contributions are vital for women to be fully emancipated (Bayeh, 2016).

1.2 Background to the Study

The global understanding of the concept of development has changed over the years, as have definitions (Trent & Schnurr, 2018). In the past years, development was mostly equated to either increases in economic output, or industrialisation (Mwangi & Sena, 2003). Economic growth ahead of people and the environment was the notion advanced by this growth-centred development. This kind of economic development thinking gave rise to prescribed development theories such as Modernisation and Dependency theories, which were Eurocentric. Modernisation meant that Africa had to follow the developmental footsteps of Europe. Although Dependency theory was regarded as revolutionary alternative to Modernisation because of its emphasis on underdevelopment being a product of economic dynamics exercised by the central capitalist economies that restrict the choices of peripheral countries and hold them back from pursuing autonomous development, Dependency theory remains Eurocentric (Zambakari, 2018).

When Europeans arrived in Africa, they referred to it as the “dark continent” which had to be modernised (Matunhu, 2011). Since Modernisation and Dependency theories were not context specific and contrasted so strongly with African realities, ideas of these theories impoverished Africa. The theories failed to recognise the creativity and initiative of the Africans, hence the economic gap between Western countries and African countries widened (Kutor, 2014; Mehmet, 1998). Thus, although Africa is rich in resources, most people in the continent are railing in abject poverty (Zambakari, 2018; Matunhu, 2011). Matunhu (2011) argued that the African continent is impoverished mainly because of advancing Western prescribed development models, including Modernisation and Dependency theories.

In view of the failure of past development theories which were top-down, recent trends reveal a reorientation towards people-centred development, which is a bottom-up approach (Esteves, 2021; Foster, 2010). Since bottom-up approaches are more sustainable, development concepts like “community development” have emerged, which promote the development of the community by the community itself. Researchers such as Kelly *et al.* (2010), Birdsall and Kelly (2005) and Foster (2010) are mutually agreed that communities should lead in addressing challenges that affect them.

The push for community focus has intensified as evidenced by the shift from a micro scale to a global scale. For instance, the 19th International AIDS Conference, which was convened on

22–27 July 2012 in the United States of America (USA), clearly advocated for community focus (Magezi, 2012). Moreover, a subsequent conference which was also held on 20–25 July 2014 at the 20th International AIDS Conference in Melbourne further emphasised the important role that communities play in community development (Magezi, 2017).

As Rodriguez-Garcia *et al.* (2013) highlights, community responses can be divided into six categories, which include the types of implementing organisations and structures and actors involved in driving the response, among others. Churches are named among the six categories of community response and fall under implementing organisations. Magezi (2008) upholds that churches are very appropriate institutions that direct community development activities, since they are a subsection of the community and are heavily involved in community activities. The Roman Catholic Church, for instance, owns several community organisations which include CARITAS, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD).

Churches in Zimbabwe have also contributed significantly to community development through the provision of access to education from primary level up to tertiary level. Thus, the community is empowered, since education also promotes the upward social mobility of community members (Mujuru, 2016). Primary education encourages creative thinking as pupils learn through discovering and problem solving (Nziramasanga, 1999; World Bank, 2002). The community is empowered through primary education, as children are involved in games and physical activities which encourage teamwork, participation, and respect for each other's beliefs. When community members value one another they tend to promote developmental projects in their community. Through teamwork, primary school leavers may pool their ideas together to try and solve community problems, thereby enhancing community development (Nziramasanga, 1999).

The benefits of primary education are further refined through secondary education. World Bank (2002) observes that secondary school education generates pathways for opportunities and produces more informed citizens than primary school education. Furthermore, graduates contribute to community development through political consciousness, informed decision-making, research skills, and participation in economic activities (Hod & Ben-Zvi, 2018; Abdi, 2006; Folson, 2006; Sweetman, 2001; Mortenson, 1998; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 1997).

Churches in Zimbabwe have also contributed immensely to community development through the construction of schools. For instance, the Roman Catholic church was instrumental in the construction of several schools, which include the Dominican Convent Primary and High Schools in Bulawayo, Dominican Convent High in Harare, Christian Brothers College in Bulawayo, Marist Brothers Secondary School in Dete, Regina Mundi High School in Midlands, Kutama College, Chegutu Primary School, St. Georgie's College, St. John's College, St. Ignatius College, and Monte Cassino Secondary School in Marondera, among others. Schools such as St. James Mission and Peterhouse were constructed by the Anglican Church, whilst Kwenda Mission High School, Sandringham High School, and Waddilove High School were constructed by the Methodist church, and Vumangwe Primary belongs to the Salvation Army. Thus, churches own primary and secondary schools, as well as tertiary institutions. Solusi University, for example, is owned by Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Africa University by Methodist church, Ezekiel Guti University by Ezekiel Guti of the ZAOGA church, and Catholic University in Zimbabwe by the Roman Catholic Church, among others (Kugwa, 2020).

Churches in Zimbabwe have also contributed immensely to community development through the provision of health care services. For most Zimbabweans, church-funded hospitals are increasingly becoming the most affordable healthcare option, with well-trained medical staff and affordable medical drugs as privately owned medical centres are prohibitively expensive. Although government-sponsored hospitals are relatively cheap in comparison to private hospitals, they are not an option for many people because of the severe economic crisis that has crippled the health system. Government hospitals in Zimbabwe have shortages of medical personnel, medicines and medical equipment. Therefore, mission health facilities are more equipped and have cheaper services of higher quality as compared to poorly equipped government healthcare centres (Chingwe, 2020).

The Roman Catholic Church has an established body called the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference's Health Commission, that is responsible for providing healthcare in Zimbabwe. Through this commission, the church owns 25 hospitals across Zimbabwe which include St. Luke's hospital in Lupane, Materdei hospital in Bulawayo, St. Josephs, and St. Mary's, among others (Kugwa, 2020). Churches also provide free home-based care services to the sick members of the community. Therefore, churches play a critical role in community development in the health sector, since addressing the social determinants of health is integral to the core functions of community development (Hilt, 2019).

Besides contributing to education and healthcare, churches are also heavily involved in charity activities which help curb hunger and malnutrition, especially in less developed countries (Zhu *et al.*, 2014). The reduction in government funding for community development initiatives suggests potent roles for charitable giving as a funding source (Harrow & Jung, 2016). Churches also assist community members in case of natural disasters. For example, after the Haiti earthquake in 2010, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America raised \$12.5 million, the United Methodist Committee on Relief raised \$43 million, and Catholic Relief Services raised \$194 million, with \$50 million of that coming from special offerings collected within dioceses (Catholic Relief Services, 2012; Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2011; United Methodist Communications, 2011). Almsgiving is a practice that is commonly practised in most faith institutions, as all major religious traditions hold the values of charity, altruism and compassion as sacred (Eckel & Grossman, 2004; Queen, 1996).

Religious groups have also provided platforms for advocacy on several development and human rights issues. For example, activists across the theological spectrum jointly advocated for debt relief for poor countries in the late 1990s (Kurtz & Goran, 2002). Thus, the contribution of churches to community development is so immense, although it has not been recognised (Mati, 2013). It therefore follows that the contribution of women in churches to community development is also belittled, yet they constitute the majority and are heavily involved in church activities (Magezi, 2017).

This study was therefore crucial since it exposes why women in churches are relegated to the periphery in community development, although women empowerment and gender equality has been the focus point in all development initiatives over the last two decades (Gyan & Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2022). It is therefore apparent that women's advancement and participation in both developed and developing countries is restricted regardless of increased attention given to gender equality in community development (Gyan, 2021).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Churches in Zimbabwe generally have more female than male membership (Mapuranga, 2013). Women in churches heavily participate in community development activities but documented information, or recognition of their efforts in community development, is scarce (Rakocsky, 2004). Gender equality and women's empowerment are concepts that have been embraced by many Southern African countries including Zimbabwe, because of the realisation that for

community development to be sustainable there must be equal participation of men and women (Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), 2017).

At an international level, Zimbabwe is a signatory to many conventions including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (FAO, 2017). At a national level, the government has set up the Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development to promote women participation in developmental projects. However, despite these efforts, women in Zimbabwe continue to face economic, political and social challenges as a result of gender discrimination (FAO, 2017). It is against this background that the researcher sought to understand the contribution of women in churches to community development, with Bulawayo as the case study.

There are also relatively few community development studies on faith-based community groups (Tarpeh & Hustedde, 2021), and the role of Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in community development has been given relatively scant attention by scholars and secular institutions (Clarke & Ware, 2015; Vidal, 2001). As Rakocsky (2004) observes, women are exposed to all forms of abuse and discrimination in churches as they are absent from the power structures of the churches, which are male dominated. Hence, although women constitute the majority (60-70%) of the congregation in each Sunday service, they are hampered from executing their talents for the good of the community by patriarchy, which is embedded in the church system. Oduyoye (2004:90) also maintains that “women are not treated with dignity and honour in church circles”. Thus, their ideas are not incorporated in decision making although they are welcome as members of the church. In most churches, the number of males who assume leadership positions are more than that of females, so that makes it easy for men to dominate the decision-making process.

As Klingorova and Havlicek (2015) noted, some church customs promote the establishment of gender disparities and relegate women to lower functions in the community. Thus, the position of women in the community results from the influence of church doctrines which are in turn influenced by the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon, among other religious texts, and by the culture and the set-up of the church communities (Klingorova & Havlicek, 2015).

It is noteworthy that, there is limited economic growth and poverty alleviation in societies where gender discrimination is high than in societies where men and women are treated equally (World Bank, 2001). Contemporary research has shown that community initiatives were more successful when women freely participate in leadership positions within the community and

where they formed the majority as board members, than in those communities led by men (Gittell *et al.*, 1994a; 1994b). Therefore, meaningful community development cannot occur without the active participation of women since the active participation of women is crucial for any community development initiative to succeed, especially in the developing world (Kasi, 2013).

Organisations such as the World Bank, World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Council of Europe (COE) and (FAO) have acknowledged community development as essential for environmental, local, cultural, political, economic as well as social development (Parry, 2003). The concept of development of the community by the community which advances that community members should come up with solutions to their own community problems has largely gained popularity in the last decade. Churches as institutions that are prominent in communities have, therefore, been acknowledged as appropriate in steering community development activities (Magezi, 2008).

A study by Foster (2010) unveiled that, in Southern Africa, the large portion (63%) of community organisations is from the church. The WHO also estimated that churches contribute 30-70% of medical care in developing countries (World Council of Churches, 2010). In his comparison of the quality of services provided by the government and Faith Based Organisations, Samuel *et al.* (2010) observed that, in most cases, services provided by the church were of better quality than those provided by the government. This is partly because churches possess the ability to build trust and relationships in complex communities where the government is not trusted (Jones & Petersen, 2011). However, although churches have been instrumental in African development, they suffer lack of adequate recognition in social scientific analysis (Mati, 2013). Samuels *et al.* (2010:1) share the same sentiments and observed that “although the position of churches is acknowledged, churches have not been significantly explored and socio-scientifically analysed”.

1.4 Research Objectives

The aim of this study was to understand the contribution of women in churches to community development.

The objectives include the following:

1. To assess the role played by women in churches in community development in Bulawayo.
2. To analyse how structures in churches encourage or hinder the participation of women in community development.
3. To determine the nature of the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe and to appraise how that relationship affects the participation of women in church in community development.
4. To examine whether women in churches participate meaningfully to community development in Bulawayo.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. What is the role played by women in churches in community development in Bulawayo?
2. How do church structures encourage or prevent the participation of women in community development?
3. How is the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe and how does that relationship affect the participation of women in churches in community development?
4. Do women in churches participate meaningfully to community development in Bulawayo?

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was carried out in Bulawayo, the second largest city in Zimbabwe and the largest city in the Matabeleland region. The Bulawayo Metropolitan Province consists of five main districts which are: Reigate, Mzilikazi, Bulawayo Central, Imbizo and Khami. Bulawayo was chosen because of access and experience. Bulawayo was also selected for convenience. Being a church leader in Bulawayo and having worked for a church organisation called Churches in Bulawayo (C.I.B) afforded the researcher the rare opportunity and privilege to mingle with several church leaders from various churches. This thus motivated the researcher to seek

answers to certain topical issues pertaining to women's participation in church-oriented community development initiatives. This study was based on the contribution of women in churches to community development as very few studies in development focus on the activities of women in churches and their contribution in community development.

Although Zimbabwe is home to several religious groups, it is called a Christian nation because Christianity dominates all faiths. It is estimated that 87.4% of the population are Christians, with 74.8% identifying themselves as Protestant (including 37.5% Apostolic, 21.8% Pentecostal and 15.5% other Protestant denominations), 7.3% as Roman Catholic, and 5.3% as another denominations of Christianity (The Cultural Atlas, 2022). As highlighted in CIA World Factbook (2017, cited in The Cultural Atlas, 2022), about 2.1% of Zimbabweans identify with another faith, such as traditional beliefs or Islam, whilst 10.5% do not identify with any faith. The researcher therefore decided to focus this study on Christian churches, since they are the most dominant group in Zimbabwe that share similar values, framework and visibility about development and a common language (Tarpeh & Hustedde, 2021).

Furthermore, the study narrowed its focus on three church groups that use the Bible as their reference for doctrines and beliefs. These groups are Pentecostal, Mainline and African Independent churches. In this study, the contribution of the church to community development also entails contributions by church affiliated organisations or FBO's. One would realise that although these organisations operate as separate entities from the church, they are still connected to the belief system of the church congregations they emanate from, and they are subservient to the church, despite the confusion in defining what the church is. Magezi (2017) provides a clearer explanation that Churches are FBOs, but FBOs are not churches. For example, independent Christian influenced organisations like Tearfund and CARITAS are not churches but para-church groups that are part of the church.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This study is important because it advocates for recognition of the role of women who constitute most of the population in churches. Apt to note is that their role in churches also influences their status in the community and their participation in community development initiatives. The study is critical, considering that it generates new knowledge and presents findings that are important for community development literature. The greater demand for the inclusion of women in development, gender equality and the empowerment of women (Labadi, 2022; Chinonso & Ekene, 2021), justifies the need for more studies about women in churches

since there can never be any community development without the active participation of women (Gyan & MfomM'Carthy, 2021).

Moreover, given that community development has become a buzzword in developmental discourse, and that church institutions have been recognised as significant institutions in leading community development, there is scant attention in literature on the contribution of churches to community development (Magezi, 2017). This study is, therefore, significant in giving a detailed account of the role of churches in community development since churches contribute to community development in various ways which include health, education, and advocacy (Tarpeh & Hustedde, 2021).

Since gender studies reveal that women are largely affected by patriarchy which limits their active participation in community development (Gyan & MfomM'Carthy, 2021), this study is essential in unveiling traces of patriarchy that hinder women's participation within the church system for the benefit of women and the broader community. This research was, therefore, essential in further guiding development specialists in identifying gaps in knowledge concerning the participation of women in churches in community development initiatives.

1.8 Research Limitations

This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated lockdown restrictions to curb the spread of the virus, and this limited the researcher's movements. As a result, face-to-face interactions with participants were limited, which deprived the researcher an opportunity to observe non-verbal communication cues of participants. The non-verbal communication is essential as change in someone's face or body language can signal a lot of different emotions. The researcher was, however, able to capture some of the emotions through social media platforms, such as WhatsApp since verbal and non-verbal communication has increasingly taken place in the digital environment through emojis, memes, Graphics Interchange Format (GIFs) et cetera.

1.9 Clarification of Key Terms

Church- refers to a local assembly or congregation, denomination, and universal church. The church is responsible for preaching the Gospel and for demonstrating and making known God's will and the care for humankind (Magezi, 2017).

Community development- Community development can be defined as development of the community by the community. It is a process by which people from the government as well as people at community level work together to contribute to improved socio-economic and cultural conditions of the community (Christenson & Robinson, 1989:11).

Gender- The concept of gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. As highlighted by Udry (1994), roles and responsibilities of both men and women are created in different spheres, at family level, in society and through culture. The expectations held by both men and women concerning characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviours are shaped by the concept of gender.

Gender and Development (GAD)- The GAD approach is not just focused on biological inequalities among sexes but on how social roles, reproductive roles and economic roles are linked to gender inequalities of masculinity and femineity. The GAD approach is focused on addressing unequal gender relations which hinders equal development and leads to exclusion of women from fully participating in community development initiatives. GAD, therefore, seeks to have both women and men participate in decision making and sharing of benefits. The main objective of this approach is therefore, to meet the practical needs as well as to promote strategic interests (UNESCO, 2014: 9).

Faith-Based Organisation (FBO)- FBOs are directly or indirectly religiously tied organisations. This means that their activities are centred on principles of faith. Their inspiration and guidance are derived from faith teachings and the related schools of thought are within the confines of faith (Clarke & Jennings, 2008).

Patriarchy- Patriarchy is a system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. It is a combination of social, economic, political as well as religious regulations that enforce women's domination by men throughout the ages. (Jones, 2000).

1.10 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters.

Chapter One introduces the thesis and present the definitions of the research concepts and the background to the research problem was outlined.

Chapter Two presents the review of literature on women, churches and community development and the GAD theoretical framework that guides this research.

Chapter Three focuses on the research methodology which was a qualitative case study research design. The chapter covered the profile of the study area, research philosophy, research approach, methodology, research strategy, time horizon, as well as data collection and analysis.

Chapter Four presents the research findings on the role of women in churches in community development.

Chapter Five discusses the research findings on factors limiting the full participation of women in churches in community development.

Chapter Six sums up the study and discussed how the study contributes to new knowledge, and recommendations for further research were made.

1.11 Chapter Summary

This first chapter has introduced the topic of Women, Churches and Community development and established the need for understanding the contribution of women in church to community development. The background to the study has detailed the emergence of the concept of community development and highlighted that top-down development concepts were not producing positive results in people's lives hence bottom-up approaches were recommended. The Statement of the Problem indicated that the contribution of church women in community development has not been significantly researched, yet women constitute the majority in church membership and churches themselves have been given scant attention in development literature. The research objectives of the study together with its significance, research questions, scope and research limitations were stated, and clarification of key terms and the outline of the thesis provided.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature on the contribution of women in churches to community development, as well as related challenges. The chapter also discusses principles of community development, which include participation and empowerment in relation to women in community development. The role played by communities in community development, the role of the church in community development, and the contribution of women to community development in the Zimbabwean context were also discussed, as well as the theoretical framework guiding this study called the GAD theory.

The participation of women in community development is a dominant feature that plays a pivotal role in determining the success or failure of development initiatives. Prior to Ester Boserup's work (*Woman's Role in Economic Development*) in the 1970's, the contribution of women in development literature was largely overlooked. However, her book provided an extensive and pioneering effort, giving a general overview about the role of women in the development process (Ntini & Sewpaul, 2017; Beneria & Sen, 1981). Since then, this concept has been given much attention in academic circles.

The participation of women in community development is an issue of concern that dates to the first Women's forum in Mexico which was organised by the UN in 1975 (Bird *et al.*, 2015), and currently this phenomenon is being scrutinised globally (Peterson & Powers, 2019; Whitehead, 2003). Whereas the participation of women in development has become a buzz word, there is however, little progress achieved by women in community development across the world. Compelling evidence has revealed that the participation of women in community development is hampered by serious impediments at the institutional level globally (Gyan *et al.*, 2022; Hart, 2013).

Women are still subjects of extensive gender discrimination at both local and international scales. Nevertheless, there were international conventions or treaties and conferences as far back as the 1970s, aimed at incorporating women in development, which were attended and signed by several countries with the aim of addressing the very same challenges that are of concern to date. These include, inter-alia, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) signed in 1979, the UNs' four world conferences signed in Mexico in 1995, and the UN's Millennium Declaration that was signed in 2000 by 189 global leaders. This was followed by the UN's Conference on Sustainable Development which was convened in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 to develop Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) intended to sustain the momentum propelled by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to fit into a global development framework beyond 2015 (Bird *et al.*, 2015).

Due to these developments which were triggered by Ester Boserup's work, the MDGs had a specific goal number three which was meant to promote gender equality and empower women. Moreover, among the 17 SDGs, gender is mentioned directly and indirectly in several developmental goals. A classic example is goal number 5 (Gender Equality) and goal number 10 (Reduced Inequalities) (Bird *et al.*, 2015).

The shift towards integrating women into development has also engendered the formation of theoretical approaches with the same agenda of incorporating women into development. The theories include, inter-alia, Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD), and the recent and popular Gender and Development (GAD) (Haddad, 2016). In view of these initiatives intended to enforce gender mainstreaming in society, one wonders why a vast number of gender inequalities still exist and barely little has been achieved. Given the sanguinity of development interventions in the 1970s that a focus on funding women programmes would inevitably advance their lives, it is pertinent to ask why so little has been achieved (Magezi, 2017).

However, there is still a significant difference in the number of women who attain senior management roles as compared to men worldwide, although the number of qualified women for management positions are on the rise. Women are appointed to menial jobs or are given low pay for the same work performed by men (Doran *et al.*, 2019; Williams *et al.*, 2012). Brown *et al.* (2013) further observes that women in Africa are deprived of freedom and power for decision making, hence they lack control over essential matters that govern their own lives. It is worth noting, however, that not all women are subjected to the same conditions because of differences in background, class, and race. For example, black and minority women are rendered invisible in official strategies to combat gender inequality and racial discrimination, and they are rendered vulnerable to further discrimination (Doran *et al.*, 2019).

It is important to recognise that there are certain women who have links to influential men within communities and that gives them power over others to make decisions. Such women

can abuse such powers and use them to oppress other women or harness opportunities which are far removed from ordinary women. Whilst such women are successful, it is important to stress that their success is solemnly due to their association with powerful men. This implies that women are still dominated by men and are less empowered to make independent decisions because of social structures (Nyong & Archibong, 2018). This concurs with Afolabi's (2010) observation that the subordination of women knows no boundary or barrier and it is not dependent on social, educational, or economic status of women.

Certain levels in society are out of reach for most women, since they are restrained from reaching the top by the glass ceiling. Bertrand (2018:7) defines the glass ceiling as "the pervasive phenomenon of women going only so far and no further in their occupations and professions." This concept is founded on the assumption that women possess the stamina and capacity for occupying powerful and prestigious positions, but they are limited by invisible forces that hinder them from rising to the top even in community-based organisations (Whitehead, 2003). The World Bank explains the glass ceiling as "the artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organisational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing upwards in their organisation into management level positions" (World Bank, 2000:4).

Women are also taken advantage of by policy makers. Regardless of their immeasurable contribution, policy makers view women as a source of free labour for development initiatives and their socio-economic input is not regarded (Whitehead, 2003). Women are continuously being marginalised and abused in projects that are community based despite the vital roles they occupy in their communities. The roles of women are not only complementary to those played by men but are in fact significant. However, the drawback is that, regardless of the critical position they occupy, women are barely mentioned or given any kind of recognition by their domineering male counterparts (Nyong & Archibong, 2018).

Moreover, women experience discrimination similarly in spiritual organisations such as churches. Previous research has established that in the past, churches were largely ignored in community development literature, but the current trend indicates that they have attracted significant attention. This is also influenced by feminist organisations that advocate for the close monitoring of the church system, which is perceived as a system that promotes doctrines that oppress women (Alina, 2020; Tadros, 2010).

Churches are therefore critical institutions that promote community development initiatives since they exist in and exert influence over the community. However, churches were criticised

in previous studies, mainly because of their haphazard implementation of development projects. These projects are primarily charity based and have no accountability. Consequently, most development actors largely find it extremely difficult to embrace churches, as they apparently lack defined strategies in executing development initiatives (Magezi, 2017). As a result, they do not consider churches as institutions that could be instrumental in fighting poverty in their communities (Dotsey & Kumi, 2020).

Recently, churches have attracted significant funding for community development projects, and this is a cause of concern for most feminist organisations, as they argue that women are still subjected to discrimination within churches. They perceive that such funding would further entrench women to patriarchal oppression and is detrimental to women's efforts in community development. The evidence reviewed here seems to suggest that much work still needs to be done, because women are still subjected to discrimination after several decades of promoting their emancipation and participation in development (Gyan *et al.*, 2022; Tadros, 2010). However, there is evidence that the full participation of women in community development has tremendous potentiality, if women are allowed to be involved in all stages of community development without discrimination.

2.2 Understanding community development

The failure of past theories, such as Modernisation and Dependency, was an apparent indication to development practitioners that development was not going to occur by merely focusing on theories and macro-strategies (Davids *et al.*, 2005). Over the past decade, most research in development has emphasised that sustainable development needs to be people-oriented or people-centred. Therefore, instead of the macro-theories of Modernisation and Dependency, the micro-approach which was more human-centred and community-oriented was adopted in the late 1980s (Theron & Barnard, 1997).

According to Davids *et al.* (2005:18), “people increasingly became the focus of development to such an extent that people-centred development became a buzz word in the 1990s and the early twenty-first century”. In the same vein, several development scholars argue that this resulted in the birth of micro-development concepts which include, inter-alia, community development, people-centred development, participatory development, and capacity building (Theron & Barnard, 1997; Coetzee, 1989).

Community development is a combination of two concepts “community and development”. “While there is usually some agreement that a community is based around commonality derived from place, shared identity or common interest, the concrete parameters of community have tended to remain vague” (Biddle & Thomas, 1966:22). In the past, community was defined by place but with the advent of new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), defining a community by place is now problematic (Chung, 2022). Platforms like Twitter, Facebook and personal Blogs which facilitate quick dissemination of information to a wider audience have become a norm, as much of community activism is currently taking place on the internet (Lopes, 2014).

Internet technologies have turned the world into a global village and, as a result, it is no longer adequate to define community by place. ICTs are currently part and parcel of humanity and have recently proven to be relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic, where COVID-19 induced restrictions made it impossible for members of the community to meet physically. When COVID-19 was at its peak, virtual meetings became the order of the day, and this amplified the need for further investing in technology in case of a similar occurrence in the future (Lopes, 2014).

As much as defining community is a challenge, defining development is similarly problematic. Studies have shown that development for some is associated with growth, whilst for others it is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing modernity, economic growth, industrialisation, urbanisation, and grassroots movements (Jalil, 2022; McGranahan *et al.*, 2002). According to the comprehensive review of Melkote and Steeves (2001:332), development is “a concept that has to include the physical, mental, social, cultural and spiritual growth of individuals in an atmosphere free from coercion or dependency”.

In line with the definition of Melkote and Steeves (2001), it is interesting to observe that spiritual growth is included as part of development. This definition is especially relevant to this study since the degree of development in a particular community is linked to the level of spiritual maturity of the members in the church. At the highest level of spiritual growth, the focus of the church members is to please God and to please God one must obey his commandments. Most people in Africa are spiritual since they believe in something or someone supernatural. In Zimbabwe some people believe in the power of ancestors, called *Amadlozi* in Ndebele and some people believe in God exclusively. These people are usually influenced by what God or *Amadlozi* say or instruct. Their belief system affects how they view development

or participate in development activities (Rakotoarison *et. al* 2021). Religious organisations mostly participate in community development initiatives, because of their beliefs and religious books that encourage them to do so. Christians who, for example, follow the Bible are influenced by Mark 12:31 which says, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” They initiate programmes that assist others as a way of honouring God and his word.

Although Melkote and Steeves (2001) mentioned spiritual growth in passing, it is important that spiritual matters are brought to the fore as they affect community development processes. A spiritually mature individual is more likely to participate in community development activities to please their God. Spiritual growth is also a result of direct input of the church and is necessary for community development. The contention that FBOs offer a more holistic framing of development by tackling both spiritual and material dimensions has certainly been appealing for many men and women. As stated by Wresinski, spirituality, should be at the centre of the fight against extreme poverty and social exclusion (Wodon, 2018). However, the danger lies when the spiritual, the material and the political dimensions are combined to restrict or limit choices, as opposed to enhancing them.

Defining either community or development is a highly contested terrain, the same as attaining a common understanding of what constitutes community development. Defining community development has been elusive because of its complex practices (Carlon, 2021; Carlon, 2016). According to Bridger and Lulloff (2003), community development can be referred to as efforts to improve the economic or structural conditions of a community. There is a lot of controversy and skepticism around the use of this term, because it has been abused for personal gain. As Schutte and DPhil (2005) highlighted, community development is misused by people in politics to swindle votes and to access international financial aid. Magezi (2017) nevertheless concluded that community development is something that can be achieved as proven by certain studies although it is contested. Henderson (2008) argues that for community development to be effective, the key is having committed local members who are ready to take action to solve existing problems.

2.3 History of community development

It is difficult to trace the true origins of community development. The concept of community development has recently gained prominence in development literature, although the practice is not something new but is as old as the communities. The practice long existed before it was coined as community development (Chile & Simpson, 2004). Indeed, it is impossible to

imagine a time when there was no community development activity taking place. It is likely that it was not defined as community development, yet it pre-existed the name. De Beer and Swanepoel (2000) trace community development to the 1930s at a time of social welfare and community improvement in the USA and United Kingdom (UK). At that time, social welfare programmes in the USA targeted urban areas and were poverty-relief oriented, whilst community development advanced the welfare of rural communities.

Monaheng (2000:126), however, traces the formation of community development to the establishment of India's community development programme, after its independence in 1947. This event also stirred community development efforts in Asian and third world countries. According to Korten (1980:481), community development was brought to prominence in the post-colonial era by Ford Foundation's funded project in India's Ettawah district in 1949. The main aim of the Ettawah project was to increase productivity in local industry and in agriculture, but it also responded to local needs like health, education, and sanitation (De Beer & Swanepoel, 2000).

However, a comprehensive idea of community development became popular in the 1950s and 1960s guided by the UN and its affiliated organizations, including UNESCO, International Labour Organisation (ILO), FAO, WHO, and UNICEF, which were in support of the process of reconstructing the economy, mainly in developing countries where there was a critical need to uplift living standards of the poor (Chile, 2002; Campfens, 1997). By the 1960s, community development programmes had spread to over 60 countries and in more than half of those countries, community development programmes represented national development efforts. As from 1968, community development attracted significant recognition from development practitioners, governments and education professionals who generated influential reports and provided funding for combating poverty (Henderson, 2008). Since then, with the help of international and local agencies, community development is focused on alleviating poverty. The more recent origin of community development is attributed by some American authors to the practice of Agriculture extension, instituted in the 1870s in some mid-western states of the USA (De Beer & Swanepoel, 2000).

According to Chile (2002), in Africa and other western European countries, community development evolved over thousands of years. The early practice of community development emphasised the means or methods to bring about change. Method is consequently one of the themes constantly present in the earlier writings on community development. The method

usually entailed the use of a change agent such as a Community Development Worker (CDW), who had the aim of stimulating participation of the community in development projects. Most often such projects were decided on and planned by outsiders, be it government or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), who decided the needs of the community. Put differently, it was an attempt to co-opt in a friendly way, poor people to participate in projects decided on, planned, and managed by outside agencies (Chile & Simpson, 2004).

In Zimbabwe, the community development concept dates to the colonial period, years before Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980. The mode of implementation was mainly top-down in nature with no meaningful contribution from community members, because of British colonisers who were quite domineering. The approach that was employed by the colonial government was based on coercion. In most instances, the regime followed policies of paternalism and indirect force in urban areas. The needs of the people were defined and catered for through experts. This approach meant that the authorities decided, planned, and organised services in response to the people's needs (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1985).

When Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980, community development was mainly focused on improving rural areas and such development was engineered through village, wards and district committees, including the Village Development Committees (VIDCOs) and Ward Development Committees (WADCOS). These committees were mainly created to encourage grassroots participation of community members in rural areas by the Zimbabwean government (Makumbe, 1996; Higgins & Mazula, 1993). To date, many international, regional, and local developmental organisations have been actively involved in community development initiatives in their bid to improve the livelihood of urban and rural communities in Zimbabwe.

2.4 The role played by communities in community development

As De Beer and Swanepoel (2000) highlights, development theory does not provide much information on organised communities that take part in community development efforts and succeed, although in the last ten years, the role played by communities in leading community initiatives has attracted significant attention. The problem of HIV which affected communities has also provided an important link through which the role of the communities has been comprehended (Magezi, 2017).

Contemporary research has concluded that communities play an important role in responding to community needs, although the research was impressionistic and localised (Birdsall & Kelly, 2005; Kelly et al., 2010; Foster, 2010, cited in Magezi, 2017). There is now a shift in focus to

global scale as evidenced by the Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Community Dialogue, which was held by the Joint United Nations AIDS Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) (2014) Eastern and Southern Africa, that focused on the sustenance of community responses beyond 2015. The conference was a follow-up on resolutions which were discussed in the July conference, which was held in Melbourne (Magezi, 2017). According to Simms (2013), the 2011 UNAIDS Strategic Investment Framework that demands for increased community participation is a clear indication that the role of communities in leading community response is attracting serious recognition. Several researchers, nevertheless, observed that financial resources for executing community development projects are a challenge in many communities (World Council of Churches, 2010). Therefore, to improve the economic, social, and cultural conditions of the community, there is need for combined efforts of people at grassroots level, as well as people from the government (Sharma, 2002).

Ghana's experience is a clear example of combined efforts of people from the government, civil society and the private sector. The government engaged the civil society and exposed the need of constructing water systems in the community. The government, civil society and the private sector worked together. The community was tasked with planning, operating, and monitoring of the water systems (Mackay & Gariba, 2000) a result, the community development initiative was a success.

If one examines the role and importance of community in the social, economic, spiritual, and political life of human beings, it is far clearer that various functions that are performed by the community have a bearing on the extent of the well-being experienced by its members. Communities provide a sense of belongingness to their people through identification and symbolic artefacts. Human beings associate and form relationships with each other based on shared identity of place, class, race, ethnicity, cultural heritage, and various other mechanisms that help form these identities. This sense of belongingness connects people with each other and builds relationships based on mutuality, trust and cooperation that are referred to as social capital, which is essential for community development (Mackay & Gariba, 2000).

Although there is no certainty that people would develop trust and cooperation, a sense of belongingness opens possibilities of establishing connections, networks and generating solidarity. This formation of social capital can be both inclusive and exclusive of marginalised and disadvantaged communities. The current environment of uncertainty and exponential growth in materialism has given rise to inequalities and unjust distribution of resources for

most people living in the 21st century. Moreover, the current trend in most of the developed and developing economies is towards shifting responsibility for welfare services onto the community (Ife, 2013).

Therefore, the community must take more responsibility in providing support, care, financial resources, technical know-how and maintenance services to its members with minimum resources provided by the state. The changes in the functions of the community call for alternative ways of working with communities to support them in new functional responsibilities (Ife, 2013). As argued by Ife (2013), community-based solutions are needed to address contemporary social issues such as poverty, hunger, illness, crime, and violence. Thus, developing community-based structures can serve as an alternative to large-scale bureaucratic structures and governance that might be distanced from the community it plans to serve.

2.5 The role of the church in community development

De Beer and Swanepoel (2000) notes that although there have been numerous attempts to involve the church in community development, attempts to actively involve the church in sustainable development have been limited. In Zimbabwe churches play a huge role in promoting community development, although their doctrines are diverse. As highlighted by Chitando (2020), various church groups, including Mainline, African Independent and Pentecostal churches, have immensely contributed to community development.

The church offers many advantages over circular non-church institutions because religion is central to values and beliefs that drive society. Moreover, churches tie people together even when there is a lot of resistance (Njogu, 2013). Christians through the church are mandated to convey fairness and integrity in the world as a way of showcasing God's just kingdom, with far-reaching implications on how the church functions in the world (Nkansah-Obrempong, 2018). There are community development initiatives that emanate from interactions between local religious organisations. Furthermore, people in church congregations can detect and address each other's economic and spiritual problems (Marshall & Van, 2007). Christian religion is, therefore, crucial in uplifting the standards of living for poor people (Belshaw *et al.*, 2000).

Although churches are generally united when it comes to dealing with community issues, there are instances where churches are clearly divided, and this in turn affects community development. This is especially true in Zimbabwe where churches are usually fragmented

because of differences in doctrine. It is nearly impossible to see Orthodox churches working together with Pentecostal churches for the good of their communities, because they look at each other with skepticism. Thus, religion has the potential to ruin the same society that it intends to serve. The Boko Haram faction in Nigeria is a good example of such a scenario of religious extremism.

Furthermore, religious texts are used in some church circles to perpetrate gender-based violence and subordination of women, which is why some humanitarian organisations do not value the role of FBOs (Samuels *et al.*, 2010; Mati, 2013). Some churches prejudice the identity of women in society with a heresy that God created them as second-class citizens, and once women are brainwashed with such false religious teachings, they lose self-esteem. Thus, the role of religion in society is extremely debated, even in the media and in academic circles (Njogu, 2013). Evangelism and the social responsibility of Christians is something that is always questioned (Nkansah-Obrempong, 2018). Therefore, the church's role in community development is a puzzle that is difficult to solve.

However, as Wijisen (2011) observes, most community development initiatives have failed because religious beliefs are not taken into consideration, since religion greatly affects how people respond to situations. It is the researcher's conviction that the failure of community development initiatives is a result of taking little consideration of the activities of the church. In Zimbabwe, every community has a church, and the churches form the majority of local community institutions. Their contribution spiritually and physically to the welfare of people in society is so great that they deserve adequate recognition.

As United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2004) observes, engaging church leaders and church related organisations may be an essential way that assists in addressing various forms of gender discrimination, especially on those issues that are culturally sensitive, including reproductive health and sexuality. The partnerships with FBOs across the world have catalysed the processes of social change to address such issues as HIV/AIDS and reproductive health rights. This has led to positive results at the community and national levels. The community has general understanding that the church's role is not solely to preach and spread evangelism, but also to be included in progressive development (Alawode, 2016).

It is important to also note that development initiatives in education, farming and health in most African countries were moulded by the theology of missionaries (Belshaw *et al.*, 2000). Thus, development in most African countries was centred on church principles which have shaped

and promoted the present-day world (De Temple, 2012). Therefore, since Zimbabwe is predominantly a Christian nation, it is indeed necessary to understand how churches implement community development initiatives.

2.6 Principles of community development

There are various principles of community development, but this study shall concentrate on two major principles, participation and empowerment which directly affect women. It is important to understand how women in churches participate in community development and determine whether they are sufficiently empowered to participate effectively.

2.6.1 Participation

This study sought to understand whether women in churches participate meaningfully to community development projects. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the meaning of participation because participation is one of the key elements of community development. There are two types of participation, which are active and passive participation (Chikerema, 2013). Lack of active participation by community members hampers the success of any community development initiative. As community development theory and practice has evolved over the past 70 years from the top-down approach to the radical bottom-up approach, participation has increasingly become a prominent key factor. Citizen participation was an obligation in the 1940s, but it has evolved into the primary right of citizenship today (Veltmeyer & Delgado, 2018). According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 27, everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts, and share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

As Roodt (2001) highlights, people's possession of power to influence decisions that affect their lives is a sign of genuine participation in community development. Participation is not about mere inclusion but should address the actual process of inclusion and the role people play once included (Narayan, 2009). According to Gilchrist (2004), participation is the active involvement of people at grassroots level in the choice, execution and evaluation of programmes designed to improve their livelihoods. This indicates that participation should be continuous throughout the programme or project.

Participation empowers the community to provide solutions to their problems through self-help projects (Sharma, 2002) It also enhances grassroots democracy, ensures equal distribution, access and optimal use of local resources for effective community development. Ekins *et al.*

(2002), however, argues that to attain real participation is a challenge when the development agency fails to balance participation with donor and community demands. Donors usually prescribe the trajectory of the participation process before funding is released and the implementers are left with no room for improvement or creativity but to meet the demands of the donor. On the other hand, Flint (2013) maintains that development staff has relied significantly on participatory approaches to allow community members to be actively involved in sustainable development processes. However, it is unfortunate that there is little evidence to support the idea that participation provides any benefits to the deprived or most vulnerable groups (Cleaver, 2001).

2.6.1.1 Participation of women in community development

As highlighted above, for community development to make significant progress, it is imperative that all members of the community (women, men, and children) participate in the decision-making process. The participation of women in community development has been of central concern to development commentators (Gyan, *et al.*, 2022; Karpowitz *et al.*, 2012; Botes & van Rensburg, 2000; Braden & Mayo, 1999; Miller, 1995; Bazlul, 1994; Korten, 1980). It is daunting to learn that most women are still excluded from participating in community decision-making despite extensive efforts to include women in development processes (Karpowitz *et al.*, 2012).

As Baba *et al.* (2015) lament, women do not participate in policy formulation and decision-making processes. Many people have often assumed that the presence of women at community gatherings alongside men means that women and their issues are being addressed. This assumption completely ignores the dynamics of gender relations. Gender inequalities, oppressive social hierarchies, and discrimination are often overlooked (Guijt & Shah, 1998), resulting in women and their specific (and differentiated) concerns becoming far excluded (Narayanawamy, 2016; Cornwall, 2007d).

Cultural rules prohibit women's presence in certain gatherings, or active participation in some contexts which include certain kinds of formal meetings or rituals. Women have been conditioned by socio-cultural structures that prohibit them from expressing themselves openly in public, especially in the presence of their husbands, even when they have good ideas (Koo, 2019). Most women were deprived of education by their own parents, just because they were females. There remains this cultural belief that a male child is likely to support the parents in

the future than a girl child who would marry and support her in-laws' family. Thus, educating boys was seen as an investment although this perception is changing as evidenced by the increase of female enrolment in schools (Narayanaswamy, 2016).

In the past women found themselves being refused to participate in remunerative employment because of lack of education. Some ended up engaging in prostitution as a means of survival and others remained in abusive relationships or marriages because they did not have strategies for income generation (Guijt & Shah, 1998). In most communities, there are few women who have attained higher education. Some dropped out of school before acquiring basic education which could improve their socio-economic status. As an attempt to survive especially in rural areas, women have often engaged in community development projects (Guijt & Shah, 1998).

Community development literature is replete with barriers to women participation and the potential that women possess. Women are found in governance, agriculture, academia, commerce and industry, military, health and even science and technology. Despite the proven integrity of women in various human endeavours, they have remained largely marginalised and discriminated against. The fate women have suffered whether in the rural or city communities is an age-long story which is widespread especially in developing nations of Africa and Asia and in most religious states of the world (Offor, 2000).

Women and children are treated with disrespect. This situation has led to poor participation of women in community development. Women are struggling to be recognised and to be equal with their male counterparts (Haider & Loureiro, 2021). Nevertheless, the vital roles women play in their various communities are significant and not only complementary to those played by their male counterparts. However, there are deliberate efforts geared towards defining the participation of women in community development throughout the world. Attention has been drawn to the strategic place of women, as well as an enabling environment that is based on equality, development, and peace as challenges of the present century, with the next requiring equal and full participation of the entire community (Gyan *et al.*, 2022; Fubara, 1995).

2.6.1.2 Gender Mainstreaming and the participation of women in community development in Zimbabwe

Across the key sectors in the country, women still lag behind although they constitute 52% of the population. The implementation and translation of gains for women has remained the greatest challenge for Zimbabwe, despite the treaties and progressive laws in support of gender

equality (UNICEF, 2022). Zimbabwe has, however, made some strides towards the integration of women especially in politics. After the 2013 general elections, for example, the representation of women in parliament increased from 17% in 2008 to 35% which was quite significant (Wamoto, 2016). Under a special electoral quota system, the country has been ranked among the 30 countries globally that are striving towards increased representation of women in parliament to a minimum of 30%, considered as the least for collective action (Zanhi, 2016).

According to section 17 of the 2013 constitution, women must fully participate in all spheres of the Zimbabwean society and gender balance should be established. The referendum in support for gender equality was approved in March and signed in May 2013 (Wamoto, 2016). As a result, there are 60 slots preserved for women through an arrangement of Proportional Representation in parliament, taking into consideration the casted votes for political competitors in the National Assembly (Hannah, 2004). With the promulgation of the new constitution in 2013, gender equality proved to be an issue of great importance as it happened during the time when Zimbabwe was ranked poorly (116 out of 148 countries) on the Gender Index. The issue of gender balance was a national objective with emphasis on attaining 50/50 positions between men and women in institutions and agencies of government (Legal Resource Foundation, 2014).

Although the new constitution was widely endorsed and elevated as a sign of victory for women, it failed to address the plight of Zimbabwean women as women continued taking back seats in the development sector. This proves that gender equality in Zimbabwe is still largely a mirage. There are no equal job opportunities between men and women as women still suffer from gender discrimination. Opportunities for education are also limited and women are not able to participate fully in decision-making processes, and their participation in politics is still hampered (Zanhi, 2016).

Although women in Zimbabwe have seized the opportunities and benefits of education and participation in the labour force in the recent past, they still face challenges in getting full access to such opportunities. Women are confronted with numerous gender related challenges in the political, economic, and social sectors which inhibit them from attaining their full potential. On the social side, women suffer from abuse and violence than men, which in turn affects their health and well-being. As women are less likely than men to obtain paid employment, they

tend to be engaged in unpaid care-work and work more hours than men in non-economic activities (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZimStat), 2019).

The Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development was established to integrate women into community development with the mandate to formulate and implement policies, strategies and programmes that promote women's participation in national development, ensure women empowerment, promote gender equality and equity, and enhance the development of communities through poverty reduction programmes. However, these efforts have yielded little gains, as women are facing challenges at economic, political, and social levels as a result of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination engendered their inefficiency in community development projects, as men continue to dominate the decision-making processes (FAO, 2017).

2.6.1.3 The participation of women in churches in community development

Although churches have different doctrines, there is a trace of unequal relationships between men and women within the church. The patriarchal religious teachings and practices are a major factor that contributes to women's unequal treatment. As a result, development donors are facing criticism that they hurried to engage religious leaders and FBOs without a full understanding of the complexes and sensitivities involved (Pearson & Tomalin, 2008).

There are mixed feelings among development practitioners concerning the participation of women in community development. While others believe that religion is detrimental to the efforts of women others are of the opinion that churches give women a platform to express themselves and to be more productive in their communities. As Tadros (2010) observes, in religious congregations, women are provided with an opportunity to build connections with other believers who have the capacity to offer goods and services, or information sharing. Such connections are also necessary for obtaining knowledge of the potential channels for acquiring assistance in the wider community. It is true that women build relationships in church and if natured well, these can contribute significantly to community development because the church platform allows women to meet consistently, almost on a weekly basis.

Another argument in favour of the positive role of FBOs in women's lives is based on the idea that faith-based interventions are not only concerned with material development but also with spiritual dimensions of well-being (Richardson *et al.*, 2022). It is argued that FBOs have a more

holistic view of development since “their theories about change do not only concern outward, social but also inner and personal transformation” (Tyndale, 2006:172).

In many instances, arguments on combining spirituality with development have also tended to emphasise the “indigenoussness” of the spiritual and development path pursued. For example, according to Otzoy (2003), in Awakatan, Guatamala, women organised and established the Association of Community Women of Awakatan (ADEMCA) to promote agricultural development in a context where women and men have suffered from decades of armed conflict and poverty. While the women active in the association belong to the Christian as well as Mayan faiths, they see their work as both developmental and spiritual, with no division between the two. How they approach their work is permeated by indigenous forms of engaging with spirituality (Otzoy, 2003).

The assumption about FBOs is that they have a special connection with excluded and the most marginalised people in society and the myth surrounding all FBOs is that they represent people’s values, priorities, needs and agendas because of their grassroots connections. The common religious affiliation with people makes several FBOs have extensive outreach potential. Nevertheless, this is not synonymous with pursuing grassroots agenda or with being grassroots. While some FBOs maybe organic and stem from the grassroots, others are not and impose their own ideologies and values instead of responding to local agendas. Through their top-down structures, some transnational FBOs have also exported their own doctrines, especially on issues to do with gender hierarchies and roles (Ghodsee, 2007). The above contentions were essential in presenting the possibilities of FBOs acting as channels for improving women’s lives.

Furthermore, while churches present certain advantages towards women, they have been accused of ambiguity. On the one hand, they may challenge unequal gender relations, and on the other, they may be seen reinforcing it. In Malawi, for example, while the Protestant FBOs, Muslim and Catholics were challenging the widow cleansing practice, they reinforced women’s vulnerability to AIDS by opposing the government’s campaign which promoted the use of condoms (Rankin *et al.*, 2008). Women’s involvement in religion is something that is generally debated, especially their involvement in churches as leaders, volunteers, and members. Although women are active in third sector organisations, they do not occupy leading positions (Ishkanian & Lewis, 2007). Most churches legitimise male leadership on religious

grounds, and interrogating male patriarchal leadership is tantamount to questioning the sacredness of religious doctrine.

Women join FBOs for multiple reasons. Some find the experience spiritually fulfilling, while for others, working for an FBO is a way of living one's obligation and religious commitment (Mahmoud, 2005). As Drogus (1994:11) highlights, a woman "may gain greater power and stature in the home and in the religious community primarily by redrawing expectations from spouses in the domestic sphere". Hence, women seek to convert male partners to their faith and, through this, emphasise different gender practices that require men to alter their behaviour. Men are expected to change their consumption and spending on alcohol, as well as expenditure outside the household (for example, on extramarital relations). As Drogus (1994) further explains, improved gender relations in the household are a notable outcome of women's involvement, especially in Pentecostal movements.

However, research has shown that the prospects of developing an ideology of transformative power relations beyond the domestic sphere are limited. Hence, Drogus (1994) was too speculative in assuming that if a man joins Pentecostalism everything changes automatically, and they stop drinking. He did not consider that for many people salvation is a process and some who have joined are still struggling with drinking or extra-marital affairs. However, if a man is fully converted, not only in Pentecostal churches but across religions, a woman can truly benefit.

Therefore, in the analysis of women's agency and power, what becomes critical are the terms and conditions of their participation in FBOs, and not only whether women are exposed to prospects for assuming leadership positions. In some cases, women take leading positions in FBOs, but within strictly defined parameters of appropriate gender roles and with minimal opportunities for negotiating the terms of their participation. In many FBOs, women volunteers must prove their full compliance with the organisation's ideology and adherence to its gender-based ideas before they are allowed to become members or get assistance. In churches where women have no alternative sources of assistance and are desperate, they become vulnerable to the organisation's ability to lay down conditions for its assistance (Berger, 2003).

Some churches can go to the extent of offering services to vulnerable female populations without being directly solicited. For instance, an investigation that was conducted in 2002 by a journalist in Bosnia revealed that 10,000 war widows with orphans under their care, received letters from Saudi charities. The widows received letters which were offering pensions on

conditions that they send their children to religious schools that were founded by Saudi charities, and they wear headscarves. Out of desperation, many of the widows accepted the offer as these charities targeted the vulnerable group of rural women, with few job prospects and little education (Prothero, 2002, cited in Ghodsee, 2007).

In the light of the above discussion, there are different dynamics that affect the participation of women in community development in religious organisations. While in some contexts it may be fruitful to engage religious leaders in promoting gender participation in community development, in others it is rather misguided considering the power politics behind the FBOs' terms and conditions of their participation.

2.6.2 Some of the factors that hinder the meaningful participation of women in churches in community development

2.6.2.1 Menstruation

After attaining puberty, a woman every month experiences a natural physiological phenomenon until menopause called menstruation. The menstrual fluid is comprised of blood and endometrial tissue of uterus together with an unfertilised egg. This cyclical process is controlled by hormones produced in the ovaries and brain of the female that prepare the reproductive organs for pregnancy. If pregnancy does not happen, the lining breaks down and is discharged from the body as menstrual flow through the vagina. Menstruation appears to be harmful if one fails to understand the underlying biological basis. What makes it a myth is that every 28 days of the month, a woman undergoes recurrent bleeding, without any apparent wound or injury (Kaunda, 2015).

The menstrual cycle appears supernatural, as it mirrors that of the moon. Beliefs and attitudes regarding menstruation can restrict menstruating girls and women and place a limitation on their ability to fully participate in employment, education, and community life (Mohamed *et al.*, 2018). What is further confusing is that the menstruation experience is exclusive to females, disappears during pregnancy, and ceases at middle age (Kaunda, 2015). Thus, menstruation is sometimes associated with shame, danger, and dirt. Religious, domestic, and sexual taboos are established because of the belief that menstrual blood is dangerous, especially to men.

In Arapesh, a primitive society in New Guinea for example, when a girl starts menstruating, she is isolated from the community. They stay in a cage, cave or in a dark hut or any enclosed

place symbolising a womb. In South America, 40 primitive societies also believe that menstruating women are harmful to men and must be kept at a distance (Mohamed *et al.*, 2018). Taboo restrictions also become elaborate which increases fear. This may be caused by the fact that few empirical studies describe comprehensively the psychological, social and physiological aspects of menstruation (Mohamed *et al.*, 2018).

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, including some Christian denominations, women are advised not receive Holy Communion, or to be involved in prayers and fasting during their menstrual period. This ancient practice is strictly observed by women in those churches, especially the conservative or traditionalist female members (Cohen & Shinwell, 2020). As Cohen and Shinwell (2020:7) rightly observes, “menstrual practices create gendered roles and expectations and channel women’s sexuality for specific reproductive purposes”. Girls and women of ages between ten and 50 (the menstruating age) in India were also denied entrance to the Sabarimala Temple in Kerala during menstruation, lest they distract the deity who is believed to be a celibate bachelor. As a result, the #happytobleed social media campaign arose and attracted international attention against the 2015 Sabarimala Temple board statement (British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 2015). Hence, the supreme court ruled that it was illegal to prevent any woman from entering Sabarimala. Although this ruling was welcomed by many, there was an uproar that has created differences over gender, caste, history, and party politics (Nair, 2019).

This is a sign that menstruation needs special consideration although it is rendered as a cultural taboo to talk about in society. There is need to engage in community dialogue without considering menstruation as a shameful and sexual issue. The community needs to ask questions, share experiences, and discuss this issue of menstruation openly because menstruation and women need attention (Shah & Madiha, 2017).

The above discussion is proof that women in churches are sometimes exposed to gender discrimination, which hinders them from fully participating in all church activities. Women are restricted from assuming leadership positions which require full attendance of all church gatherings. The failure to attend all church services because of restrictions imposed on menstruating women then justifies the appointment of men to positions of influence within the church and this makes them ultimate decision makers. There is an uproar that the discrimination against women because of menstruation is a violation of their human rights (Mohamed *et al.*, 2018).

There are certain churches in Zimbabwe which still enforce such practices against women, although they are a clear violation of women's rights. The government of Zimbabwe also avoids being confrontational when it comes to addressing issues that are church related. It may be that the government considers churches as sacred and is afraid of fighting the will of God in the process. However, some churches perpetrate gender discrimination using religious texts, for instance Leviticus 15:19 which states that, "if a woman has a discharge of her blood many days, not at the period of her menstrual impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond that period, all the days of her impure discharge she shall continue as though in her menstrual impurity, she is unclean. Any bed on which she lies all the days of her discharge shall be to her like her bed at menstruation and everything on which she sits shall be unclean, like her uncleanness at that time. Likewise, whoever touches them shall be unclean and shall wash his clothes and bathe in water and be unclean until evening".

Churches that place restrictions on menstruating women use this verse to keep women from participating in church activities and in community development projects. Although it is stated in this verse that women are unclean during the time of menstruation, it is not specified that women should not engage in any church activities which include preaching during this time. Menstruation in this case is merely used as justification for excluding women from positions of influence in the church, and this needs to be dealt with if women are to contribute significantly to community development.

2.6.2.2 Harmful patriarchal traditional and cultural gender-based practices in the church

Patriarchy is something that has been a mode of life and is deemed ahistorical, eternal, and endorsed by God (Wood, 2019). Patriarchy is considered as the main problem that hinders the participation of women in community development. The roots of patriarchy run so deep in society and are difficult to change because they survive on principles of male dominance and control. To better understand patriarchy, Johnson's "The Gender Knot" is helpful. He uses the metaphor of a tree to explain how patriarchy is embedded in society (Gyan & Mfoafo-M'Carthy, 2022).

The core of patriarchy is represented by the roots of the tree, and this is where centrism, control and male dominance are located (Johnson, 2014). The roots of a tree symbolise the deep-rooted male domination and control that is hard to disentangle, or extremely complex to remove.

Hence, the social institutions that support and shape patriarchy are represented by the trunk. FBOs are among the institutions that have an impact on how women are valued or perceived (Wood, 2019). The way in which individuals interact with patriarchy is illustrated through branches.

As Johnson (2014) highlights, patriarchy influences all spheres of people's lives which includes legal structures, families, and communities. This applies to the church and to how women respond to patriarchy in the church. "With the tree metaphor, Johnson illustrates that it is not simple to break the link between patriarchy and the individual, and in order to refute patriarchy, one has to start with the roots; thus, society has to look into and question patriarchy, its underpinnings and the knowledge that shapes it" (Wood, 2019:2).

Patriarchy as an ideology maintains and upholds the view that males are superior, and they have superior control over women and all dependants under their care. The patriarchal ideology was created and enabled to thrive by social structures, educational institutions, the media, religion, and culture. Patriarchy is indeed something which is evil and oppressive; it needs to be challenged and contested for women to be emancipated as it also promotes male supremacy even in spiritual organisations such as churches (Wood, 2019).

As stated by Landman (2009), religion is controlled by patriarchy in church leadership, marriage, desire, and family. Landman further opines that patriarchy strengthens the idea that a biblically based marriage should have a subordinate female, subject to a dominant man (Landman, 2009). It is evident that patriarchy is a major obstacle preventing women from being equal to men in faith communities and it needs to be disbanded for the lives of women in churches to progress.

Churches today, whether Catholic or Protestant, are still grappling with striking a balance between women and men's equality in spiritual and social matters. The church leaders support structures of cultural patriarchy directly and indirectly and this is the reason why women are still facing challenges of inequality, subordination, and violence (Karant-Nunn & Wiesner-Hanks, 2003). When Makhene presented at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Faith Communities hearing, she expressed that all religions are patriarchal, and that patriarchy was reinforced by missionaries and since then women were left voiceless and powerless. She further stated that God is male, and because of that, scriptures in the Bible uphold male dominance and spiritual activities of the church, which include worship and prayer that all promote male dominance. She advances that men are the ruling sex in churches although women dominate in

terms of numbers or church leadership. In her opinion, “Not only are women excluded from visibility in the liturgy and hymns of the church, but also from the Christian language, where people are referred to as ‘sons of God’, ‘brothers’, ‘Lord’, ‘Master’, ‘King’ and ‘Father’(Makhene, 1997:5). Makhene believes that the domination of women by man is exacerbated by this kind of male language and imagery.

While the researcher concurs with Makhene’s view that patriarchy exists in religion, Makhene’s view that all religions are patriarchal is not entirely true considering that churches are not a homogeneous group, since they are governed by their own individual doctrines (Karant-Nunn & Wiesner-Hanks, 2003). Some churches maybe patriarchal but some are not, and some are promoting women emancipation through scripture (Pierce & Groothuis, 2004). Moreover, her idea that God is male is not based on scripture as the Bible makes it clear that God is spirit in John 4:24 which says, “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” Thus, spirits are sexless (Spencer, 2010).

Furthermore, Moses in Deut. 4:15–20 explains that God is Spirit and has no form. He says “Since you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. And when you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven”.

This passage reveals that God does not have the form of any human, animal, or inanimate thing on earth. Therefore, one cannot say that God is male because according to God’s own self-revelation, He has no physical gender which is either male or female. The challenge in churches that are still patriarchal is that scripture is manipulated and used to silence, humiliate, and marginalise women (Karant-Nunn & Wiesner-Hanks, 2003). To prevent women’s marginalisation and victimisation, the church has a pivotal role to play. The leaders in churches are faced with the responsibility of redefining gender roles that affect justice and equality for women. The church is faced with a huge burden of dealing with injustices against women that have remained over the years in churches, and through teaching, to also correct ignorance that

has prevailed concerning the equality of women and their full potential within the church and in the society (Karant-Nunn & Wiesner-Hanks, 2003).

Some churches have attempted to condemn patriarchal oppression pointing out that it results in dehumanisation of women. However, such churches face stiff opposition from other churches which are still gripped by patriarchy. More needs to be done so that women are emancipated in all spheres of life. Churches should provide safe spaces for both men and women; hence, they must educate the members of the church and the broader society on the negative effects of patriarchy to the development of both the church and the community (Robinson, 2012).

Change must begin in the house of the Lord for lasting solutions because many people participate in church activities and are committed to church doctrine. The unfair treatment of women is a crime not only against women but against society at large. Regardless of the existence of gender inequality in some churches today, the researcher agrees with Pierce and Groothuis (2004), who opine that women and men were created equally as revealed in Genesis 1:27. They have equally fallen into sin according to Romans 3:23 and they are equally redeemable through Christ's life, death and resurrection as stated in Joh 3:16. Therefore, they should be accorded equal opportunities to participate in the new covenant as highlighted in Galatians 3:28 as they are equal heirs of God in Christ as stated 1 Pet 3:7. As stated in Acts 2:17, by the Holy Spirit, both genders, whether male or female are equally responsible for executing 'ministry duties' as empowered human beings (Robinson, 2012).

2.6.3 Dismantling patriarchy in religion through feminism

It is important to understand the relationship between feminism and religion as this study employs GAD, which is a theory that emanated from feminism. As hard as it is to fathom, religion and feminism have also a long history of encounters and intersections (Giorgi, 2020). Feminist movements largely included religious women as far back as in the 19th century, and so did Black feminism in the 1970s/1980s (Braidotti, 2008). Throughout the history of feminist movements, religious based feminist movement always emerged in various countries (Giorgi, 2016; Rochefort, 2007; Woodhead, 2001).

Most feminists, however, argue that religion acts as a conservative force in maintaining the status quo. For feminists, that status quo is a patriarchal society (Taragin- Zella, 2014; Scott, 2009; Williams & Vashi, 2007b; Predelli, 2004; Bartkowski & Read, 2003; Shirazi, 2001; Read

& Bartkowski, 2000). Secular feminists are very sceptic of religious feminists. They point out several factors that are inconsistent with feminism from a religious perspective. From a secular feminist standpoint, the three Abrahamic religions (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam) have patriarchal and misogynistic scriptures and practices. According to Elizabeth Cady Stanton cited in Chong (2014:5), “history shows that the moral degradation of woman is due more to theological superstitions than to all other influences”. Secular feminists wonder how religion, with such well documented negative impacts on women (Nishat, 2017; Christ, 2016; Chong, 2014; Mikołajczak & Pietrzak, 2014; Radford, 1993; McDonough, 1977; Daly, 1973), can have religious women who claim to be both religious and feminist. They wonder how religious women can navigate through the scripture they put so much faith into, while simultaneously holding on to their feminist beliefs. With the prominent prophets of the Abrahamic religions being mostly men, how do women find ways of connecting with the prophets? It is apparent that some feminists strongly reject religion of all kinds as oppressive to women, while others celebrate faith as part of human diversity. Others try to forge a middle ground (Martina, 2013).

The researcher opines that there should be a clear demarcation between secular feminism and religious feminism as their belief systems will always collide because unlike secular feminists, religious feminists do not reject the Bible’s authority or truthfulness in Christianity, but rather give new interpretations of the Bible to support their claims (Piper & Grudem, 2012). The Bible teaches that husbands and wives are heirs together of the grace of life and that they are bound together in a relationship of mutual submission and responsibility (1 Cor. 7:3–5; Eph. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:1–7; Gen. 21:12). The husband’s function as “head” is to be understood as self-giving love and service within this relationship of mutual submission (Eph. 5:21–33; Col. 3:19; 1 Pet. 3:7). Different social roles attributed to the representatives of different genders in the Bible do not mean male supremacy over women (Grudem & Piper, 2012).

Feminist experiences and theorisations that include religion are quite marginal. Feminisms show extreme difficulty in including religious women and in articulating the role of religion and religious inequalities within feminist equality discourse (Amiriaux, 2013; Bracke & Fadil, 2012; Rosenberger & Sauer, 2012; Bilge, 2010). Most secular feminists believe that spiritual women are brainwashed (Amiriaux, 2013) and secular feminist studies usually claim that “women who participate in patriarchal religious traditions are acting against their own objective interests, and are therefore simply the passive and brainwashed victims, dupes, or doormats of men and their patriarchal institutions” (Burke, 2012:8).

Not all feminists agree, however, that religion is essentially patriarchal, arguing that many early religions featured prominent goddesses and other female figures. Instead, they argue that patriarchal societies have changed religions to ensure they reflected and reinforced patriarchal values. This is a more convincing perspective especially among Christian groups who use the Bible as their reference. Women such as Deborah in Judges were clearly successful leaders. For example, according to Judges 4:5, “She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided.” Deborah was apparently leading both males and females to prove that leadership was not only the space occupied by male figures.

Candidly speaking, traces of patriarchy within religious institutions persist but this study suggests that demystifying religious feminism through biblical teachings grounded on religious principles can be viable in reaching out to religious women. Admittedly, out of personal observation and experience, traces of patriarchy are visible within religious circles. The researcher, as a Pastor and a Pastor’s wife, regularly preach at the church’s online platform. One sometimes observes nasty comments from men who practice fellowship in denominations where women are not allowed to preach. They express how inappropriate it is for a woman to preach to men. They highlight that according to Paul; a woman must sit down and be quiet (1Corinthians 14:34). This verse is usually interpreted out of context to oppress women within the church system (Noble, 2018).

Although African scholars like Chimamanda Adichie (2009) have contributed immensely to feminism, she openly admits that she is an agnostic respecter of religion. In her address to God, Adichie (2009) wondered: “But have you ever wondered why? Why did He have to murder his own son so we would be saved? Why didn’t He just go ahead and save us?” This shows that she doubts the very foundation of Christianity, although she claims to be nominally religious. If religious feminism is to penetrate committed Christian women groups in Christian countries such as Zimbabwe, feminists who believe and value the foundation of Christian and biblical principles. For example, the National Coalition of American Nuns (NCAN) would be ideal in advancing it to avoid extremist views and utter rejection of feminism in religious circles (Istratii, 2017).

Religious feminists should be afforded space and opportunity to contribute to mainstream development. This implies that non-secular religious epistemologies may need to be given a more central position in gender and development theorisation (Bradley, 2011), as a way of

improving the relevance and effectiveness of gender sensitisation and programming in these non-western/non-secular contexts (Istratii, 2017). African and western religious feminists who understand and value spiritual concepts would be ideal to counter Global North feminists who are mostly secular and often opposing religion (Giorgi, 2020).

2.6.4 The need for decolonial feminism

In many African societies, colonial legacies and patriarchal culture assign superior roles to men and inferior roles to women (Jaiyeola & Isaac, 2020). The power structures created and embedded in processes of colonisation remain long after former colonies have attained independence. In scholarship, the power structures are called coloniality (Mpofu & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019). Decoloniality is then defined as the practical efforts employed in challenging the power structures and promoting alternatives. The difference between coloniality and colonialism is that coloniality refers to ideological structures by which colonial relations were created and justified (López-Calvo, 2016). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015) defines it more explicitly by stating that “coloniality is, therefore, an invisible power structure, an epochal condition, and epistemological design, which lies at the centre of the present Euro-North American-centric modern world” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015:488).

Decoloniality is also distinct from decolonisation. While decolonisation alludes to the process of being independent from former colonies, decoloniality is concerned with challenging and annihilating the ideological frameworks that defend and maintain colonial power relations (Maldonado-Torres, 2016). Coloniality and decoloniality are attached to western civilisation and western modernity. Whenever modernity is mentioned, coloniality is part of it (Tarusarira, 2020). Coloniality is a term used to define the darker side of modernity that requires to be debunked through decoloniality because it enforces domination, control and exploitation hidden in the so-called modernisation, salvation, progress, and being good for everyone (Mignolo, 2011).

The Colonial constructions of Africa have served to render African people as bizarre and barbaric (Boonzaier, 2017; Tamale, 2011; Mama, 1995). The violence that is bolstered by using single lens to understand gender inequality is also meant to demonise and ‘other’ African people (Shefer, 2018; Shefer, 2016). The neo-colonial forms of denomination are legitimised through Western hegemony, where gender inequality is measured through Western standards. Many stories that are told in feminism about men and women are also rooted in Western

hegemony (Brenner, 2003), as feminism was born in the West out of women's experiences of gender inequality (Chiweshe, 2018).

Adichie (2009) always challenges the feminist discourse about Black men. She is critical of understanding reality from one perspective. She highlights the dangers of a singular narrative, which is defined as the blanket term for extensive and diverse body of work that generally examines women's inferior position in male-dominated societies, and endeavours to challenge power inequalities (Sheer, 2004:11). In 'The danger of a single story', Adichie (2009) highlights how Africa has been constructed as a unitary "place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals and incomprehensible people fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves, and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner".

The theories are disguised as knowledge, research and science being depicted as objective and neutral absolute truths (Dlamini *et al.*, 2018). Nevertheless, these theories are deep-rooted in broader dynamics of power, and they consistently generate power disparities, in intentional and unintentional ways (De Fina, 2008). Although African intellectuals are challenging such theories, their contributions to decolonisation of knowledge are often ignored (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021).

The anecdote of white middle-class women continues to dominate in the Western-centric universalist feminism framework (Decker & Baderoon, 2018; Mekgwe, 2008; Carby, 2007). The subject of feminist scholarship in Africa has predominantly been women who are disenfranchised and marginalised (Kiguwa, 2004). Feminism in Africa has sought to challenge the oppression of African women by highlighting that the experiences of women in Africa are not the same as those in Western contexts (Frenkel, 2008). The dominant focus of feminism in Africa has been on the relationship between men and women mediated through culture and religion (Atanga, 2010; Lugones, 2008) and less on the numerous structural inequalities that African women face (Kiguwa, 2004). In so doing, feminism in Africa has inadvertently maintained a colonial lens (Shefer, 2018; Tamale, 2011).

Global North feminism has also been incorporated as part of the patriarchal structures to advance racism and imperialism (Brenner, 2003). Black women from the Global South, for example, are treated as passive victims of a variety of social problems and are considered inactive participants in the transformation of their communities (Dogra, 2012). Such constructions are utilised to only reinforce paternalistic, moralistic, and racist reasoning regarding African people, thereby proliferating a coloniality of power by which the West is

depicted as inherently more egalitarian than everywhere in the world (Kessi & Boonzaier, 2018).

The narrative that depicts African women as downtrodden does not account for various ways by which African women express themselves and resist patriarchal structures (Meth, 2016). A decolonial feminist approach that seriously considers the historical conditions and political climate, as well as the economic systems within the African context is recommended, that is, an African-centred feminism. Those that are promoting African-centred feminism have awareness that the myriad forms of oppression do not only affect women but men also. Therefore, African-centred feminism realises that the fight against patriarchy, capitalism, and white supremacy, as well as other forms of oppression, is not a fight against men but against systems that reproduce inequalities in which all genders are engrained.

2.6.5 Empowerment of women

Empowerment is defined by Nayaran (2002:84) as the “expansion of freedom of choice and actions to shape one’s life”. This means that empowered people can influence the allocation and access to resources. For women to actively participate in community development activities, they need to be empowered to do so, since participation and empowerment are intertwined. Therefore, an empowering approach to participation involves voluntary contribution in planning projects, including participating in decision making, in monitoring and evaluation of development projects, in implementation of projects, and in sharing of benefits (Trommlerová *et al.*, 2015). Empowerment is a concept that is fundamental in community development as it enables the community to find answers to their own problems (Trommlerová *et al.*, 2015; Stevens & Botha, 2003).

The World Bank (2001:25) refers to empowerment as “the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.” Connected with the empowerment approach are some underlying aspects which are critical, and these include gender, ethnicity, educational background, and status. Women in Peru for example, participate in local activities with confidence through this approach (Kabeer, 1999, cited in Trommlerová *et al.*, 2015). Through the empowerment approach, members of the community and outsiders are enabled to communicate effectively and professionally (World Bank, 2001).

The empowerment approach involves people participating because it is their right to do so. Empowered people not only make informed decisions on matters that affect them, but also release their potential and energy, and through this create their own version of community development. Empowered communities can build their social capital. Hartini (2004) refers to social capital as social cohesion, common identification with the forms of governance, cultural expression and social behaviour that makes society more cohesive and more than a sum of individuals. The poor people (majority being women) are usually voiceless and powerless in relation to the institutions, markets, and the state. Therefore, the purpose of empowerment is to increase the power of disadvantaged people (Dahal, 2013; Krantz 2001). For women to positively influence their wellbeing as individuals and as a collective, it is necessary that formal and informal barriers that hinder them from acting are removed (Islam, 2014; Nayaran 2002).

According to the empowerment approach, the state, as a male dominated institution, is not able to defend women's concerns. Therefore, the empowerment approach underlines the necessity of women to increase their socio-economic, political, and cultural power so that they can challenge the existing structures by themselves. The main instruments of the empowerment approach are awareness raising and political mobilisation. The empowerment approach points to the existing structures in our societies as sources of women's subordination and puts strong emphasis on the necessity of challenging them in all areas and at all levels (Rissel, 1994).

Throughout its long history, women's gender subordination has become deeply and firmly embedded within the existing structures. The structures of inequity start within the family, and reach all levels of socio-economic, political, and cultural structures of our societies. The empowerment approach views the issue of women's gender subordination within this complex economic, cultural, and socio-political context. The solutions proposed through this approach also need to be accordingly sophisticated if the status and material conditions of women is to change, since the causes of unequal gender relations and women's inferior status are deeply rooted in the psychology of the self, religion, political institutions, history, social attitudes and in laws and legal systems (Schuler & Kadirgamar-Rajasingham, 1992, cited in Batliwala, 2007).

Not only is women's subordination rooted in existing structures, but also in the minds of both men and women. The structures of inequity in their minds result in false consciousness which makes men and women internalise that women's inferior position is normal and natural. Gender-based subordination is deeply ingrained in the consciousness of both men and women

and is usually viewed as a natural corollary of the biological differences between them. It is reinforced through religious beliefs, cultural practices, and educational systems (both traditional and modern) that assign women lesser status and power (Maunganidze, 2020).

From a feminist perspective, the empowerment approach “involves the radical alternation of the processes and structures which reproduce women’s subordinate position as a gender” (Young, 1993:158). Maunganidze (2020:11) is of the notion that, “equality for women is impossible within the existing economic, political and cultural processes that reserve resources, power and control for small groups of people”. Increasing women’s power is, thus, a necessary condition for challenging the structures of oppression (Maunganidze, 2020). This gives insight as to why men are sometimes threatened by women’s empowerment because of the fear of losing their patriarchal control (Rowlands, 1997).

The three empowerment processes, as distinguished by Rowlands (1998), are personal empowerment, collective empowerment, and empowerment in close relationships. This distinction is a necessary and helpful one in thinking further about processes of empowerment and how to approach conceptualisation which might serve a practical purpose in organisational and planning terms. For an individual woman, the process of empowerment is a unique and personal experience (Rowlands, 1998). This dimension of empowerment involves developing individual confidence and a sense of self to undo the effects of oppression that were internalised (Rowlands, 1995). Furthermore, personal empowerment requires a sense of agency through which a woman can cause things to happen through interacting with her surroundings (Rowlands, 1997). Self-esteem, self-confidence, and dignity are some of the core elements for personal empowerment (Rowlands, 1998; Rowlands, 1997).

The second dimension of empowerment is collective empowerment which refers to women’s collective experiences created during the empowerment process. To achieve extensive results women collectively work together instead of working as individuals (Rowlands, 1995). The core elements for collective empowerment include sense of collective agency, self-organisation and management, group identity, and group dignity (Rowlands, 1997).

The experiences of women within their immediate family, for instance with their husbands and children, parents, parents-in-laws, and so on, is the third dimension of empowerment. This dimension is concerned with developing the capacity to influence and negotiate the nature of the relationship and decisions made within it (Rowlands, 1995). Achieving this type of empowerment is a challenge for most women, as they are forced to fight as individuals

(Rowlands, 1998). For this reason, empowerment in close relationships demands a certain degree of personal empowerment and could be seen as an area of change arising from personal empowerment processes (Rowlands, 1998).

The core elements for empowerment in close relationships include “ability to negotiate, ability to communicate, ability to get support, self-organisation and management, ability to defend self or rights and sense of self in the relationship and dignity” (Rowlands, 1997; Rowlands, 1998). It is important to note that the three empowerment processes are interdependent. Positive changes in one dimension can encourage changes in other dimensions as the three dimensions are closely linked. Personal empowerment is a necessary condition for attaining collective empowerment as it is impossible for an individual to be active collectively without first being empowered at a personal level. Moreover, women also need to be empowered collectively to defend their individual achievements (Young, 1993; Rowlands, 1997).

Young (1993) further emphasised the connection between individual and collective empowerment by stating that this process includes both individual change and collective action. She criticises the empowerment approach of mainstream development literature which concentrates on the individual dimension of empowerment, while undermining its collective aspects. As Young (1993) warns, the individual empowerment cannot simply be equated to individual advancement. Women’s individual empowerment should not incorrectly be conceptualised as the self-empowerment of an individual woman in isolation from others.

Genuine empowerment cannot be engineered from outside as it arises out of the internal dynamics of a group. Instead, women can develop, freely analyse, and voice their concerns without any imposition from above. External bodies only act as enablers that assist women to overcome barriers and constraints in the process of being empowered (Baden & Oxaal, 1997:4). Empowerment therefore is not something that can be given but must be self-generated (Kabeer, 1995).

Although empowerment appears to be beneficial, its implementation processes appear to be controversial. Although this approach looks flawless in theory, in practice those who are elevated in society, such as managers, can manipulate the process (Argyris, 1998, cited in Nilsen, 2008). This approach also lacks specific indicators for success. There is lack of sufficient theoretical framework for providing definite criteria to be measured (Rissel, 1994). Measuring the process of empowerment is as difficult as defining and conceptualising it. As Kabeer (1995) opines, “not everyone accepts that empowerment can be clearly defined, let

alone measured". Kabeer (1995), nevertheless, recommends concepts such as gender, social norms, and knowledge, as indicators for empowerment to assess the results. Therefore, this study adopted Kabeer's recommended indicators to determine whether women in churches were empowered to effectively engage in community development.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

Gender is a development issue and vice versa (Momsen, 2010). There are several theoretical frameworks which focus on women and development, which include, inter-alia, WID, WAD and GAD. WID in the late 1970s was criticised for giving attention to women in isolation. Women's inability to access resources led to their subordination as suggested by WID. This approach was largely condemned, because it did not focus on gender relations which impede women's access to begin with. As WID did not address social relations problems between men and women, the GAD approach was formulated because it concentrated on a development process that changes gender relations. This was aimed at giving women an opportunity to participate with men on an equal footing in decisions that affect their future (Haddad, 2016). GAD sought to bring together all lessons learnt from, and the limitations of, the WID and WAD approaches.

This study is, therefore, guided by the GAD theory as it is the recent and widely used approach in studies dealing with issues pertaining to women in development. The OECD's Development Assistance Committee also acknowledges the GAD approach as best practice. GAD evaluates the impact of development on both women and men, and it seeks to ensure that both women and men participate in and benefit equally from development. Therefore, this approach was considered appropriate for this study because it does not focus on women in isolation but focuses on social relations between men and women that are detrimental to women's efforts in development (Haddad, 2016).

GAD is also aimed at reforming institutions so that equal rights and opportunities by both parties are realised. The GAD theoretical framework highlights that without change in social relations of gender, wholesome development of all society is not possible. Hence, the church is a very critical institution in the community which needs reformation as it influences how men and women participate in community development through doctrine. Thus, the GAD theoretical framework made it possible for social structures in churches to be examined, and structures that hinder the participation of women in community activities to be exposed. It was

necessary to examine the power structures in churches because although women participate extensively in church activities, they are hindered from fully expressing themselves by the power dynamics which operate within the church (Rakoczy, 2004) and the GAD approach was necessary for exposing such power dynamics which limit women's participation in church and in the community.

The GAD approach was also useful in unearthing traces of patriarchy within the church, which limit women in community development. The GAD approach recognises that patriarchy knows no class as it affects all women. It is important to note that women are of different classes within the church, including those that are gainfully employed and those that are not, the married and single women et cetera, but they all suffer from the effects of patriarchy as highlighted in GAD (Haddad, 2016).

GAD also questions the basis for assigning specific roles to different sexes. This aspect of GAD was necessary for examining the roles that are assigned to women and men in churches and to understand why they are assigned to those roles. Women from conservative churches are not allowed to teach, nor to usurp authority from a man, but to be in silence in church according to 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34. Women in certain churches are not allowed to become pastors. However, there are some churches that are now embracing women and assigning them to significant positions within the church. Women are also stepping out to start their own big ministries. Bishop Lilian Bwanya is an example of a powerful female pastor in one of the biggest churches in Bulawayo. This proves that women have potential to excel if they are given space to express themselves (Momsen, 2010).

Empowerment of women is central to the GAD approach, since it unveils whether women in churches are empowered enough to actively participate in community development. Also, GAD does not exclusively emphasise female solidarity but welcomes the contributions of men. The study was composed of both male and female participants to understand how men and women comprehend the participation of women in community development and how men support women in carrying out community activities. Male involvement is now a priority in gender and development praxis. Men's and boys' roles towards gender equality are now a subject that has attracted great attention. The inclusion of men comes from the realisation that men are both part of the problem and part of the solution. Gender injustice would only cease when men join with women to put an end to it (Haddad, 2016).

GAD also emphasises that it is the government's duty to provide social services to community members. The community work which is usually a burden to women is the responsibility of the government, but due to constrained government funds, communities would assist the government for the benefit of their community. Zimbabwe has been battling with economic hardships for over two decades and, therefore, community engagement is extremely crucial. It is women who are mostly faced with the burden of providing free services that should have been provided for by the government. The government should, therefore, become proactive in promoting women's participation in community development. The GAD framework thus helped the researcher to find out what the Bulawayo City Council, as a body of local government, has done to promote the activities of church women in the community and to understand the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe.

2.8 Chapter Summary

Chapter two interrogated the literature on church women in community development. The chapter detailed the history of community development, the role played by communities in community development and the role of the church in community development. The two major principles of community development, which are participation and empowerment were also discussed. The full participation of women is a crucial issue in community development hence the participation of church women in community development was discussed. The factors that hinder the full participation of women in community development such as patriarchy and menstruation were considered essential hence discussed. The need for dismantling patriarchy in religion through feminism was explored and especially through decolonial feminism. The chapter concluded by providing the theoretical basis of this study. The theoretical framework that guided this research called GAD was therefore, discussed.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

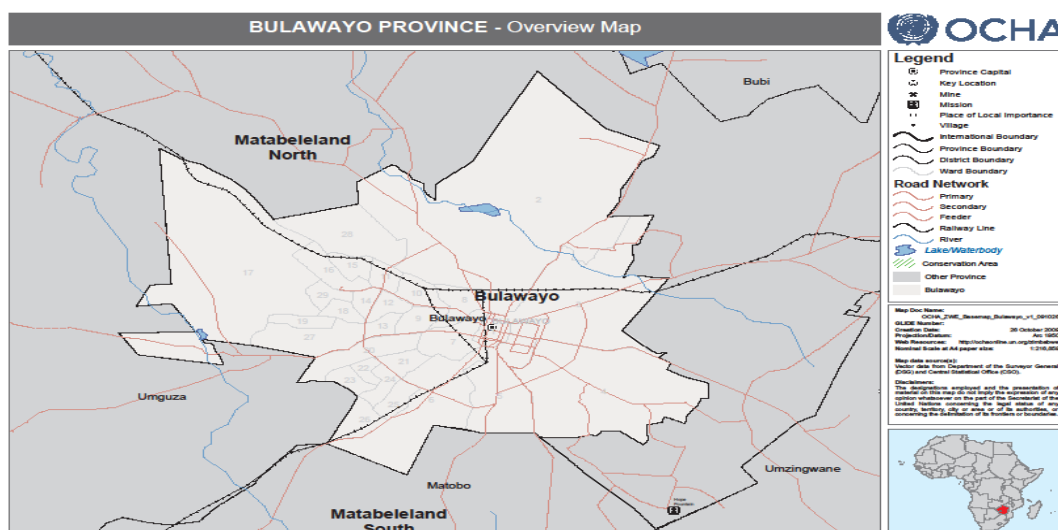
3.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights the research methodology for this qualitative study. A case study research design was adopted to explore the intersection of community development, women, and churches. The chapter, therefore, describes the methodology that was used to carry out the research to provide answers to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. It covers the profile of the study area, research philosophy, research approach, methodology, research strategy, time horizon, and research population. The sample size and sampling techniques, as well as data collection and analysis are also discussed. Issues to do with validity and reliability of research instruments, methods of data analysis and ethical issues are also considered an important component of this study and are therefore discussed.

3.2 Profile of the Study Area

Bulawayo is the largest city in Matabeleland region, and it is the second largest city in Zimbabwe. Bulawayo and Harare are the two cities in Zimbabwe that are also provinces. Figure 3.1 is a map showing an overview map of Bulawayo.

Figure 3.1 - An overview map of Bulawayo

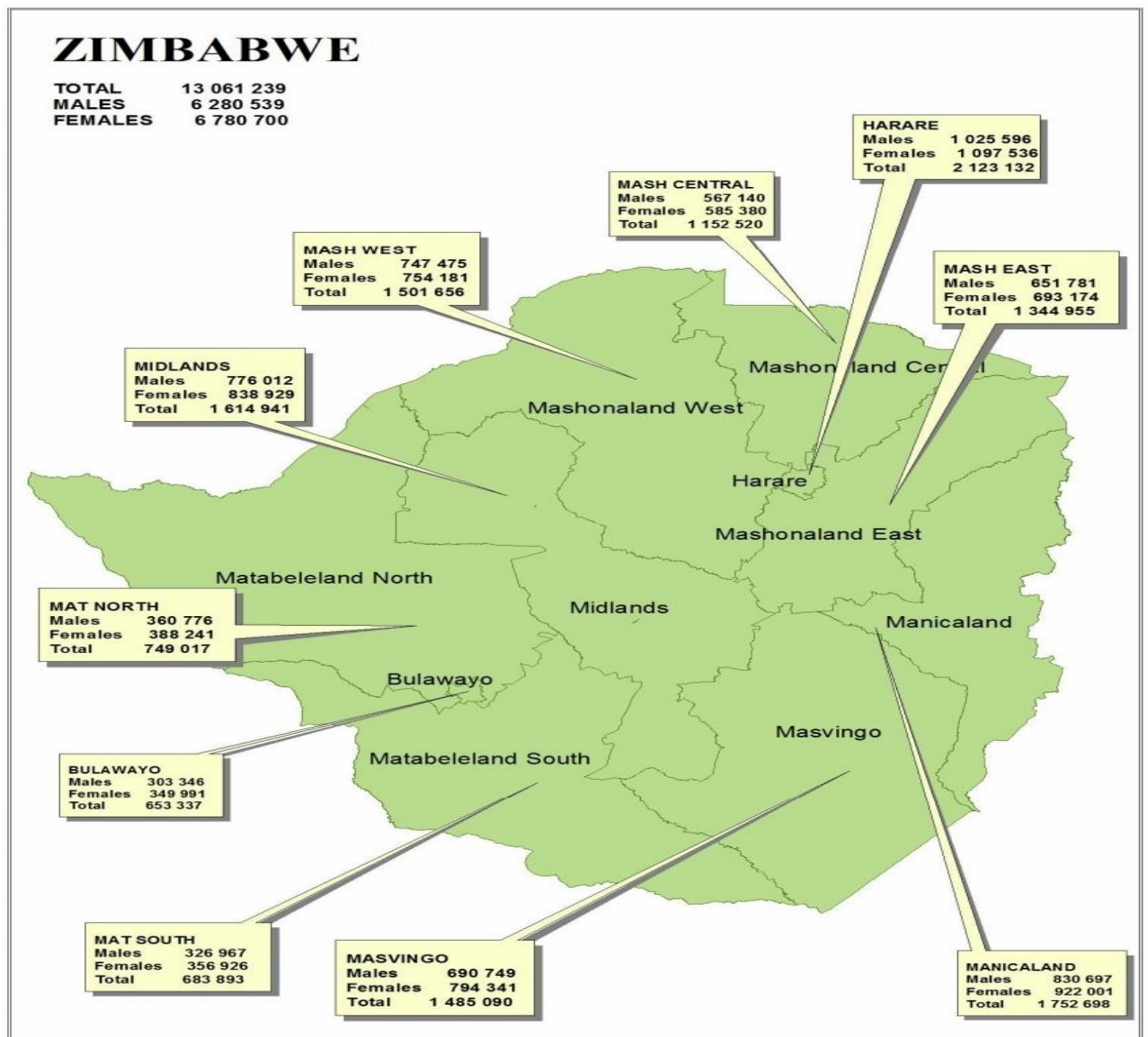


Source: OCHA, 2009

According to the 2012 census, Bulawayo's population was disputed. According to the Census Report (2012), there were 653, 337 people, whilst the Bulawayo City Council (BCC) estimated it to be 1.2 million people. The BCC argues that the misrepresentation of population figures is a political move aimed at allocating fewer resources to the development of the city. The observation by the BCC might be true considering that Bulawayo has always been known to be supporting an opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Support for the MDC is highest in Harare and Bulawayo. During the 2018 general elections, 72% of all votes cast in Harare and 67% in Bulawayo were for the MDC (Country Policy and Information Note Zimbabwe: Opposition to government, 2021).

The population of Bulawayo as of the 2022 census is at 643, 000, which is a 0.47% increase from the previous year 2021 (PopulationStat, 2022). As per the previous census that was undertaken in 2012, the Bulawayo Province's male population was at 303 346, whilst the female population was at 349 991 (Zimstat, 2012). This proves that there are more females than males in Bulawayo. This is also the case at national level, since there are more females than males in Zimbabwe (World Bank, 2019). Figure 3.2, which shows the distribution of male and female population in Zimbabwe, reveals that women are more than men in all provinces.

Figure 3.2 - : Population distribution in Zimbabwe by sex



Source: ZimStat, 2015

It is crucial to ensure that women fully participate in community development, since women constitute the majority at national level, as well as in community institutions such as churches. Thus, incorporating women in community development initiatives and ensuring their full participation for the benefit of the entire nation is consequently fundamental.

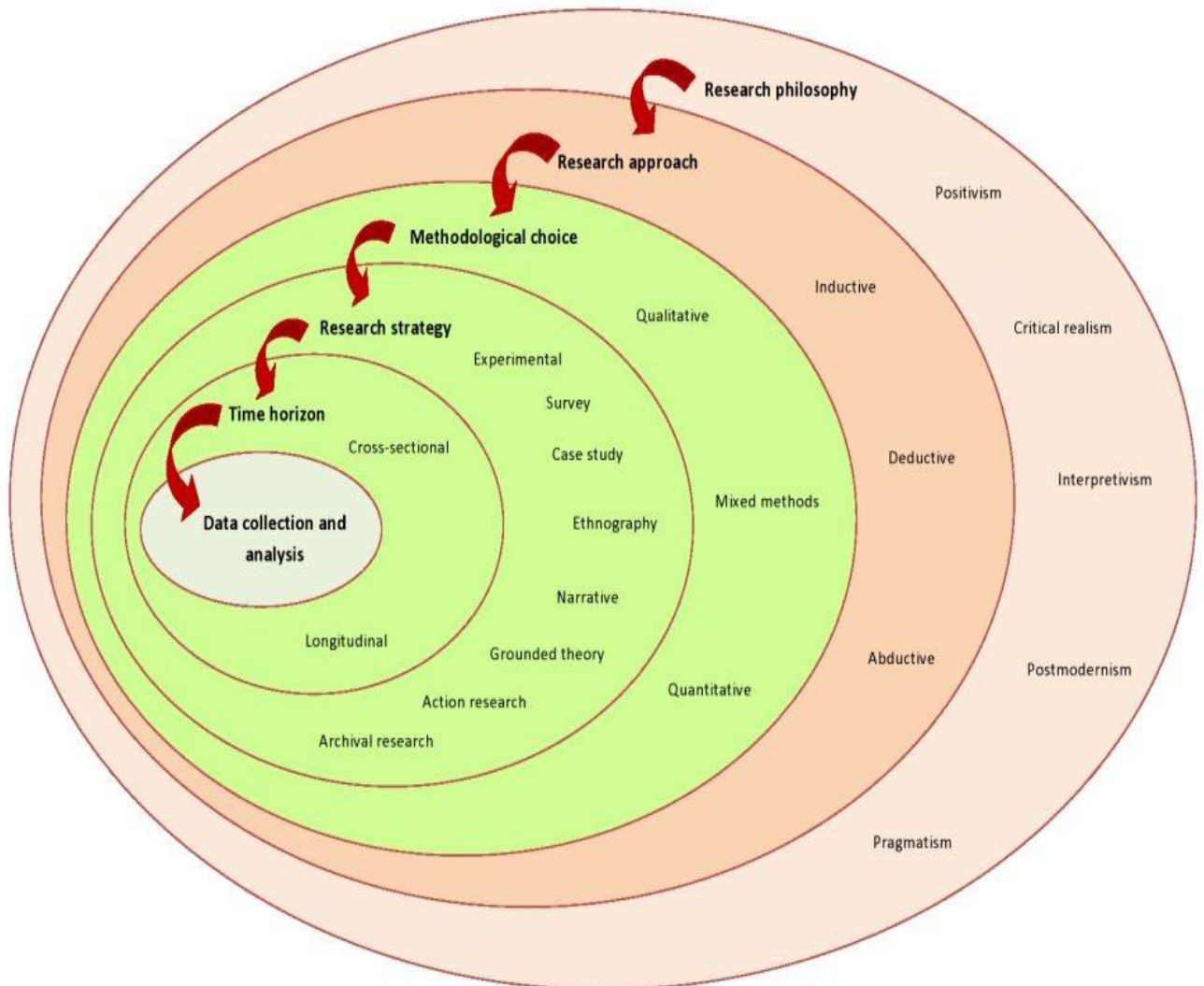
In the past, Bulawayo was the principal industrial hub of Zimbabwe. The factories produced building materials, electronic equipment, textiles, furniture, food products, cars and car products. “KoNtuthu ziya–thunqa” is how the city was famously known, a Ndebele phrase which means a place that continually exudes smoke. For many years, Bulawayo as Zimbabwe’s industrial hub attracted several large manufacturing and engineering companies, which

included Hubert Davies, Build Elect, Hunyani Holdings, Merlin Textiles, Tregors Group, Zimbabwe Engineering Company, and G&D Shoes. The National Railways of Zimbabwe is also headquartered in Bulawayo. However, due to a collapse of the economy, the industries are no longer puffing out smoke. Many factories closed or moved their operations to Harare.

For some, the relocation of factories from Bulawayo to Harare is interpreted as punitive measures put in place by the state because of its citizens' wrong political affiliation to the MDC. Hence, the stringent measures were heavily felt during the era of the government of the late president Robert Mugabe. The city was, therefore, subjected to contrived poverty since the economic decline of the city was a consequence of intended political exclusion. The sentiment that is shared by many people is that the Shona-dominated central government has been purposefully marginalising the Ndebele-populated city for years to frustrate companies, so that they relocate to other provinces (Munyaka, 2014).

Although it is the responsibility of the government of Zimbabwe to ensure the development and revival of the city of Bulawayo, the burden to revive the economy is overwhelming for the government to handle without assistance from community members. There is need for the citizens of Bulawayo to partner with the government to ensure community success. Thus, without the active participation of women, meaningful community development cannot be realised. There is a gap in knowledge on the contribution of women in Bulawayo to community development, let alone contribution of women in churches to community development.

Figure 3. 3 Research Onion Model



Source: Saunders *et al.* (2007)

Figure 3.3 shows the research onion framework which was utilised to clearly outline how the research was conducted. The research onion was developed by Saunders *et al.* (2007) to describe the stages through which the researcher must pass when formulating an effective methodology. This framework was chosen for this study because it creates a firm basis for development of coherent and justifiable research design (Muranganwa, 2016).

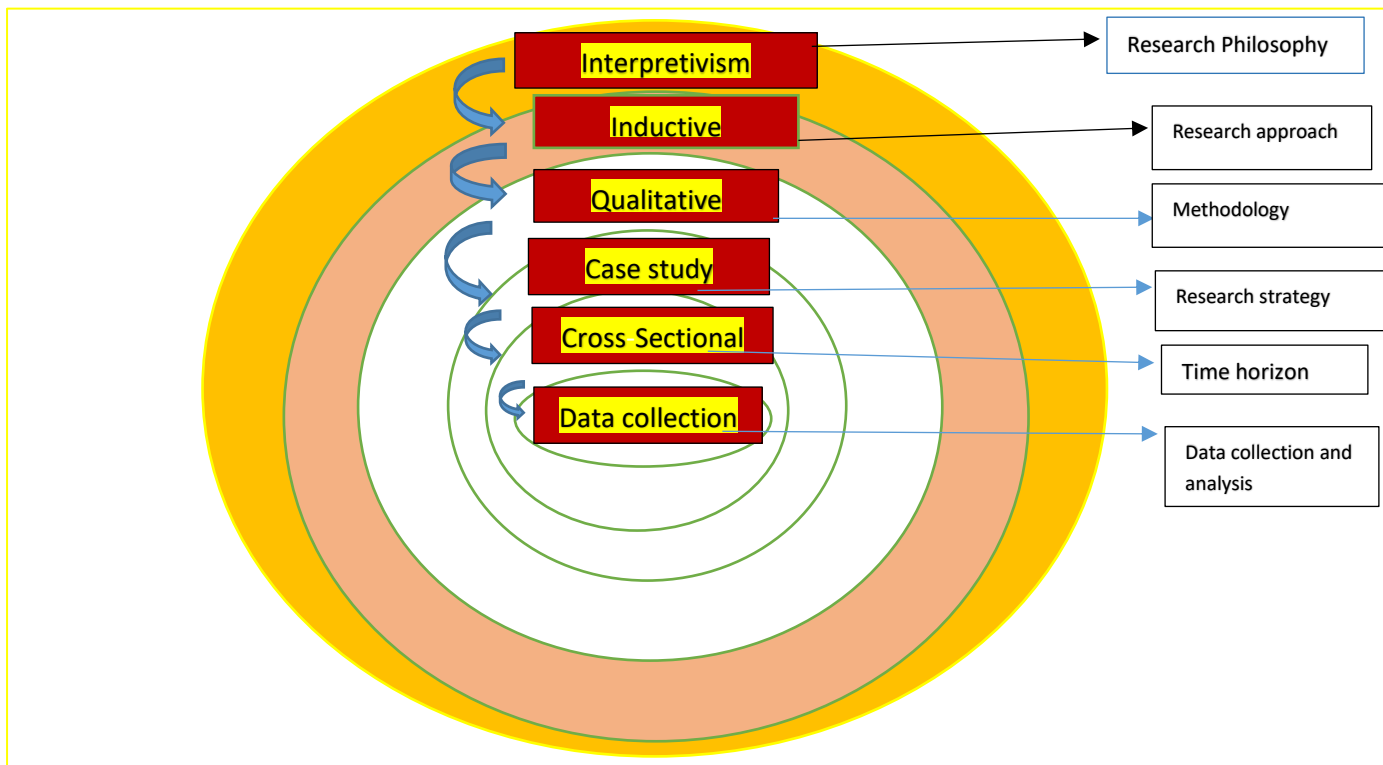
As Raithatha (2017) observes, the research onion model aids in the step by step designing of the research methodology, hence it can be used as the main academic research model. Researchers concur that the research onion guides the researcher through all the steps that need to be taken when developing a research methodology (Raithatha, 2017; Muranganwa, 2016;

Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Just as all research onion layers are interdependent and interrelated, the philosophical choice determines the approach, which consequently influences the selection of methodology, strategy, time horizon, as well as data collection and analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

The research onion was suitable for this study because it is an efficient model widely used in social sciences (Raithatha 2017). This model can be easily adapted to almost any type of research methodology and can be used in various contexts (Bryman, 2012). As Muranganwa (2016) highlighted, the model can be used in exact sciences, computer science, marketing (Ramdhani *et al.*, 2017), information technology, and in social sciences (Lloyd, 2012).

Figure 3.3 therefore provides a detailed model that can be used to produce a clearly laid out research starting from the outer layer, which is research philosophy to the inner core, data collection and analysis. Following the research onion model, the researcher constructed a diagram with specific research steps that were taken in conducting this research study as shown in Figure 3. 4.

Figure 3:4: Research Process



Source: Own compilation, Adapted from the Research Onion Model

3.3 Research Philosophy

As Miles and Huberman (1994:40) argue, almost “all research ultimately has a qualitative grounding”, so does this study. Therefore, this study employs qualitative research methods, which allow further processes to follow constructivism, as a philosophical/epistemological stance, because it states that reality is socially constructed. As depicted in Figure 3.4, the outermost layer of the research onion model is research philosophy, which sets the stage for the research process. A research philosophy forms the basis of any study as it provides a description of the theory that the research is built upon. It is a critical part of research methodology.

Research Philosophy is defined as a “set of beliefs concerning the nature of the reality (ontology) being investigated and the choice of the type of research philosophy applied in an area of research study, depending on knowledge being investigated” (Žukauskas, *et al.*, 2018:10). Saunders *et al.* (2016:13) defines research philosophy as, “a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge”.

Research philosophy is categorised into ontology, epistemology, and axiology. Through these philosophical approaches, the researcher is enabled to decide which approach to adopt and why, in line with research questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The vital assumptions that are present in research philosophy explain the researcher’s view regarding the world. The research strategy and the methods of that strategy are determined by these assumptions. The researcher’s views can be positivist, interpretivist, pragmatic, critical realism, postmodernism as portrayed in figure 3.3, depending on the nature of the research methodology, that is, whether it is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed. Interpretivism is generally implemented in qualitative studies, whilst positivism is mainly adopted in quantitative studies (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

The reason why the researcher included research philosophy in this study is that research philosophy provides the “general principles of theoretical thinking, a method of cognition, perspective and self-awareness, all of which are used to obtain knowledge of reality and to design, conduct, analyse and interpret research and its outcomes” (Moon & Blackman, 2014:8). Before carrying out the empirical study on women, churches and community development, the philosophical approach, and the paradigm on which the research is based is necessary (Otieno *et al.*, 2020).

Burrell and Morgan (2016), further highlight the relevance of building research on the foundation of research philosophy by stating that knowingly or unknowingly a researcher will

be making numerous philosophical assumptions, while conducting research and these assumptions are related to human intelligence or knowledge (epistemological assumptions), realities discovered in one's research (ontological assumptions) and the various ways in which one's own values influence their research process (axiological assumptions). The assumptions imminently direct how one comprehends the methods employed, research questions, and the interpretation of findings (Crotty, 1998).

3.4 Interpretivist Research Philosophy

This study adopted the interpretivist and naturalistic approach to the understanding of the world. The reasoning behind the decision to adopt the interpretivist epistemological stance was that community development is not a factual but a socially constructed opinion with insights from the results of the views of community members. The interpretivist research philosophy was therefore necessary in bringing about improved research findings by giving a detailed report on perceptions of different community individuals. As one of the interpretivist researchers, the researcher believes that reality consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world.

Willis (1995) highlights that interpretivists are anti-foundationalists, who believe that there is no single route or path to knowledge. Walsham (1993:13) further gives insight that in the interpretive tradition, "there are no 'correct' or 'incorrect' theories. Instead, they should be judged according to how 'interesting' they are to the researcher as well as those involved in the same areas". According to this interpretivist paradigm, the world is understood subjectively from experiences of individuals with the aim of explaining the subjective meanings or reasons that are hidden behind social action.

Through the interpretivist framework, the world is seen as constructed, interpreted, and experienced by individuals, as they interact with each other and with broader social systems (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Merriam, 1988). This framework was therefore suitable for this study as its purpose of inquiry was to understand how women in church participate in community development activities and how they describe their own experience (Farzanfar, 2005). Researchers within the interpretivist paradigm, therefore, can be categorised as naturalistic because they give meaning to real-world situations as they naturally unfold. This framework is for that reason, unobtrusive, non-manipulative, and non-controlling (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The interpretivist approach best suits this study as the participants'

perceptions on the contribution of women in church is considered within their natural social context.

The qualitative methodologies which include interviews, focus groups and semi-structured questionnaires were therefore used to gather data, since interpretivist researchers use qualitative research methodologies to investigate, interpret and describe social realities (Cohen *et al.*, 2000; Bassegy, 1995). The interpretivist epistemological assumption is that through methods such as these, one can understand people's beliefs, preferences, and the meanings they attach to social phenomena (Lincoln *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, interpretivist researchers cannot divorce themselves from their own socio-cultural realities and adopt a value-free position, nor can they operate in an apolitical environment. Researchers need to reflect on their own views and feelings and identify how these might impact on their study. In other words, an objective analysis of events or social phenomena is impossible (Marsh & Stoker, 2002; Deacon *et al.*, 1999; Neuman, 1994).

As argued by proponents of the interpretivist school such as Geertz (1973), the scientific method is reductionist and as a result, it normally fails to interpret or understand qualitative research. An interpretivist perspective is founded on the notion that qualitative research must be concerned with unmasking multiple realities rather than searching for one objective reality. In Denzin's (2010:271) words, "Objective reality will never be captured. In depth understanding, the use of multiple validities, not a single validity, a commitment to dialogue is sought in any interpretive study". In view of the foregoing epistemological debates, the researcher concurs with Denzin's persuasion that the researchers' interpretation, translation, and representation of data obtained from research subjects cannot be considered objective, since it is socially constructed. Therefore, the findings of this thesis cannot be generalised to other contexts.

3.5 Research Approach- Inductive

The research approach for this study was inductive which correspond with the interpretivist research philosophy. Research approach is the next layer in the research onion framework. The research approach can either be inductive, deductive, or abductive as shown in figure 3.3. The inductive research approach provided a better understanding of the social responsibilities of various stakeholders in the community, which include, inter-alia, the government and the various church members and church organisations.

The inductive approach also provided the observations required to form the views for the results, to meet the research goals. This was done by conducting primary research using an unstructured questionnaire to gain an understanding of observations in the field of research. This approach allowed the researcher to gain understanding on how women understand the church structures that liberate or obstruct their community development efforts. The same understanding was also sought from men in three (3) church denominations which include the Mainline, Pentecostal, and African Independent Churches.

As mentioned earlier, this study utilised the qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is inductive in nature and therefore the researcher was able to explore meanings and insights about the perception of community members and their understanding of community development (Levitt *et al.*, 2017; Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Meanings and insights were deduced when women from various churches were explaining their participation and experience in community development. Thus, this study used an inductive approach to generate novel insights into the phenomena that were difficult to measure quantitatively including individual perceptions.

3.6 Methodological Choice-Qualitative

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, which is the next layer of the research onion model. Research methodology refers to the processes and procedures adopted by researchers during the research process, and the philosophical assumptions that guide these processes and procedures (Creswell, 2013). In many institutions, the usage of qualitative research has greatly increased over the last few decades, because of its ability to explore various areas of human behaviour for the purposes of development of organisations (Haradhan, 2018). As highlighted above, qualitative research is inductive in nature, and the researcher generally explores meanings and insights in each situation (Strauss and Corbin, 2008; Levitt *et al.*, 2017).

This attribute of qualitative research was necessary, as this study sought to understand the subjective meanings from the church members themselves about the participation of women in community development within their church denominations (Faryadi, 2019). A qualitative methodology also enabled the participants to make meanings of their own realities and come to appreciate their own practice. This process can be seen as enabling or empowering them to freely express their views (Cohen *at al.*, 2000). According to the GAD approach, women suffer from patriarchy which limits their full participation in community development (Fisher, 2014). The far-reaching insights from personal experiences of women from the selected church

denominations, gave the researcher an understanding of how women are affected by patriarchy when executing different activities within the church and in the community.

Considering that qualitative research refers to a range of data collection and analysis techniques that use purposive sampling and semi-structured, open-ended interviews (Dudwick *et al.*, 2006; Gopaldas, 2016), the researcher was able to isolate only those churches that are involved in community development to obtain relevant information, as well as gain deeper understanding of the church's contribution in community development. The key informants selected through purposive sampling from various church denominations, FBOs, Inter-denominational organisation and the Bulawayo City Council, provided relevant and detailed information about activities of women in the church and in the community. Through qualitative research methods like interviews, the researcher was able to gain in-depth understanding about their own reasons and rationales for implementing the work they were doing in the community and how women from different denominations participate in community development activities.

Although FBOs are not necessarily church denominations, they have religious components in their values, mission and decision-making. They are governed and administered through religious faith principles and were therefore an integral part of this study (William *et.al*, 2020). They have emerged as a powerful platform of executing professional church community development. This study is privy to that, hence the inclusion of FBO's as part of the church's contribution to community development

FBOs are of two types. There are those that are linked to an existing church denomination such as CARITAS, Unbound and Catholic Relief Services, which emerged out of the Roman Catholic Church, and those that are not associated with any church denomination like Christian Alliance and World Vision, but are administered through Biblical principles. The other key informant was selected from Bulawayo City Council (BCC), which is a local government body responsible for all community development initiatives in Bulawayo. The data obtained through the Housing and Community Services Department was comprehensive, as the BCC shared their experiences of working in partnership with various church denominations and observing how they execute community development in various communities.

The data gathered through open-ended in-depth-interviews enabled further probing for clarity on issues discussed. All key informant interviews were audio-recorded for in-depth analysis. Audio-recording qualitative interviews can be useful both during the interview itself and afterwards. During the interview, recording the interview means that qualitative interviewers

can focus on listening, probing, and following up (Edwards *et.al*, 2013) and maintaining eye contact with their interviewee. It can be quite distracting to have to keep taking notes during the interview. Quite often, audio-recorded interviews are utilised to allow for more consistent transcription (Creswell, 2012). The researcher often transcribes and enters the data into a computer file, to analyse it after interview.

The other important attribute of qualitative research is that it is exploratory and seeks to explain 'how' and 'why' a particular social phenomenon, or programme, operates as it does in a particular context (Polkinghorne, 2005). Viswambharan and Priya (2016) further highlight that the choice of methodology is directed by the questions being raised. The qualitative methods were, therefore, best suited for addressing the how questions of this study (De Vos *et al.*, 2011; Krippendorff, 2013; Maree, 2016).

This study employed non-numerical data and qualitative research was relevant since it is a type of social science research that collects and works with non-numerical data and seeks to interpret meaning from these data that help us to understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Punch, 2013). This study was mainly focused on words rather than numbers and interpreting situations to understand the meanings that people make from day-to-day life.

The non-numerical data was obtained through qualitative data collection methods which include focus groups, in-depth interviews and semi-structured questionnaires. Faryadi (2019) states that by using various ways to collect data, the qualitative method can contribute meaningful and accurate information. It allows researchers to explore the views of homogenous, as well as diverse groups of people, and that helps unpack different perspectives within a community. As statistics are not used in it, a more descriptive, narrative style helps one to gain new insight.

Although qualitative research was the most appropriate methodology for this study, it however has important weaknesses as other research methodologies. Some of the major weaknesses of qualitative research are that it is difficult to demonstrate the scientific rigour of the data collection exercise. Results in data are not objectively verifiable. Collection of the data can be time consuming and costly. Therefore, the time required for data collection, analysis, and interpretation is lengthy and it needs skilled interviewers to successfully carry out the primary data collection activities (Bowen, 2006; Yauch & Steudel, 2003). To counter these challenges,

the researcher used such methods as triangulation and conducted the study within her city of residence to cut down on transport costs.

3.7 Case Study Research Design

The next onion layer is the research strategy. A case-study research strategy was employed for this study. This research design was favorable because it focuses on a single contextual environment in Bulawayo. This research strategy supports an enhanced understanding of the case phenomena (Hyett *et al.*, 2014; Cooper & Schindler, 2008). The case study research design was preferred to gain in-depth understanding of the relationship between women, churches, and community development in Bulawayo.

Case studies are considered as quantitative or qualitative research depending on the purpose of the study, and the design that is chosen by the researcher (Haradhan, 2018). As this study was qualitative in orientation, a qualitative case study was therefore relevant as it allowed for the examination of the phenomenon within its real-life context. A case study is a general term for the exploration of an individual, group or phenomenon (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018; Sturman, 1997). The structure of a case study was such that it addressed the problem, the context, the issues, and the lessons learned (Creswell, 2014). The case study was chosen for this study because it offers a comprehensive description of an individual case and its analysis (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018; Mesec, 1998).

It gives an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme, or system in real life (Simons, 2009). The case study approach was therefore relevant as the overarching objective of this study was to understand the contribution of women in churches to community development, and the researcher sought to understand multiple perspectives about the role of women from both men and women in churches.

Rule and John (2015) describe a case study as an approach to research that enables the exploration of a study area within its setting using a diversity of data instruments. This approach therefore allowed the researcher to use diverse data instruments such as semi-structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews to gather rich data. This means that the phenomenon is not discussed only through one lens, but a multiplicity of lenses which permit the gathering of rich data on the phenomenon (Gilgun & Abrams, 2002). Thus, a case study enabled the researcher to gather rich data from multicity of lenses.

Gomm *et al.* (2000) argues that a case study has the advantage of rendering a detailed study of an item singled-out for research on a small scale and on relatively short duration. The case study approach was therefore useful in gathering rich data within a limited time on how women in churches have contributed to community development in their local areas and to the Zimbabwean nation.

As indicated by Creswell (1994), case studies do not allow for statistical generalisations but are generalisable to theoretical propositions (Gilgun & Abrams, 2002; King *et al.*, 1994;). They are generalisable to theory in the sense that investigating the case study is facilitated and illuminated by a theoretical framing. In addition, the case study findings may be used in refining a prevailing theory about the particular social phenomenon under investigation. Through this approach, the GAD theory was scrutinised from the perspectives of women in churches themselves. In this way, the case study approach also tended to be inclusive and comprehensive by incorporating into the investigation a diverse array of social relationships, interactions, practices, meanings, and ideas which are relevant to unpacking the specificities of the case. The case study design therefore seeks to give a unitary character to the social phenomenon under analysis by weaving together the complex and fluid social facts which structure and animate the case (Rashid *et al.*, 2019; Punch, 2005).

Case study research mainly focuses on ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions (Myers, 2009) and for this reason is appropriate for descriptive and exploratory studies (Mouton, 2001). The case study, therefore, enabled the research to answer questions such as how church structures encourage or prevent the participation of women in community development and how the relationship between the church and the government affects the participation of women in community development. According to Yin (2015), the case study method may be appropriate for different epistemological orientations. This means that case studies are relevant and potentially compatible with a range of different epistemologies. The case study approach was therefore, considered appropriate for this study as noted earlier that this study followed constructivism as a philosophical or epistemological orientation. The researcher had this understanding that, “a case is not just a research method or strategy, but it is a researcher’s choice about what will be studied” (Takahashi & Araujo, 2020).

It is worth noting that although the case study method is the most widely used method in academia for researchers interested in qualitative research (Baskarada, 2014) and case studies have been discussed extensively in the literature, little has been written about the specific steps

one may use to conduct case study research effectively (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016; Halkier & Yves-Chantal, 2013). Baskarada (2014) also emphasised the need to have a succinct guideline that can be practically followed as it is tough to execute a case study well in practice. There is extensive literature available on the theory and practice of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Patton, 1990; 1980), although most of these studies discuss case study research in a cursory way (Hancock & Algozzine, 2016).

3.8 Time Horizon

The next research onion layer consists of the time horizon. This study was framed within a cross-sectional time horizon. The cross-sectional time horizon approach means that research focuses on the present situation whereas a longitudinal alternative approach needs repeated studies over a period to identify correlations between observations and changes between results over different time periods (Setia, 2016).

The reason for choosing the cross-sectional time horizon was because of the limited time available to complete this research as well as constrained financial resources. Normally, different organisations or groups of people are selected, and a study is conducted to ascertain how factors differ. This means, collecting data on more than one case at a single point of time (Bryman 2007:44). While realising that churches are founded on different doctrinal value systems, it was necessary to ascertain how those doctrines hinder or further the contribution of women to community development.

3.9 Data Collection and Analysis

The inner-core layer of the research onion consists of the techniques and methods used to collect data and how the data was analysed. Both primary and secondary data were employed. While secondary study involved the investigation and use of academic literature, related reports and press reports, the primary study provided raw information and first-hand evidence through in-depth interviews, questionnaires, and focus groups. What is important for us to recognise here is that although primary sources are more credible as evidence, good research uses both primary and secondary sources. The combination of primary and secondary data resources can bring rigour to research by selecting the most appropriate and best measures for analysis (Siddiqui *et al.*, 2017).

3.9.1 Population Sample

Bulawayo was chosen as the population research site of this study mainly because of convenience and access since the researcher resides in Bulawayo. A sample can be defined as a representative selected for a study whose characteristics exemplify the larger group from which it was selected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2002). Churches were the population sample and both women and men from Mainline, Pentecostal, and African Independent churches were selected as the sampling frame. The sample consisted of both males and females drawing from the GAD approach which emphasises that men are an integral part of the solution to issues that affect women and should not be excluded. The sample under study was on women's participation in community development. In this study, the total sample consisted of 58 participants. In this case, the churches were grouped into three groups (Mainline, Pentecostal, and African Independent) because of differences in doctrines to represent all Christian church denominations within Bulawayo. The characteristics of these church groupings exemplify the larger group of different church denominations.

3.9.2 Sampling Techniques

After the initial questions were developed, the questionnaire and interview guide were piloted to assess the clarity and to ensure a consistent understanding of questions. The first questionnaire and interview guide for feedback on the developed questions was administered to potential respondents. Based on the findings of the pilot study, the questionnaire and interview guide questions were revised and feedback from those who conducted the pilot study was incorporated.

The research participants were selected through purposive sampling. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:138) define purposive sampling as “an approach whereby participants are selected because of the rich information they hold that is required to answer the research questions.” In consonance, Cohen *et al.* (2007:115) posit that, in purposive sampling, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the study based on their typicality or possession of certain characteristics being sought. In this case, the researcher needed to choose only churches where women in their congregations participate in community development activities for the purposes of collecting relevant information.

Through the purposive sampling technique, an inter-denominational organisation was selected to be part of this study because of its ability to congregate different church denominations for the purposes of executing community development. The researcher was optimistic that an inter-denominational organisation would provide the full picture of how women from different churches participate in community development, regardless of church or religious affiliation and to bring out the potential that women in churches possess in unison. The Inter-denominational organisation directed the researcher to an African Independent Church (AIC), one of their partners in community development, through snowball sampling. Through this sampling method, the researcher was directed by the members of the AIC to a Mainline church and the Mainline church further directed her to a Pentecostal church. As such, the researcher was able to identify only churches that are active in community development to be part of this study.

The researcher included, as part of this study, three categories of church denominations. One church grouping was selected from among Mainline churches, one from Pentecostal and one from AIC's. The reason for selecting participants from various denominations was done in case they have different perspectives. Although it is worth noting that there might still exist slight variations among churches with the same denominational orientation, for example, within the pentecostal grouping not all pentecostal churches have same spiritual beliefs. However, the researcher realised that there are insignificant variations, as they all emphasise the workings of the Spirit (Anderson, 2004).

To enable comprehensive understanding of the contribution of women to community development in Bulawayo, the researcher perceived that engaging the local government which is responsible for community development in Bulawayo was necessary. Hence, the BCC's housing and community services department was also purposively sampled. This was done because community development activities in the city fall within their area of jurisdiction. It is their mandate to ensure the successful implementation of community development initiatives. They have partnered with local members in communities like businesspeople and different organisations, including churches, to bring about change in communities. The BCC also possesses in-depth knowledge about community development and as such provided invaluable information especially on the contribution of churches to community development. Purposive sampling was mainly employed in this study because this sampling method is suitable for qualitative studies, where the researcher is interested in informants with the best knowledge of the research topic (Babbie, 2010).

3.9.3 Methods of Data Collection

The data collection methods used were in-depth interviews using semi-structured questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGDs). These multiple data collection methods enabled the researcher to triangulate the gathered data, thus providing a detailed, rich, and an in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study (Babbie, 2010).

3.9.3.1 Interviews

Interviews were used to collect data using a semi-structured questionnaire as an instrument of gathering data from the six church leaders who were key informants from the three church denominations. The semi-structured questionnaires have many uses, most notable being to discover what the participants are thinking and these include market research, political polling, customer service feedback, evaluations, opinion polls, and social science research (O’Leary, 2010). As Willig (2008:22) notes, “Strictly speaking, there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ methods. Rather, methods of data collection and analysis can be appropriate to our research question.” In this case, the questionnaire was mostly composed of open-ended questions.

Answers obtained through closed-ended questions with multiple choice answer options are analysed using quantitative methods, whilst answers obtained through open-ended questionnaire questions are analysed using qualitative methods. Primary data collected using open-ended questionnaires involve discussions and critical analyses without use of numbers and calculations (Galletta, 2013). Hence, the semi-structured questionnaire was considered appropriate for this research study. The researcher managed to send questionnaires through email and get timely responses from the Mainline and Pentecostal churches. The reason for using e-mail was because of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

However, gathering data from an African Independent church was a colossal task. They were very skeptical, and they stated that they do not own any e-mail addresses. For some African Independent churches, especially white garment churches, data collection is completely banned, and they do not allow their members to share any information with outsiders. The researcher had to arrange a physical meeting with one of the white garment church members and distribute the questionnaires in printed form.

The advantage was that this face-to-face method allowed them to get clarifications on questions they did not understand. The questions mainly consisted of open-ended questions consistent

with a qualitative questionnaire. The questionnaire provided rich information on whether women can make independent and vital decisions in the church and in community development. The researcher strictly observed the COVID-19 social distancing protocols which include sanitising and wearing a mask to protect herself and the participants.

3.9.3.2 Key Informants Interviews

Key Informant Interviews were conducted to provide in-depth information about the activities of church women in community development. Key informants are knowledgeable individuals who contribute a perspective on a research phenomenon or situation that the researchers themselves lack (Cossham & Johanson, 2019). This data collection method was relevant to this study as the researcher sought to understand the kind of a relationship that exists between the government and churches. This kind of information requires knowledgeable individuals such as employees of Bulawayo City Council that work at the Housing and Community Services Department, Church leaders as well as Community Development Specialists who work for FBOs. This method was therefore, considered appropriate for this study as it contributed to expanding the researcher’s understanding of precise insights (Cossham & Johanson 2019) The study had a total of ten (10) key informants shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Distribution of Key Informants

Number of Key Informants	Institution
2 Key Informants (1male, 1 female)	Mainline church (Roman Catholic)
2 Key Informants (1 male, I female)	Pentecostal church (Agape Missions)
2 Key Informants (1 male, I female)	African Independent Church (Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God)
1 Key Informant (Male)	FBO (Catholic Women of Saint Anne’s Association- linked to Roman Catholic Church)
I Key Informant (Female)	FBO (Christian Alliance- Not linked to any church congregation)

1 Key Informant (Female)	Inter-denominational organisation - Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ)
1 Key Informant (Male)	Bulawayo City Council

Source: Own Compilation

The four key informants from the four institutions (two FBO's, BCC, Inter-denominational organisation) responded to questions through in-depth-interviews whilst six key informants from the three church denominations (Mainline, Pentecostal and African Independent church) responded to a semi-structured qualitative questionnaire. All interviews were conducted face to face and were audio-recorded. The interviews were very interactive and insightful. The researcher strictly observed the COVID-19 social distancing protocols to protect herself and the participants. The researcher and participants wore their masks properly during the interview process and their hands were sanitised at the beginning of the meeting.

3.9.3.3 Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups discussions were utilised to collect data from six groups of men and women, that is, two groups from each church denomination. Focus groups are part of a category of qualitative research methods useful when the researcher wishes to obtain some understanding of participants' views, feelings, and attitudes (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). In this regard, focus groups were relevant to this research as the researcher sought to understand the views of participants concerning attending church services or participating in church activities during menstruation. The researcher further sought to understand their views and feelings about women leading men in church activities. FGD therefore, produced data and insights that ordinarily would not have come out without group interaction as hearing the experiences of others stimulated memories, ideas, and experiences (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Group interactions provided several benefits. They inspired a variety of communication including anecdotes and jokes, which were an eye opener to the researcher on what the participants know and encouraged a wide understanding of issues (Kitzinger, 2006).

The researcher collected data through WhatsApp focus groups from the Mainline and Pentecostal churches. However, as highlighted above, the researcher faced difficulties accessing African Independent churches through modern technology. The FGDs from an African Independent church therefore, involved face to face interactions with participants and

maintaining COVID- 19 safety regulations. The advantage of the face-to-face interactions was the ability to capture the non-verbal cues. The participants from Jerusalem Church of God were only able to understand and respond to questions in *Ndebele* (one of the local languages in Zimbabwe). As such the researcher had to interpret the research questions and translate *Ndebele* responses into English.

The researcher was aware that lack of due diligence during translation process could potentially lead to inaccurate data collection (Jones & Costica, 2018), therefore, the researcher was diligent, and she allocated time in forward translation and back translation to capture accurate information. As stated by Jones and Costica (2018), the mother tongue of the forward translator should be the local language. The researcher's mother tongue is *Ndebele*, this made translation easier. Each church grouping was homogeneous. In homogeneous groups, "participants are grouped because of a common characteristic, such as age, gender, professional role, or membership in an organisation" (Johnson, 2014: 7). The participants were therefore divided into two groups by gender (8 males and 8 females) from each church denomination.

The WhatsApp focus group discussions that were employed in this study have been used in different studies. For example, it was used in a 2019 waste management study in Singapore, which indicated the potential of using the platform for health research, while underscoring the need to further develop mobile messaging as a qualitative research method (Chen & Neo, 2019). Another study published in 2019 utilised WhatsApp to conduct remote interviews exploring health workers' perceptions in a conflict zone (Fardousi *et al.*, 2019). The study commented on issues such as internet connectivity and confidentiality concerns as factors that impacted the ability to conduct interviews via WhatsApp.

In June 2018, VillageReach used WhatsApp FGDs to collect qualitative data from Malawian youth on contraceptive needs and preferences, as part of a larger study funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation entitled "Youth-led Contraceptive Knowledge Generation and Design". WhatsApp was selected as a tool for eliciting information from adolescents because the mobile messaging application is popular among sub-populations of the Malawian youth (Thorp *et al.*, 2021), thereby offering researchers a chance to test whether the platform could offer an innovative approach to obtaining sensitive information from young people who may be uncomfortable sharing such information in traditional face-to-face FGDs.

To recruit WhatsApp FGD participants, the researcher was assisted by the church leaders who provided a list of male and females who have in-depth knowledge about the community

development activities of women in their church. The researcher then randomly selected 8 males and 8 females from the list provided to avoid bias. The participants used their WhatsApp enabled smart phones to respond to questions. It is, however, important to note that whilst there are benefits associated with WhatsApp FGD methodology, there are considerations that may complicate data collection in comparison to other qualitative methods. The approach requires certain logistics such as access to power sources to keep phones charged as well as WIFI or stable mobile data network connection to ensure FGDs run smoothly and ensuring that these pre-conditions exist requires planning. In addition, the methodology may not be conducive to every demographic and as elaborated elsewhere, requires target populations to have some level of smartphone literacy, which should be considered when sampling populations with low rates of smart phone ownership (Chen & Neo, 2019).

Costs associated with WhatsApp FGDs (providing devices, data) may prohibit use of the platform, but with a projected increase in smartphone ownership paired with introduction of low-cost WhatsApp bundles by some sub-Saharan mobile network operators, more people have access to this platform and other social media than ever before (Chen & Neo, 2019). The WhatsApp FGD also allowed the participants who were not comfortable sharing the information considered sensitive to privately inbox the researcher. The researcher shared Interview guide questions over a period of two days in each group and allowed participants to respond as they got time. This gave an opportunity for participation of both the working class and non-working class. When compared to data collected using traditional FGDs from the African Independent churches, WhatsApp FGDs elicited similar findings. Participants from the WhatsApp FGDs shared detailed examples and engaged in extended discussions about their experiences and the activities of women in their churches.

The focus group that was most effective and efficient was the one from a Mainline church. It seems this church is familiar with students who do research. All participants from the female and male groups were self-motivated and they all responded to all the questions individually. Similarly, all female participants from the Pentecostal church responded to all interview questions, but a few from the male group participants did not respond to the questions at all, although they were privately asked for permission to participate and agreed. However, many of the males that responded gave in-depth information about the participation of women in their churches in community development.

3.9.4 Research Validity and Reliability

The reliability of the research depends on the performance of the research questionnaire as the test instrument. This has been piloted by several potential questionnaires to ensure that different participants understand the questionnaire consistently. The questionnaire was revised to address the questions which the respondents in the questionnaire pilot did not understand easily or similarly. Since potential participants had consistently understood the revised questionnaire, it was a reliable answer to the questions included in the questionnaire.

Although use of reliability and validity are common in quantitative research, it has been reconsidered in the qualitative research paradigm (Galofshani, 2003). Creswell (2014) explains qualitative validity as a process in which the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. Qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher's approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects. The instrument must have both validity and reliability for its purpose. Validity and reliability of measurement instruments influence the extent to which a researcher can learn something about the phenomenon under investigation, and the extent to which the researcher can draw meaningful conclusions from the data (Leedy and Ormrod, 2013). The researcher triangulated different methods bringing several sources of data or perspectives from participants (Creswell, 2014). The research is primarily based on the lived experiences of women in church, and composite meanings ascribed to the experiences, rather than generalisations.

According to Golafshani (2003:603), "triangulation is typically a strategy (test) for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings." In the same way, Mathison (1988:13) states that "triangulation has risen to be an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation in order to control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology." Engaging multiple data gathering instruments, such as in-depth interviews, questionnaires and focus groups enabled the researcher to gather reliable, valid, and diverse experiences and realities (Galofshani, 2003).

3.9.5 Data Analysis

Thematic data analysis was the data analysis method adopted for this research. Mainly because this study is qualitative, and thematic analysis is a relevant qualitative research method (Nowell

et al., 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis should be a foundational method for qualitative analysis, as it provides core skills for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. Many authors have agreed that because thematic analysis is a process utilised by several qualitative methods, it can be used to assist researchers in analysis (Holloway & Todres, 2003; Ryan & Bernard, 2000; Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that can be widely used across a range of epistemologies and research questions. It is a method for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This analysis method, therefore, assisted the researcher to organise the responses of the participants into themes which were easier to understand and report. The themes generated answered the research questions of this study.

Thematic analysis provides a highly flexible approach that can be modified for the needs of many studies, providing a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). Thematic analysis, therefore, enabled the researcher to provide rich and detailed account of data. Braun and Clarke (2006) and King (2004) hold that thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights. Thematic analysis is also useful for summarizing key features of a large data set, as it forces the researcher to take a well-structured approach to handling data, helping to produce a clear and organized final report (King, 2004). This approach was, therefore, helpful in producing a clear and organised report, as highlighted by Blaxter *et al.* (2010:31) that data analysis is about “moving from chaos to order .”

Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes emerging from the interviews. Kumar (2014: 16) states that thematic analysis means “analysing the contents of interviews or observational field notes in order to identify main themes that emerge for the responses given by your respondents, or the observation notes made by you.” According to Deterding and Waters (2021), the purpose of analysis and coding is to build themes and opinions associated with phenomenon under research. The interviews were audio-recorded to allow the researcher to go through the recordings many times for in-depth analysis.

The tasks entailed the reading and re-reading of the transcribed interviews to give us a full understanding of the themes related to the research topic (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The analysis process involved highlighting sentences with the same words and ideas that had been

repeated or occurred and re-occurred. The researcher also translated from Ndebele to English for Jerusalem Church of God participants as the participants had challenges responding in English. Moreover, to ensure credibility of the researcher's interpretations, the transcripts of the quotes used were presented. The six stages of thematic analysis were followed in generating themes are explained in chapter 4.

3.9.6 Research Ethics

Consent, anonymity, and confidentiality are the principles of research ethics, which were employed in this study. The emphasis is placed on moral principles and general ethics principles. Under moral principles the emphasis is on four internationally established and accepted ethics: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice. Autonomy means that research should respect the freedom, rights, and dignity of research participants. Beneficence prescribes that research should make a positive contribution towards the welfare of people. Non-maleficence refers to the fact that the research should not cause harm to the research participants or people in general.

As Leedy and Ormrod (2013) observed, most ethical issues in research fall into one of the following categories: protection from harm, voluntary and informed participation, right to privacy and lastly, honesty. As such, all participants were informed that the objective of the study is to gather information about the contribution of women in churches to community development and to determine their opinion or perception about the subject. The participants voluntarily signed the informed consent form to participate in this study.

A researcher has responsibility towards those involved in and affected by the study. As a result, the researcher took reasonable steps to anticipate and guard against possible undesirable or harmful consequences of this research. All the participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the interviews before the commencement, and this was reflected in the informed consent forms they signed. The researcher requested all the participants to remain anonymous so that they would be able to participate freely and without fear of any form of intimidation. They were informed of the digital recording of the interviews for the purpose of the transcriptions. The participants were notified before the commencement of interviews that participation was voluntary without any form of or promise of remuneration. Anonymity and confidentiality were two ethical issues that were addressed in the form.

To cater for confidentiality, the raw data for research was kept in a safe place known only to the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Before conducting interviews, the reasons for doing this

research were explained to the participants and permission was granted. Kumar (2014) states that informed consent includes making sure that the participants are satisfied by informing them the purpose and aim of the research and how such information would affect them.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided the mechanisms through which data that informed this thesis was collected. In this chapter, the researcher first tackled issues of research philosophy through the research onion model, giving attention to interpretivism as the research philosophy that this study is anchored on. Then the researcher highlighted that the study was inductive as it is qualitative in orientation. The case study research design was employed, and cross-sectional time horizon used. The data collection methods used were in-depth interviews using semi-structured questionnaires. Participants also included key informants and FGDs. Ethical issues were also incorporated, and thematic analysis was the data analysis method used. The validity and reliability of data were also ensured.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONTRIBUTION TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BY CHURCH WOMEN OF BULAWAYO

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research findings on the contribution of women in churches to community development in Bulawayo. The chapter reflects the researcher's interactions with participants from the Roman Catholic Church which represented Mainline churches, the Agape Missions Church, which represented Pentecostal churches and the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God (the 'white-garment church'), which represented African Independent churches. Data were gathered through FGDs and questionnaires as detailed in Chapter 3. The gathered data answered the following research question: What is the role played by women in community development by church women of Bulawayo?

Although church women have a desire to contribute meaningfully to community development, they are limited by several factors that are beyond their control (Makaye & Munhande, 2008). Zimbabwe is still undergoing economic challenges, which have been exacerbated by economic sanctions. The country's economy is performing badly due to the sanctions imposed by USA, UK, Australia, Canada, and the European Union (EU) (Nyoni, 2019). The Land Reform Programme implemented in Zimbabwe in 2001 is believed to have triggered the economic sanctions imposed against Zimbabwe through the Zimbabwe Democracy and Economic Recovery Act (ZIDERA). For the West, the basis for the imposition of sanctions against Zimbabwe was related to the violence that accompanied the execution of The Land Reform Programme (Makaye & Munhande, 2008).

Most citizens in Zimbabwean are living below the poverty datum line (PDL). Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Zimbabwe's economy was already in recession, with poverty levels standing at 70.5% in 2019 while unemployment levels remained high, above 21% (African Development Bank Group, 2021). Nevertheless, women still contribute to community development, directly (in the community) and indirectly (through the church). This chapter, therefore, details the direct and indirect contribution of women in churches to community development. The chapter also dwells on participants' perceptions regarding the meaning of community development. The thematic data analysis method was employed to

generate themes from primary data. The six stages of thematic analysis were followed in generating themes and these were: familiarisation with collected data (this included the transcripts of the verbal data); generation of initial codes; searching for themes; review of the themes; the definition and naming of themes; and finally, production of a report (Braun & Clarke, 2006:16). This has become the most widely adopted method of thematic analysis in qualitative studies (Clarke & Braun, 2017). In the next part of the chapter, raw data is presented highlighting the participants' responses to the questions.

4.2 Perceived meaning of community development

As highlighted in Chapter 2, defining community development is amorphous. Various concepts are linked to the subject of community development. Some researchers perceive community development just as a metaphor with few success stories (Schutte, 2018; Cornwell, 1986). Practically, community development projects are mostly associated with alleviating the plight of the poor (Schutte, 2018).

In the same vein, there seemed to be confusion among participants regarding what community development really is. Members of the various church denominations mainly understood the concept as the provision of basic needs and services such as food and clothing to the poor members of the community. When asked about the target beneficiaries of their community services, this is how the participants responded:

“The target group for our community services includes the orphans, widows and vulnerable members of the community” (Key Informant 1: Agape Missions Church).

Another participant from the Roman Catholic Church also highlighted that:

“The beneficiaries of our community programmes include the elderly and vulnerable children” (Key Informant 1: Roman Catholic Church).

A participant from the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God stated that:

“Our beneficiaries are widows, orphans, and vulnerable families” (Key Informant: Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

The participants' responses resonate with Schutte's (2018) assertion that community development is perceived as a concept closely associated with the plight of the poor and the most vulnerable members of the community, and community development is understood as

involving helping the poor members of the community (Schutte, 2018; Gaudier, 1993; Barry, 2002).

Apparently, churches are adopting a welfare and spiritual-psychosocial approach to community development. A community development approach refers to how and for whom development programmes are planned, implemented, and managed (Luna & Knud, 2003). Community development approaches include the participatory approach, the asset-based approach, the community-based approach, the area-based approach, the community economic development approach, the welfare approach, the spiritual-psychosocial approach, and the rights-based approach (Blickem *et al.*, 2018). A welfare approach, therefore, addresses immediate needs of the community, an individual, a group, or the marginalised groups. The vulnerable groups that may be targeted by this approach could be the urban poor, the blind, the abandoned or street children, and indigenous peoples (Blickem *et al.*, 2018).

All the participating churches, therefore, seemed to address the immediate needs of the vulnerable members of the community, which is the welfare approach to community development. Their approach, however, was not systematic. Charity work was often implemented through individual congregations as and when church women got access to resources. There was a lack of a well-thought-out strategy for the execution of charity work. The lack of a collective strategy among the church denominations confirms Magezi's (2017) observation that churches are ineffective in carrying out community activities because of lack of clearly defined strategies. Their potential contribution to effective community development has been hindered by poor coordination and limited capacity to collectively organise charity work (Magezi, 2017). This assertion was confirmed by a participant from the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God who highlighted that:

“Asizake siqoqane njengamabandla ukuthi sibambisane ukwenza lumsebenzi ngoba asizake sibelomqondo lakho, njalo siyabe singakwazi ukuthi ukuze sikwenze kumele siqale ngaphi” (We have never mobilised ourselves as church partnership because we have never given it a thought and we don't even know where to start) (Participant 6: Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God, Focus Group Discussion, Females).

This reveals that the church denominations have never been mobilised and capacitated to employ various community-building strategies and they have never been capacitated on the impact of collaboration on community development (Magezi, 2017). Besides the provision of basic needs to the poor, the churches also emphasised that they provided spiritual support by

praying and providing counselling services to the vulnerable groups in the community which they perceive to be significant in community development. One participant stated that:

“We believe in loving and giving things to our neighbours. The giving is not confined to material things but in sharing the word, giving each other emotional support during sickness or death” (Participant 4: FGDs, Roman Catholic church, Males).

This is a spiritual-psychosocial approach permeated with a tinge of religiosity toward value formation, personal development, and social commitment (Quimbo *et al.*, 2018). This means that within the Christian community, community development is generally perceived as the church’s response to the welfare and spiritual-psychosocial needs of the poor.

4.3 The role played by church women in community development

This study reveals the critical role played by women as they directly work in the community and indirectly through different roles within their churches. This section starts by highlighting the role played by women through their participation in their respective church congregations. It is important to note that the information presented in this chapter is based on the role of women mostly before the outbreak of the COVID-19 in 2019, when churches were fully operational. It is worth to note that COVID-19 protocols negatively affected the functioning of churches and other community institutions. The disruptive effects of COVID-19 pandemic manifested in most responses from the participants, as they often began with; “Before COVID-19, ...” The following are participants’ sentiments regarding the effects of the pandemic on the role of women in the church and the community at large:

“Women no longer provide their assistance as they used to do before the COVID-19 era. Some of the women are so financially strained that they cannot offer any help and because they fear contracting the COVID-19 infection, they have stopped visiting each other in times of need. We can’t meet and discuss a lot of things as we used to do in the past and we are failing to be there for each other in time of bereavement. We are even too scared to go and help the sick and for some of us who are self-employed, it’s so difficult to make ends meet because of COVID-19-induced regulations”
(Participant 2: Focus Group Discussion (Females), Roman Catholic Church).

Another participant from Agape Missions Church also highlighted that:

“COVID-19 has affected a great deal of women’s programmes as people can’t move freely. In our culture, we are not used to doing things virtually. The physical absence may be interpreted as lack of care. The COVID-19 epidemic also induced fear in the community, hence engaging in community programmes was severely affected”

(Participant 1: Focus Group Discussion (Males), Agape Missions Church).

Another participant from the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God also stated that:

“ICOVID-19 yavimba okunengi ngoba iqala khonalapho kwamiwa amachurch, kumiwa amachurch kwama into ezinengi lokuthi ukwazi ukuthi laphana konazibani kumele siyeyenza into enje besekunzima ebantwini, ngokuthi lingezwa ukuthi laphana kulomkhuhlane besekusinzimela ukuthi siyehlangana sikhonangale sesisesabela ukuthi engxenywe uyathufika kanti yiyo iCOVID-19. Kwangani abantu abaselathando kanti uthando lukhona sesabela khonalokho. Akusahlanganwa emachurch. Khathesi kuvuliwe emachurch kodwa sokulomthemtho wokuthi nxa ungahlatshwanga awungeni sokumele uqale uhlatshwe uzuhlatshwe kabili. Thina iCOVID-19 isibulele kakhulu besisakha, isakhiwo sisele kuwindow level, ngabe kungayisiwo ngabe sesisakha uphahla” (COVID-19 has severely affected our operations. When COVID-19 started, churches were forced to close and many activities were stopped as a result, it was difficult to know what to do. We were too afraid to visit the sick in case they were suffering from COVID-19. This made it very difficult to show affection to one another. Although churches have been opened now, they are only opened to fully vaccinated individuals and as such it disturbed our plans as we were building. The building was left at window level and by now we could be roofing) (Participant 6, Focus Group Discussion (Females), Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

Apparently, the COVID-19 has severely limited the activities of women within their church denominations and the community. Most church denominations were not prepared for virtual church services and meetings. Moreover, accessing social media sites like Facebook and YouTube is very costly, thus making it difficult for church members to access data so that the church continues to function through social media platforms. Table 4.1 below summarises the role played by women within the church particularly before the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019.

Table 4. 1: The role of women in church

The role of women within the church	
Cleaning/decorating/building the church	Cooking during church events (for example, during conferences)
Preaching/Teaching	Ushering/Leading Praise and worship
Providing counselling services	Providing psycho-social support (during weddings, funerals et cetera.)
Conducting Evangelism	Interceding for the church (prayer groups)
Fundraising	Supporting the needy

Source: Fieldwork research data

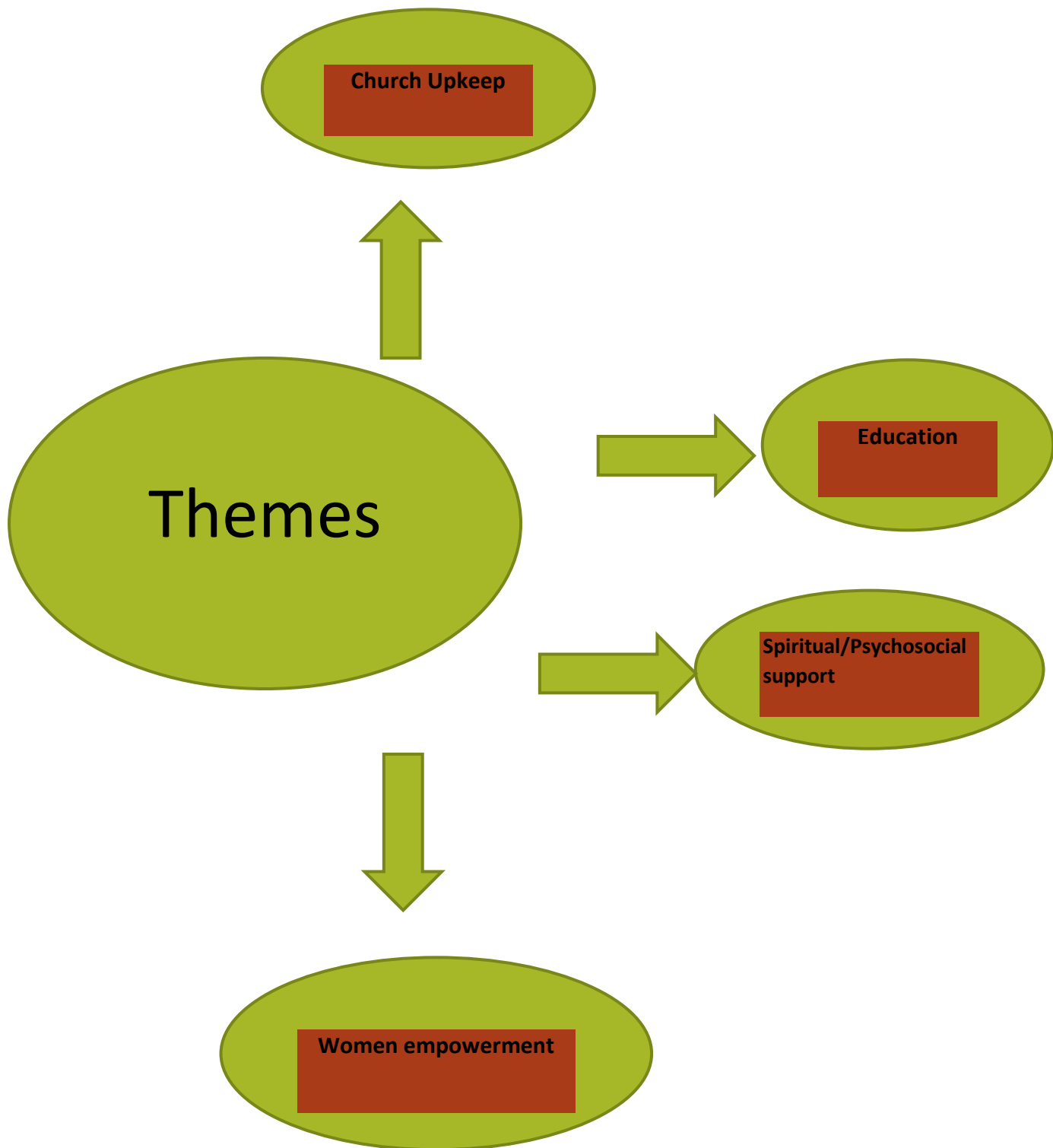
Table 4.1 shows that women commit their resources and time to various church activities. Women are the pillars in every church ministry as they constitute the largest number of congregants in churches. This means that women are heavily invested in the life of the church, and they are the most vital group in church activities. One cannot allude to the contribution of the church to community development without acknowledging the critical position women play

in sustaining the church and its activities. Therefore, the contribution of the church to community development is literally the contribution of women to community development as it is apparently impossible for churches to effectively function without women's input. The immense contribution made by women through the stated voluntary activities, therefore, cannot be ignored. The activities of women, as shown in Table 4. 1, were generated through coding and were grouped to produce the following themes: church upkeep, education, psycho-social or spiritual support and empowerment. Coding is the process of labelling and organising qualitative data to enable the identification of different themes and the relationships between them (Kiger & Varpio, 2020).

4.4 Themes

Themes are actively constructed patterns (or meanings) derived from a data set responding to a particular research question, as opposed to mere summaries or categorizations of codes (Kiger and Varpio, 2020). In this study, the themes were inductively generated as the study is qualitative in nature and its research approach is inductive as detailed in Chapter 3. Figure 4.1 depicts the themes that were generated from the gathered data.

Figure 4.1 - Themes encapsulating women' s activities within the church



Source: Fieldwork research data

4.4.1 Church upkeep

Church upkeep emerges as one of the key issues that run through the discussion and therefore qualifies as a theme. Figure 4.1 above captures details the role of women in community development as shown by women's activities in the three church denominations (Agape Missions Church, Roman Catholic Church, and Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God). Data gathered through focus-group discussions and interviews with key informants revealed that women play a critical role in the upkeep and maintenance of the church. Women ensure the smooth running of the church, and this includes ensuring a clean and safe environment for conducting church services. All the church denominations confirmed that women clean and decorate the church. One participant highlighted that:

“Women ensure that the church is clean both internally and externally, including taking care of the entire premises. They strive to provide the needs of the church both materially and financially” (Participant 5: Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Males).

Findings show that women do not merely clean the church, but also contribute money to buy cleaning materials. The African culture stipulates that women should clean the house and do general household chores. As such, women are also expected to clean the church. Arguably, cultural traditions significantly influence the church's attitude toward men and women despite Jesus' teaching in Matthew 15:6: “Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.” God's word has often been sacrificed at the altar of African culture and tradition. This confirms Oduyoye's (2004) assertion that it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish culture from religion in Africa. One male participant from Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God stated that:

“Omama kungumsebenzi wabo ukufaka iCombra phansi kufloor, ukushayina lokuhlansa indlu yeNkosi” (It is the women's duty to apply cobra, shine the floor and clean the house of God) (Participant 3, FGDs (Males), Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

The participant's attitude clearly manifests in the phrase, “*Omama kungumsebenzi wabo...*” (It is women's duty...). This implies it is culturally appropriate for women to ensure that the church premises are clean as it is believed that it is their duty to ensure cleanliness in the household.

Women do not only clean the church but are also involved in the construction and maintenance of church structures or buildings. Women contribute their financial resources through various

fundraising activities. The picture is an example of a church building that was constructed by female congregants belonging to a branch of the Roman Catholic Church in Cowdry Park Suburb in Bulawayo.

Figure 4.2 - Roman Catholic Church – Cowdry Park Suburb



Source: Fieldwork research data

It is, however, ironic to note that women seldom occupy top-leadership positions in churches. Apparently, women's lower positions in churches are influenced by culture. Cultural practices impose a double burden on women. Whilst they are expected to clean the church, which is perceived to be a "feminine" role, they are also expected to build the church, a role which is culturally considered as a "masculine" one. This challenge is similar to the burden faced by professional women who are expected to perform household duties with minimum help from their husbands and, at the same time, they are expected to contribute to the financial needs of the family through professional work. Although contemporary men do a bigger share of domestic chores and household work than any generation of men before them, working women, especially working mothers, continue to do significantly more (Botool *et al.*, 2013).

A participant from the Apostolic Jerusalem of God highlighted that:

“ICOVID-19 ingakaqalisi besisakha ibandla ngakho ke isakhiwo sethu sisele ku window level. Besidinga imali ngoku Fundraiser sithengisa ukudla” (Before the outbreak of COVID-19, we were building our church premises but because of the disease our building project stopped at window level. We used to fundraise for this project through selling food) (Participant 8: FGDs (Females), Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

The above assertion demonstrates how women have contributed greatly to the development of the church as an institution. Women also fundraise to renovate the church, purchase church furniture such as chairs, and cooking pots during church events like conferences and so on. One participant emphasised this point by stating that:

“Ungabona ibandla limile ngomama” (Women are great pillars of the church. Without their contribution, the church would not function properly) (Key Informant: Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe).

Another participant added that:

“Omama bengabona ukuthi amawindi echurch sefile lokunye okunjalo bayahlanganisa amakhanda batshaye imali kuthengwe izinto kufakwe ezintsha” (Whenever women observe that church windows are broken and other things need to be repaired, they come together and contribute money for that cause) (Participant 4: Focus Group Discussion (Males) Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

This sentiment confirms that women participate in all aspects of church life. In 1994, the Synod of Bishops at Rome also acknowledged that women in Africa constitute the backbone of church and society (Chimhanda, 2013).

Church upkeep is necessary as church buildings are not solemnly used for church services, but they are used for a host of other community events, including community meetings. Church buildings are also utilised for holding empowerment projects for local community members. For instance, Agape Missions Church highlighted that they provided free education to several orphans through Agape College and women are taught Cutting and Designing courses at their church premises. Churches also accommodate desperate members of the community during times of crises. Agape Missions Church sheltered over 200 people whose informal urban homes had been destroyed by the Government of Zimbabwe in its national blitz dubbed ‘Operation Murambatsvina’ in 2005 (*The Guardian*, 2005). Thus, church buildings or structures are very

essential community assets and women are playing a critical role in maintaining them hence they enhance and facilitate community development.

4.4.2 Spiritual and Psychosocial support

4.4.2.1 Spiritual Support

Spiritual support emerges as one of the key issues that run through the discussion and therefore qualifies as a theme. Spiritual support is the assistance provided with the explicit purpose of increasing the recipient's religious beliefs and behaviours (Krause, 2021). Women are at the fore-front when it comes to supporting the church's spiritual programmes. Women stated that they ensured that there is order in the church when spiritual activities are taking place. They reportedly participated in ushering during church services. They cooked during conferences, participated in praise and worship programmes through singing and leading people into the presence of God; therefore, women contribute to the spiritual growth of the congregants. They also carry out preaching and teaching sessions and intercede for the church and its leadership. It was emphasised that women pray and fast for the church to experience growth and for its general success. One participant noted that:

“We have intercessory groups and we are involved in praise and worship programmes, including ushering and preaching” (Participant 2: FGDs (Females), Agape Missions Church).

Through door-to-door evangelism, women invite new converts to church and that contributes to a rise in church membership and growth. They also follow up on church members who are no longer coming to church, encouraging them to return. This has contributed to the stability in church membership and its sustainability. One participant stated that:

“Women have played a major role in spiritual planting, nurturing, growth and physical assistance, covering social gaps through door-to-door evangelism visiting various community members, uplifting them spiritually, offering guidance and counselling services according each member's needs” (Participant 4: FGDs (Females) Agape Missions Church).

Another participant also highlighted that:

“Siyahamba sithandazelana njalo sivuselela abanye bethu ngoba emabandleni bakhona abanye abantu ongacina ungasamboni; so, siyahamba sisiyabavuselela. Siyahamba sifundisa njalo sinxusa abantu ukuthi sibe labo emabandleni” (We move around praying for one another and encouraging one another as some of our members sometimes entirely stop coming to church. We also evangelise through teaching and we invite people to church) (Participant 7: FGDs (Females) Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

All these spiritual activities, therefore, contribute to the maintenance of a stable church membership and spiritual growth or maturity of the church members. As more people come and stay in church, they contribute money through offerings, and this has led to the sustainability of the church and an increased ability of the church to attend to issues affecting the community. The women also highlighted that they prayed for their communities to experience peace, which is the most fundamental asset of the community-building agenda, personal growth, and the very survival of mankind. At the heart of many religious faiths, practices, and cultures, is advancement of peaceful co-existence, which is essential to ensuring productive, meaningful lives and sustainable societies (Hoffman & Hancock, 2017).

Besides praying for their communities, women also pray for one another. The companionship and prayer support they provided to each other have been shown to reduce stressful experiences that have been perceived as capable of increasing the risk of developing physical and mental health problems (Krause *et al.*, 2001). When women are physically and mentally healthy, they can contribute positively to community development.

4.4.2.2 Psychosocial support

Psychosocial support emerges as one of the key issues that run through the discussion and therefore qualifies as a theme. Psychosocial support refers to the actions that address both the psychological and social needs of individuals, families, and communities (Rogers & Stanford, 2015). Women in churches offer psycho-social support services to each other and other church members during difficult times, therefore contributing to community development and positive mental health outcomes. People who go to church are less likely to experience mental health problems. Several studies suggest that people who are more religious tend to enjoy better health than those who are less involved in religion (Levin, 1994). One participant noted:

“When you join a church and you are part of the ladies’ fellowship, they treat you as part of the Christian family. Therefore, you enjoy that family support, even during difficult times. They cry with you and support you during times of bereavement and ill-health. The church family also celebrates with you and contributes resources during good times like weddings, birthday parties or holidays like Christmas and Easter. Even if you do not have sufficient money for the wedding, they pledge money and other resources and your stress will be reduced” (Participant 2: FGDs (Females), Agape Missions Church).

Apparently, the above assertion suggests that women in church provide psychosocial support to one another during women’s fellowship services. The women stated that before the outbreak of COVID-19, they used to meet once weekly for ‘women-only’ services. During the meetings, they would offer each other emotional support and counselling services through the word of God. They indicated that after such meetings they would feel strong and energetic enough to boldly face the hostile world. Research also indicates that people with strong psycho-social support networks tend to cope more effectively with stressful life events than those who do not (Krause, 2021).

Another participant also indicated that:

“We are very active in helping one another in times of bereavement. Precisely, we visit the bereaved families to console them. We contribute money and also buy groceries” (Participant 1: FGDs (Females) Roman Catholic Church).

Another participant added that:

“Whenever one of us has been admitted in hospital, we send a basket of fruits and money. We visit the sick and pray with their family. We give them one-on-one support by washing cleaning and cooking for them. We also celebrate our birthdays by giving each other certain amounts of money every year” (Participant 6: Focus Group Discussions (Females) Roman Catholic Church).

Psycho-social support eases the burden on vulnerable members of the community who are also church members. Thus, this kind of support contributes positively to the women’s overall mental health. Mental health is integral to overall human health and well-being and thus it is essential for sustainable community development (Francis, 2014).

4.4.3 Women empowerment

Women empowerment emerges as one of the key issues that run through the discussion and therefore qualifies as a theme. Women in churches occupy a critical position in empowering fellow church members. As highlighted in Chapter 2, empowerment is a very broad concept. The World Bank (2003:25) defines empowerment as, “the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.” Kabeer (1999) suggests that concepts such as gender, social norms and knowledge can be used as indicators of empowerment to assess the results. The church women indicated that from time to time they impart informal knowledge to each other, which is an indicator of empowerment (Kabeer, 1999).

During their ‘women only’ mid-week meetings, women empower each other with different sets of life skills which contribute to their economic well-being. One participant highlighted that:

“We hold women-only services to equip each other on different aspects of life. Teach and equip each other on self-help projects and entrepreneurship skills” (Participant 8: FGDs (Females) Agape Missions Church).

Churches now comprise women with business skills. Some women are professional farmers, cooks, hairdressers, etcetera. The women highlighted that they benefited from each other’s skills during their mid-week ‘women-only’ services. A participant stated that:

“Siyatshayelana amaclub, every Thursday kulwesine sihamba siphethe something, sitshayelana amagroceries lemali. Besekusithi ngemva komnyaka sesikwabelana. Kuyasisiza kakhulu ukuthi sibelakho okokudla singathenganga okwesikhathi eside ngekhaya. Imali yakhona ingisiza kakhulu ukubhadalela abantwana ischool fees lokuwoda izinto zokuthengisa, Sengaqalisa lokugcina inkukhu zamasaso, Impilo yami sitshintshile. Sebebanengi omama ebandleni abazingcitshi ekufuyeni inkukhu. Bayasisiza ngolwazi olusinceda ukuthi siphumelele ekufuyeni inkukhu. Ngenxayalokho angisalali ngendlala. Impilo yami singcono njalo nyakholwa ukuthi senginganceda abanye. Ibusiness yami isasencane kodwa nyakholwa ukuthi ngolwazi esengilutholile sengingaphila lemuli yami” (We have formed clubs, and as such when we meet every Thursday for our women’s services, we contribute money and groceries, which we share at the end of the year. This helps us to go for a long time without buying groceries. The money also helps us to pay school fees for our children as well as buying things for

resale. I have started a chicken rearing project and my life has changed. In our church there are several women who have expertise in chicken rearing. They give us tips on how to successfully manage the chicken project. As a result, I no longer starve. My life has greatly improved and I believe that I can also empower others. My business is still small but I believe that with the knowledge I have acquired I can survive with my family) (Participant 1: FGDs (Females), Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

This finding demonstrates that woman can be creative when exposed to empowerment programmes and they have the potential to expand when resources are availed to them. Women in the sampled churches are playing an enormous role in empowering each other both spiritually and economically. Women assist each other with start-up capital to initiate income generating projects. Hence, women empower one another to alleviate poverty. The community at large also benefits when church women share the acquired knowledge and skills with other community members. This has immensely contributed to community development.

The older women who are part of the churches also impart knowledge to younger women. One participant (an old woman) revealed that:

“We are commanded in scripture and according to Titus 2 verse 4, we elderly women should train young women to love their husbands and children. So, we should prioritise giving information to young newly married women or those who are preparing for marriage so that they can enjoy peace in their homes” (Participant 3: FGDs (Females), Agape Missions Church).

This shows that older women in churches are advocating peace in marriages through biblical teachings, which therefore leads to reduction in cases of domestic violence.

One participant, a young woman who had just got married highlighted that:

“A week before my wedding, church women organised a kitchen tea party for me. They taught me a lot of things about being submissive to and keeping a man. I learnt a lot of things, especially from the older women, as they have managed to keep their marriages for a long time and they are experienced” (Participant 5: FGDs (Females) Agape Missions Church).

This attests to the fact that younger women in churches have confidence in the teachings of older women and are willing to follow their admonishments. Families are what constitute communities, and as such, when peace prevails at family level, the same would obtain at

community level. Community development can only occur when families are unified. Goodman and Dollahite (2006) have reported that a belief in sacred marriage includes a belief that marriage is part of God's plan and that God is involved in the marriage, which results in marriages that exhibit more stability and unity, increased growth and motivation and higher levels of happiness and peace. Evidently, increased levels of religious engagement between spouses, coupled with a shared belief in the sanctification of marriage, decreased the likelihood of negative interactions during periods of conflict (Kusner *et al.*, 2014).

It is, however, important to note that this role played by older women should be exercised with a degree of caution as teaching women to be submissive can have catastrophic effects on women who are prone to physical abuse at the hands of their husbands (Clark *et al.*, 2018). An elderly woman, who was also a pastor, expressed concern over the adversity of the issue of submissiveness. She highlighted that most churches concentrate on educating the woman to be submissive to the man and this leads to unbalanced scales in marriage, as males are favoured. She exclaimed:

“Vele indaba le ilenkinga omama siyafundiswa kakhulu, kufana lokuthi ma inkazana isiyakwenda siyalaywa, kumbe ekhula khonalaphana uyafundiswa ukupheka, ukugezisa lanilani, uyafundiswa konke but umtwana ongumfana kuyini akufundiswayo? Lokuthi uphatha njani umkakhe kakwazi. Lokuthi yena vele irole yakhe as a husband kuyini, uyabengayazi. Umfana uyasalela emuva. Yikho okwenza labafundisi behluleke ukufundisa abafana ngoba labo abazange bafundiswe, abakwazi ukuthi bafundiseni. Obaba laba labo kumele bafundiswe ngoba imfundiso iyasilela ngale kubobaba. Umuzi ukuthi usebenzekuhle ubaba lomama kumele babekwazi ukuthi umtshado ugcinwa njani” (This is a very serious matter because women get a lot of teachings. When a girl is preparing for marriage, she gets comprehensive teachings on how she should behave in marriage. When a girl is growing up, she is taught everything, including how to cook and how to wash dishes, but who teaches the boy-child? The boy-child is not taught how to treat his wife; neither is he enlightened about his role as a husband. The boy-child trails behind as a result. This is a challenge facing pastors, as they cannot teach young men about marriage because they were not also capacitated on how to look after their wives. Men should be taught these things because for a home to function harmoniously, both the man and the woman should be conversant with fundamental issues that sustain their marriage) (Key Informant: Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe).

The participant highlighted that although men sometimes organise a bachelors' party before the wedding for the boy-child, marriage-related teachings are rarely imparted because it is never perceived as a priority whereas it is almost impossible for a girl-child to get married without a kitchen tea party being held to give her comprehensive knowledge on how to take care of her husband. To that effect, the participant from EFZ lamented that this attitude of concentrating only on women must be discontinued and men should be introduced to intensive teachings as well. This will complement the work women are already doing in church, that is, promoting peace at home and in the community at large.

4.4.4 Education

Education emerges as one of the key issues that run through the discussion and therefore qualifies as a theme. Women in churches indicated that they contribute to the education of orphaned and vulnerable children through paying their school fees. They stated that they fundraise or contribute money from their own pockets. They indicated that in circumstances where they do not have money, they stand in as proxy for the orphans' parents. One participant highlighted that:

“Siyakhangela lezintandane, siyabahambela, hanti echurch kuyabe kulabanye abazintandane so siyazihambela izintandane leziyana sibone ukuthi bahlezi njani, kumbe ezikolo laphana ukuthi bayahamba yini ezikolo nxa kuyikuthi ngabantwana okokuthi bayaswela siyabahambisa ezikolo ukuthi bayencidiswa kuBEAM. Ngoba kwesinye iskhathi uyabona umtwana elokhu exotshwa esikolo ngenxa ye school fees, kanti kuyabe kungelamuntu omumelayo” (We are involved in caring for the orphans. There are orphans in the church; so, we visit them at home to see how we can help them. If we have realised that these children are not able to pay school fees and are not going to school, we take it upon ourselves to go and represent them at school so that they get assistance from BEAM. A child might be ejected from school because of non-payment of school fees, and no one will be representing them) (Participant 7: FGDs (Females), Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

The Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) is an important national pro-poor government funding programme that targets children from Zimbabwe's marginalised and vulnerable communities. BEAM is the largest form of educational assistance initiative in Zimbabwe. It is a government programme that pays school fees for primary and secondary

school learners who cannot afford basic education in Zimbabwe. The programme is coordinated by the Department of Social Services (DSS) within the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Apparently, women in churches are playing a critical role in fostering educational provision as they pay school fees for vulnerable children. Understandably, education unlocks community development.

4.5 The role of women in the community

As indicated in the above discussion, women contribute to community development at two levels. Women contribute to community development at two levels, that is, indirectly through their various activities in the church, as well as directly through the work they do in their communities. Table 4.2 summarises the role played by women in the community.

Table 4. 2: Role of women in community development

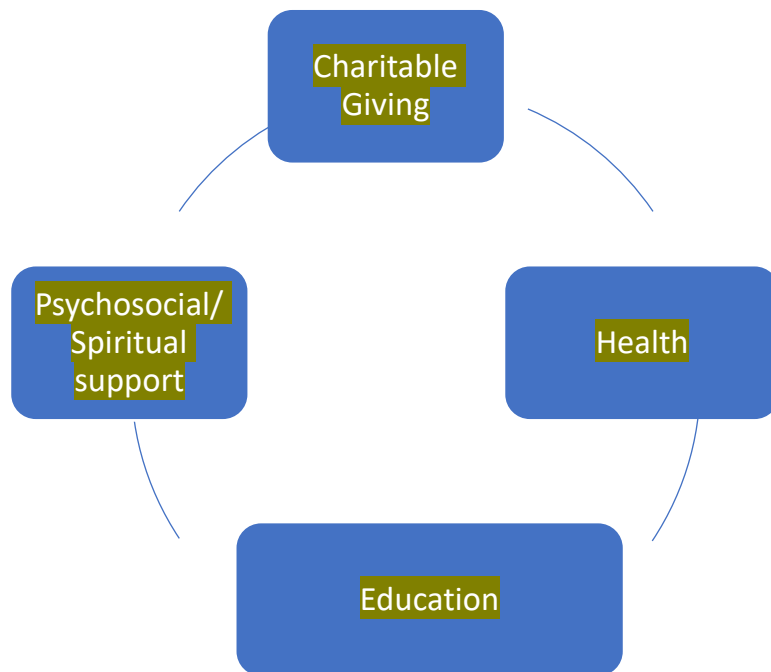
Role of women in the community	
Providing food and clothing to vulnerable community members	Providing educational support (school fees, et cetera) to orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs)
Funding vulnerable groups (widows) to start self-help projects	Evangelism and/or counselling
Responding to community disasters	Praying/ visiting and providing home-based care to the sick

Source: Fieldwork research data

4.6 Themes

The themes emerging from data detailing the role of women in the community were: charitable giving, psychosocial or spiritual support, education, and health. These themes are presented in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4. 3: Themes for the role of women in the community



Source: Fieldwork research data

4.6.1 Charitable giving

Charitable giving emerges as one of the key issues that run through the discussion and therefore qualifies as a theme. Women from the three church denominations highlighted that they mainly give food stuffs and clothing to vulnerable or needy members of the community, particularly widows, orphans, the elderly, the disabled etcetera. One participant said:

“Vulnerable individuals, widows and child-headed families have been assisted with food hampers. When women do door-to-door evangelism, they meet such needy families” (Participant 4: FGDs (Females), Agape Missions Church).

Another participant also added that:

“Women have, on several occasions, given assistance to the community through visiting orphans and widows, assisting them with books, clothes, blankets and food” (Participant 1: FGDs (Males)Agape Missions Church).

This finding reveals that women are so dynamic because whilst doing spiritual activities such as evangelism, they also identify the needs of vulnerable members of the community. The women further stated that they also identify needy people in their own neighbourhoods. So, they help them through their women’s groups from their churches. Although the Agape Missions Church does not have a separate registered organisation that is solemnly concerned with providing aid to vulnerable members of the community, they have a church arm called Mercy Ministry which is mainly composed of women who fundraise through the Mercy Ministry basket and then give whatever is donated to the vulnerable members of the community. The women in churches also indicated that they donate items to established charitable institutions such as old people’s homes, children’s homes, etcetera. The women also indicated that they contribute money to be donated to the poor members of the community. One participant lamented that:

“Women also get to an extent where they provide from their own pockets and own homes to help the identified needy individuals in the local community. All this is being done under women or ladies’ ministry” (Participant 3: FGDs (Females), Agape Missions Church).

This reveals the women’s compassionate character and how passionate the women are about assisting the poor members of the community. Women from the Roman Catholic Church also stated that they are involved in charitable activities in their community. One of the women highlighted that:

“Women in my parish have been offering lunch and a few groceries to an orphanage. This is done on a quarterly basis. They have also supported the needs of the girl-child in the form of sanitary wear. We also have what we call the Small Christian Community. In these communities, we look into our needs within the church and then look outside in the broader community. We encourage everyone to fully participate and engage in welfare activities within the community. We assist vulnerable members of the community with food stuffs. We visit the sick at Ingutsheni Hospital and assist them with food stuffs and toiletries that we donate. We have even developed the Isiphala concept (Basic grocery or food items) at diocesan level. The items are distributed to

various people that are in distress” (Participant 1: FGDs (Females), Roman Catholic Church).

Evidence depicts the Roman Catholic Church as one of the most active churches in community development in Zimbabwe. Women from the Catholic Church highlighted that they mostly concentrated on assisting the vulnerable members of society through food and clothes; however, much of their community development is channelled through many registered organisations operating under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church, such as Catholic Relief Services, CARITAS, Mastered Seed and so on. The Roman Catholic Church also owns several schools and hospitals in Zimbabwe. These organisations employ women, thus enabling them to contribute to community development in their individual capacities.

The women belonging to the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God highlighted that they provide food and clothing mostly to the vulnerable members of their church. Although they concentrate on assisting their church members mostly due to funding constraints, what is important to note is that they are still contributing to community development as their church members are also members of the community. They stated that they earnestly desire to assist all the disadvantaged members of their community regardless of religious affiliation but are constrained by lack of resources. They highlighted that if they got funding, they would start projects like chicken rearing, which could positively impact their communities. That is, however, debatable. It is likely that if that were to happen, the members of their church would benefit more than ordinary community members, as observed by James (2009), who noted that churches’ interventions tended to mostly benefit their members, which is contrary to true community development. One participant from the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God highlighted that:

“Kukalutshwane ukuthi omama ebandleni lethu bayanceda phandle ngokokudla loba nje benceda ikakhulu ngokuyathandazela abantu” (It is rare for women in our church to go and assist ordinary community members with food and clothing. However, they mostly assist by offering prayer support) (Participant 5: FGDs (Males), Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

The findings show that the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God mainly provides spiritual support to the general members of the community. However, women in all the churches are generally involved in charitable activities meant to assist the poor members of the community. Their level of assistance is, nevertheless, determined by access to resources.

4.6.2 Psychosocial/Spiritual support

Psychosocial/Spiritual support emerges as one of the key issues that run through the discussion and therefore qualifies as a theme. Women from the three church denominations indicated that they provide spiritual and psychosocial support to the sick and distressed members of the community. One participant stated that:

“Siyaphuma laphandle sikhulekela abagulayo, nxa silesikuphethayo siyabatshiyela”
(We go out to the community, praying for the sick. If we have something, we give it to them) (Participant 3: FGDs (Females), Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

Another participant also added that:

“We do visit the old people’s homes, Entembeni and women’s prison. We also share the word of God with them” (Participant 4: FGDs (Female) Roman Catholic Church).

In the same vein, a participant from the Agape Missions Church stated that:

“Women do door-to-door visits, visiting various community members, uplifting them spiritually, offering counselling and guidance services according to their needs”
(Participant 5: FGDs (Females) Agape Missions Church).

This shows that women in churches mostly offer psychosocial and spiritual support through prayer and sharing of the word of God. Women also offer counselling services to distraught members of the community. One participant stated that:

“Women take the lead when it comes to helping the family adjust to new realities and challenges” (Key Informant 2: Agape Missions Church).

4.6.3 Education

Education emerges as one of the key issues that run through the discussion and therefore qualifies as a theme. Women highlighted that they pay school fees for orphans and other vulnerable children in their communities. One participant indicated that:

“Women in our church are also involved in assisting orphaned and vulnerable children with payment of school fees for both primary and secondary education. This is sometimes done in collaboration with Forgotten Voice - a Christian organisation that

assists with fees payment for orphans and vulnerable groups” (Participant 3: FGDs (Females), Agape Missions Church).

It is apparent that women in church play a critical role in the education sector as primary education is perceived as the most important stage of human development. It forms the foundation for all forms of further education. It is the gateway to social cohesion, peace, harmony and development and it promotes community development in several ways (Mujuru, 2016). Secondary school education also refines the value of primary school education in the pursuit of community development. Investing in secondary school education is also a vital tool for poverty alleviation and reduction as well as economic development and the promotion of women’s rights (Sweetman, 2001). It is through education that sustainable community programmes can be realised. Another participant added that:

“The contribution of women in church to a society’s transition from pre-literate to literate is, likewise, undeniable. Research has shown that education can improve agricultural productivity, enhance the status of girls and women, reduce population growth rates, enhance environmental protection, and widely raise the standard of living. Mothers, in most families, often urge children of both genders to attend and stay in school” (Participant 1: FGDs (Females), Agape Missions Church).

This shows that women value education and are playing a critical role in promoting it.

4.6.4 Health

Health emerges as one of the key issues that run through the discussion and therefore qualifies as a theme. Women in the churches under study also highlighted that they contribute positively to the health sector through their voluntary work. They provide unremunerated home-based care services to the sick, especially the chronically ill. This contributes to community health. Women visit the sick and the elderly, cleaning their homes. One participant stated that:

“Women in church are the primary caregivers and caretakers of the sick children and elders in the community. They help the sick and clean their homes” (Participant 4: FGDs (Males), Agape Missions Church).

Various studies have revealed that home-based care work is mostly carried out by women. When a community or family member has fallen sick, it is women who usually carry out the caring duties (Grown *et al.*, 2005; Akintola, 2004a;). This is true because women are also

entrusted with the responsibility of providing home-based care at both family and community levels. Zimbabwean hospitals and clinics are financially constrained; hence, their capacity to provide long-term healthcare and support to chronically ill patients is limited. For many, home-based care programmes are an invaluable alternative to institutionalised medical care. Healthcare is a necessary aspect of community development as the effect of health on the quality of life can also negatively impact the desire to participate in civic duties like voting, as well as social functions and leisure activities (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2019).

4.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the empirical findings on the role played by women in churches in community development. It has been highlighted that women contribute to community development at two levels, that is, through the various activities they do within the church and in the community. The role they play within the church includes church upkeep, spiritual or psycho-social support, education, and the empowerment of women, whilst the role of women in the community includes charitable giving, psycho-social or spiritual support, education and health.

CHAPTER 5

FACTORS LIMITING THE MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN CHURCHES IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Introduction

As observed in Chapter 4, women in churches play a fundamental role in community development. However, from the researcher's interactions with participants, it is apparent that women are confronted with several obstacles that limit their full potential in community development. This chapter details the challenges that hinder the full participation of women in churches in community development. These include church structures, the relationship between the government and churches, limited funding, poor coordination, patriarchy and differences in church doctrines.

This chapter repeated the research questions through a synthesis of evidence so that the interpretation of the research findings is applied to each research question as presented at the beginning of the study. The data gathered answered the following research questions; How do structures in church organisations encourage or prevent the participation of women in churches in community development? How is the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe and how does that relationship affect the participation of women in community development? Do women in churches participate fully in community development in Bulawayo?

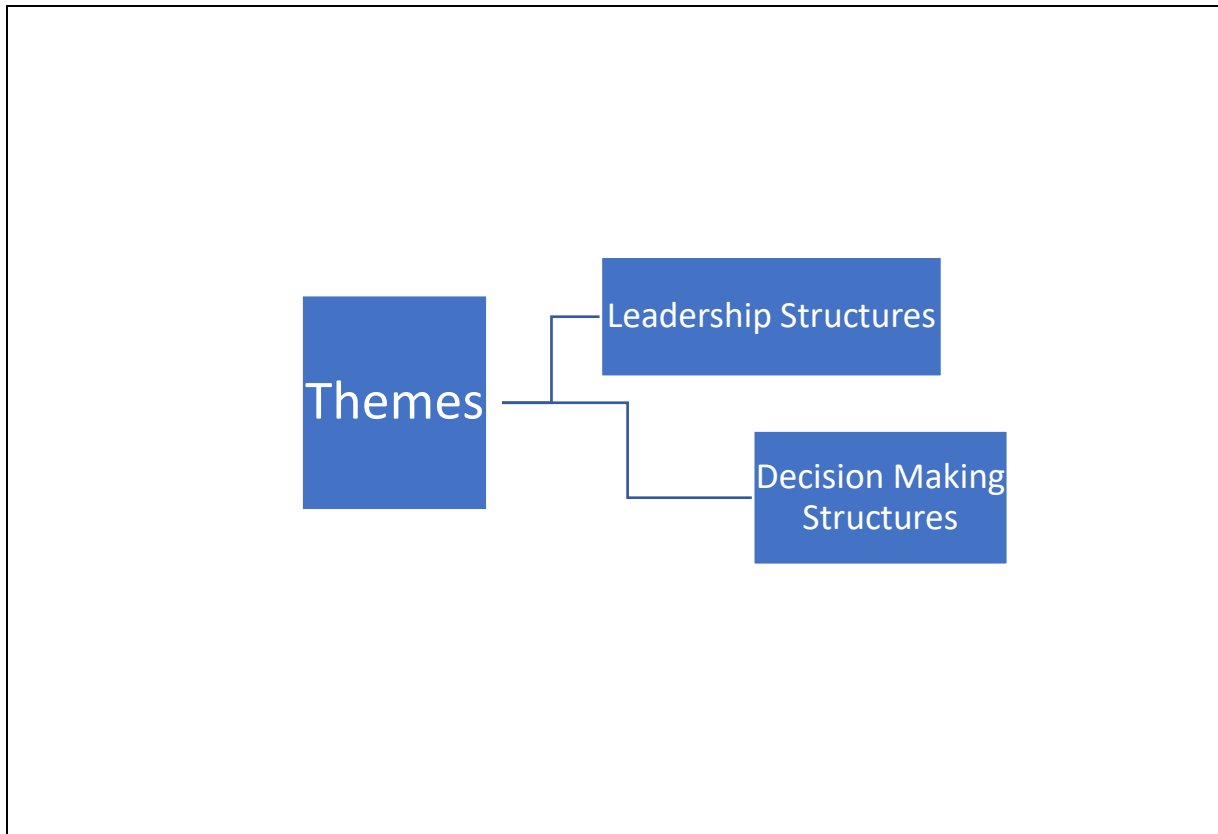
5.2 Church structures

The findings from the researcher's interaction with participants revealed that church structures are designed to relegate women to non-influential positions in the church. Although all men from the three church denominations were very supportive of women occupying leadership positions, most of them highlighted that the top leadership positions in the church belonged to men, in accordance with the biblical order of things. This kind of situation renders women powerless and confines them to a situation where they are not able to make critical decisions in church. Most women are afraid to challenge this order because of fear of being rebellious against God.

5.3 Themes

The themes that were generated from data were leadership structures and decision-making structures, as presented in Figure 5.1

Figure 5.1 – Church Structures



Source: Fieldwork Research Data

5.3.1 Leadership Structures

The vision of increasing women's leadership is not just an idea of church women but human rights issue in other institutions across the world. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender Protocol, signed by SADC member states, targeted to achieve 50/50 women and men in all decision-making processes by 2015. Furthermore in 2015, SDGs were developed with goal number 5 targeted at ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic, and public life. However, women are still relegated to lower leadership positions in church leadership structures. The research findings confirm that the top leadership positions are occupied by men and men are the final authority in all three church denominations.

Although women are increasingly occupying leadership positions, an invisible barrier prevents them from ascending to top leadership positions. This view was expressed by Northouse's (2016) that women experience a glass ceiling in most organisations. The church doctrines relegate women to lower leadership positions in the church and in social life. In this context, questioning male leadership implies questioning social patriarchal constructions and the sacredness of religious doctrine.

A male participant from Jerusalem church stated that:

“Omama bakhokhela abanye omama ezinkonzweni zabo. Umuntu ongumama angeke abe phezulu komuntu ongubaba. Umbalo uthi ngubaba okumele abephezulu. Ku Old Testament omama babevele bengavunyelwa ukukhokhela. UApostle Paul uthi omama kabathule enkonzweni nxa kulabafuna ukubuza bayebuza kubomkabo ngek haya. Kithi sokungcono ngoba sebevunyelwa lokuthi baporofithe” (Women lead each other in their women only services. A woman can't lead a man. The Bible says a man should lead. In the Old Testament women were not allowed to lead. Apostle Paul says women should keep quiet in church; if they have anything to ask, they should ask their husbands at home, but in our church, we allow them to prophesy). (Participant 1, Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God, Focus Groups Discussions, Males).

Therefore, this implies that women can only exercise authority when leading other women in church activities, whilst the top leadership positions belong to men. This reveals that space in the sanctuary is gendered and the boundaries are strictly adhered to. The participant intimated that this was the biblical order which must be followed in the church. One would, however, consider this as biblically inaccurate considering that, in the Bible, women such as Deborah were leaders of both men and women as indicated in Judges chapter 4. Some participants from the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God cited 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, which has proven to be controversial over the years. The scripture reads:

As in all the churches of the saints, the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

Therefore, one wonders whether the verse implies that women must never say anything in a church service. The researcher's conviction is that the text was misinterpreted because this would create a hopeless contradiction with what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11:5, which

indicates that women were praying and prophesying in the church. The observation that women were prophesying in the assembly concurs with what the apostle Peter said was characteristic of the New Covenant gift of the Spirit predicted in Joel 2,

And it shall be in the last days,' God says, "That I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy..." (Acts 2:17).

It is established through this verse that both males and females are allowed to equally prophesy. Therefore, 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 was probably interpreted by the participant out of context, because it contradicts Acts 2:17. The interpretation only serves to legitimise male leadership.

The top leadership structure at Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God is occupied by men. The bishop who is the top leader is male. The wife of the bishop also exercises some leadership powers. Although her powers are limited to the women's group, she is respected because of her position as the wife of the bishop. To show that she exercises certain powers within the women's group, a female participant stated that:

Thina silomama wethu osimelayo, uMamBishop Nxa kuyiprogramme yethu eyabomama, okwangolwesine. UmamBishop nguye osisebenzelayo. Uyasikhokhelela okwechurch yonke kuvela kuMvangeli. Besesithola invumo yokwenza inhlelo zethu. (We have our mother who represents us, MamBishop(Bishop's wife). If it is our women's Thursday programme, she labours on our behalf. She guides us concerning everything to do with the church with guidance from uMvangeli (Evangelist) and then we get approval from the church to carry out our activities). (Participant 4, Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God, Focus Group Discussion, Females)

This shows that leadership for women is also facilitated through the principle of co-dependency. Women may hold positions of authority because of their husbands' positions as bishops. Such women may exert tremendous influence, because they have a free hand in the formation of the organisation, and they set up projects that benefit women. The participants revealed that although there are certain restrictions on what women can do, the Apostolic Jerusalem church of God provides women with structures within which they may acquire and exercise responsibility. Although they are barred from accessing the higher echelons of the churches' hierarchy, they exercise power and influence through their prophetic gifts from which they command respect and influence in the church. However, the participants lamented that very often women's prophecies are ignored. This shows that there is need to bring women into the mainstream of church leadership.

Nevertheless, in the Roman Catholic and Agape Missions churches, women are generally provided with a wider range of opportunities, without overt restrictions like in the Apostolic Jerusalem church of God. The unstructured nature and unrestricted orientation of many of these churches and ministries allow women to take initiative. The Charismatic ministries do not impose any Levitical or traditional taboos on women. They regard this as being inconsistent with New Testament teaching, particularly with the missionary experience that followed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts. However, ambivalent attitudes towards women still exist. The participants from the Roman Catholic Church lamented that the top leadership structures of their church were occupied by men, and some doctrinal beliefs impose the glass ceiling on women.

One participant highlighted that:

The Catholic Church as you may be aware does not have females in the priesthood, meaning at the highest levels of church leadership women are absent (Participant 3, Roman Catholic Church, Focus Group Discussion, Women).

This was confirmed by a Key Informant who stated that this is a doctrinal issue and nothing much can be done to salvage the situation. He echoed that:

Women are absent in the ministerial/sacramental priesthood because of statutory/canonical, doctrinal or theological reasons. That is how God ordained the order of things in the church and that is the order that should be followed (Key Informant 1, Roman Catholic Church).

The participant further intimated that women are, however, allowed to occupy leadership positions in the lower levels of church leadership structures. He was vehemently opposed to the total exclusion of women from leadership positions in the church. Hence, although women are absent in the highest leadership structures in the Roman Catholic Church, there are certain leadership positions that they occupy. The participant shared the following:

Women occupy leadership positions like parish council, chairpersons, secretaries. Some lead in their small Christian communities and in different ministries such as those who care for the sick, those who animate the young people, et cetera (Key informant1, Roman Catholic Church).

Another participant expressed delight that more women are now acquiring higher leadership positions. She stated that:

Now we have women who are leaders in the parish councils up to diocesan level. This is very encouraging indeed (Key Informant, Catholic Women of Saint Anne's Association).

This depicts that Women in the Roman Catholic are attaining positions of influence within the church leadership structures. Catholic women are generally vocal and advocate against discrimination of women in their church. Several feminists are Catholic or former Catholics. As Fitzgerald (2003) observes, Chimamanda Adichie is former Catholic, and the late atheist Mary Daly was a Catholic who eventually became a non-believer. Although Mary Daly rejected the Bible and abandoned the Christian faith, some Catholic religious feminists do not reject the Bible's authority or truthfulness, but rather give new interpretations of the Bible to support their claims of egalitarianism in their fight to oppose the oppression of women (Grudem & Piper, 2012).

At Agape, the overseer is a man and his wife co-leads with him. The participants intimated that women indeed occupy leadership positions, but they are also limited by the glass ceiling. One participant shared the following:

Women in our church are subordinate to men. Perhaps because of church doctrine or cultural beliefs that women are subordinate to men. That I don't know, but the fact is that women are lower than men and precedence is given to men on important matters in the church (Participant 4, Agape Missions Church).

Therefore, it is apparent that women occupy lower levels of church leadership in all the three church denominations and those at higher levels are still curtailed by gender and church doctrines. To emphasise that women do not occupy the top leadership positions, a participant from Christian Alliance noted the following, as she was making an observation about their organisation's community structures:

Our entry point in communities is through church structures. I'm just thinking about community structures, in terms of representation. We are based in Bulawayo, but we have community structures throughout the country. We work with church leaders, so those church leaders form a grouping that we call a hub, or a local community structure. So, from that hub we have an executive committee who are like the leadership

of that grouping in that particular community. I was looking at community structures in terms of the leadership. Its predominantly man, even in terms of the actual senior leadership in that structure it will be man, maybe on our part, in our defence as an organisation it's not necessarily because we chose that perse but when you look at religion generally man are the ones who are Pastors, and we work with Pastors. As such you find that our structures are mainly composed of man. There will be 2 or 3 women and the rest man. Largely women just take a back seat. Whatever the man says goes (Key Informant, Christian Alliance).

This confirms what was highlighted by Klingorova and Havlicek (2015) that the position of women in the community is a result of the influence of the church doctrines which are influenced by the Bible, the Koran, Book of Mormon among other religious texts and by the culture and the set-up of the church communities. Thus, relegating women to lower leadership levels in the church also affects their position in the community. The role of women in the church determines their place and status in the community. Therefore, it is necessary for church leadership structures to be revisited for the greater good of incorporating women and giving them an opportunity to fully participate in community development.

The participant from Christian Alliance further illuminated that the few women who make it to the top in their community hub are generally passive because of the influence of the African culture and thus men dominate the decision-making process. She lamented that:

The community has a bearing on how women behave and think. Sometimes I feel like most of the times even where women are put in positions of power it's for just to say women are also represented but I don't think it's always genuine to say it's because we think she is qualified for the position. Largely women just take a back seat in community meetings because sometimes cultural settings mostly in Africa don't allow women to behave in a certain way or to speak up in a circle where there are men. Sometimes you hear a woman expressing feelings of regret saying, I think I was speaking a lot in this past workshop otherwise I will be seen as a radical or they will say, "ufun' ukuzibonakalisa" (this one is too fond of publicity). So, sometimes they don't always speak out where it's necessary and this has a negative effect on the participation of women in community development although you sometimes find one or two who are naturally outspoken (Key Informant, Christian Alliance).

The above statement synchronises with what was promulgated by Mpumlwana (cited in King, 1993:165), that African culture especially as interpreted today, prevents women from playing key leadership roles in the society since it influences the roles of women in the church and their place and status in the community. This has, therefore, maintained women and the roles they play at the periphery. It is apparent from the above interactions with participants that Church leadership structures consign women to the periphery, and they do not promote the full participation of women in churches in community development.

5.3.2 Decision Making Structures

The full participation of women in decision making structures of the church is significant to the realisation of community development. However, as noted from the above discussion emanating from leadership structures, women occupy lower leadership positions in the church, and this affects their decision-making capacity in the church and in the community.

A participant from Roman Catholic Church revealed that:

Our church decision making structures are so biased towards men. In the Catholic church, at the highest levels of the church where critical decisions are made, women have no say (Participant 2, Roman Catholic Church FGDs, Females).

Another participant from the Roman Catholic Church also emphasised that women do not make any critical decisions in the church, and they are not consulted when critical decisions are made. She stated that:

In most cases the men are the ones who decide and impose their decisions on women. Men are not realistic in their decision making but women are considerate. Even if women initiate some programmes at times they are crushed by the men in leadership. Women should occupy leadership positions that matter so that they are able to make decisions (Participant 3, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Females).

However, the researcher opines that merely affording women top leadership positions without empowering them to function in those positions is inefficacious as revealed by the participant from Christian Alliance who stated that the few women who were part of the top leadership in the community hub were largely dominated by men in decision making. Another participant, a female leader from the Catholic Church also expressed discontent that women are not given opportunity to make decisions. She stated that:

The only solution is to have women given the opportunity to make decisions and implement what they see right and even if they make mistakes to learn from them. Men should stop being leaders all the time. They mess up a lot of things (Key Informant 1, Roman Catholic Church).

Therefore, these findings concur with Oduyoye's (2004) observation that women are just accepted as part of the church membership, but when decisions are made their ideas are not considered. It is evident from the researcher's interaction with participants from Roman Catholic Church that women are against any forms of discrimination and advocate for the full participation women in church decision-making structures. Thus, women are now conscious of the need for change.

A male participant from Agape Missions Church stated that:

Women do make decisions, however, the decisions are primarily made in their women's group at their discretion (Key Informant 1, Agape Missions Church).

This is confirmation that women make decisions at the lower levels of the church decision making structures during their women's church services. A female participant from Agape Missions Church also buttressed the point that women are not given space to make critical decisions. She lamented that:

Women don't make critical decisions in the church. Critical decisions are made by men. Women may contribute if given the chance, but they are not given that opportunity to participate in making overall decisions. Men makes the final decisions in the church (Participant 2, Agape Missions Church, Focus Group Discussions, Females)

The participants from all the three church denominations revealed that women need approval from the top church leadership which is generally composed of men before engaging in any community development activity. Hence, this is a protocol that must be adhered to before any approval is granted. A key informant from EFZ also lamented that women are even sabotaged by their own husbands who are Pastors. As a result, women are excluded from making decisions at EFZ (an inter-denominational organisation). She stated that:

Abanye obaba abaziqhenyi ngamakhosikazi abo. Nxa sinxusela imihlangano yabafundisi njenge EFZ, uyabukhangelele ukuthi ubaba abuye lomama. Kodwa omama bayatshiywa ngekhaya, kuthiwe ngathi leChurch ehlezi phansi, what more ku organisation. Ngale kubafundisi lakho kudinga iteaching ezwayo ukuthi babuye

labomamfundisi kusenzela ukuthi labo bafake imibono yabo. (Some men are not proud of their wives. When we call for Pastor's meetings as EFZ, we will be expecting the husband to bring his wife along. However, men usually leave their wives at home and they justify that by stating that the wife is inactive even within the church, so she has nothing to contribute to the organisation. Pastors also need to be seriously taught to give freedom to their wives and to bring them along so that they can be involved in decision-making) (Key Informant, EFZ).

Therefore, this proves that women are furthermore deprived of making decisions in FBOs because of their subordinate position within the church. This obviously limits their functionality in the community, and it hampers women's full participation in community development.

5.4 The relationship between churches and the national government of Zimbabwe and how the relationship affects the participation of women in churches in community development.

The relationship between churches and the government should never be underestimated as doing so is detrimental to women's efforts in community development. To comprehend the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe, it is necessary to highlight that churches employ different methods of executing community development activities. The participants highlighted that some churches may choose to render their services directly to communities as congregations, nevertheless, others create a separate organisation which is registered as a Trust or Private Voluntary Organisation(PVO). Churches may also collaborate with other churches to form alliances or inter-denominational organisations for effectiveness and efficiency in community development. Individual church members can also choose to create organisations which are faith-based. The common ground for these organisations is that they are all church related and cannot be separated from the doctrinal beliefs of the church.

The Key Informant from Bulawayo City Council highlighted that:

What I have witnessed happening is that churches used to directly offer help to community members as church congregations, however, of late I have realised that quite a number of churches have registered branches of the church which are responsible for humanitarian work. Its either they are registered as a Trust, or they are registered as a PVO such that they separate their work from the church and that of a

humanitarian organisation. I have personally processed a number of registration papers. They will be registering with the department of Social Development, and Social Development requires that they pass by this side at City Council and get a letter, so I have seen a number of organisations come forward, either to register as a Trust or P.V.O. (Key Informant, Bulawayo City Council).

The participant from the Roman Catholic Church confirmed this and highlighted that the Catholic Church has several of these registered community organisations. The participant, however, highlighted that they also contribute to community development as church congregations. A key Informant from Catholic Women of Saint Anne's Association stated that:

Our Church has organisations which are responsible for various activities in the community. CARITAS may come in for example, if we have a food aid programme and sometimes the food is given to the parish, and the parish distributes it to the members of the community. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is another Catholic organisation which is responsible for funding other community organisations. CRS can also fund CARITAS for a particular programme. We also have SVP, Care Ministry, Catholic Women of Saint Anne's Association, Mastered seed for orphans, we also have the health commission looking into health issues. The Catholic Church has clinics and hospitals under this commission. We also have schools. We also have the peace commission represented by Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP). When they execute these programmes, they inform the priest, showing that as much as these organisations are stand alone, they are fully connected to the Roman Catholic Church system. CARITAS Bulawayo's offices are within the church premises although the organisation is administered by a team of professionals. These organisations are very linked to the Catholic Church, and we also contribute to community development through church congregations where church members come together to solve a community problem (Key Informant, Catholic Women of Saint Anne's Association)

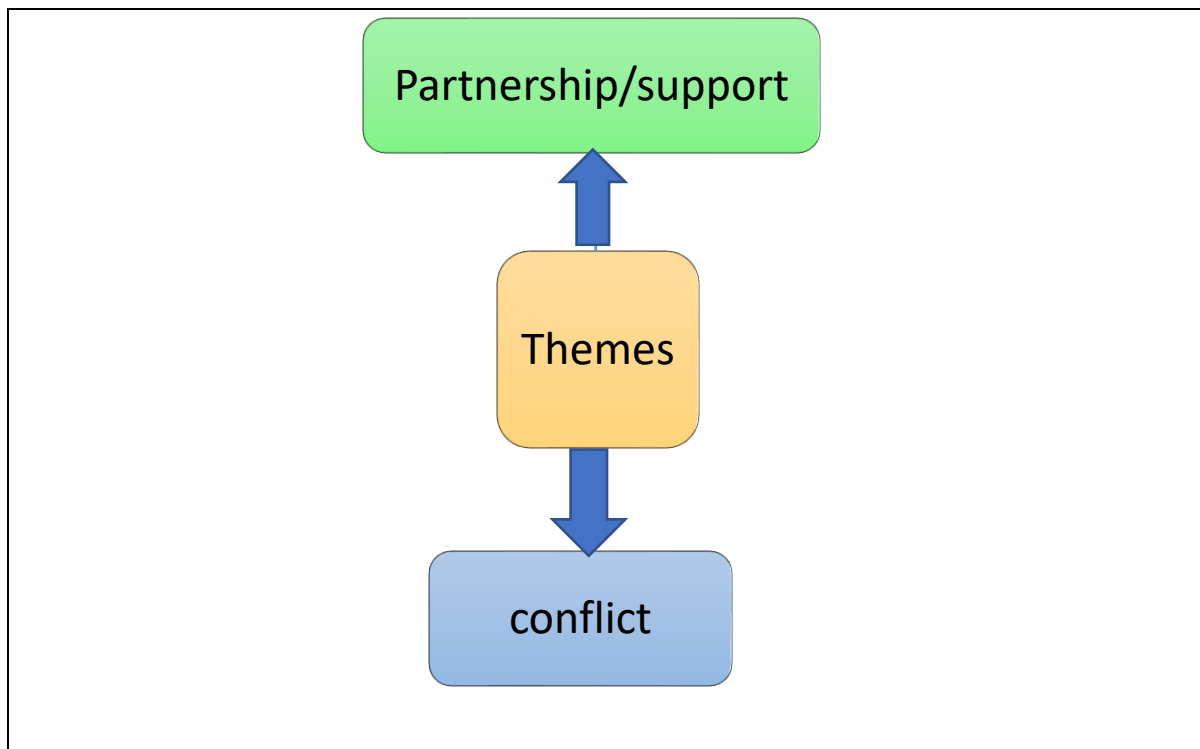
Therefore, these findings show that the Roman Catholic Church interacts with the government of Zimbabwe in community development at two levels, that is, as congregations and as the different registered community organisations. For Agape Missions Church and Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God, the participants revealed that, although they are involved in community development as church congregations, they do not have separate registered

organisations which are specifically commissioned for humanitarian work. Hence, they interact with the government as congregations.

5.5 Themes

The themes that were generated from the researcher's interactions with Key Informants from Bulawayo City Council (a local government), Catholic Women's Saint Anne's Association (a catholic FBO), EFZ (an inter-denominational organisation), Christian Alliance (FBO) and Key Informants from churches were partnership or support and conflict as displayed in Figure 5. 2.

Figure 5. 2: Relationship between the government and churches



Source: Fieldwork Research Data

5.5.1 Partnership/ Support

For a partnership to be sustainable, there must be a strong relationship which exists between partners. Partnerships represent the pinnacle of leadership and collaboration in civil society. The defining characteristics of being in a partnership include a sense of being valued, respected, and of being a part of a team. Being in a partnership is not about one person being in charge or

always getting his/her way. It is about two people listening to each other and working together to accomplish a common goal. In a true partnership, respect is present, and power is shared. Assessing the level of collaboration or partnership between churches and the government gives insight into the kind of relationship that exists between the two institutions.

The participants highlighted that since it is the duty of the state to provide community services, they expect support or an extended hand for partnership from government institutions. The Key informants from the three church denominations, however, highlighted that their church congregations have never received any assistance or support from government, nor have they partnered with Bulawayo City Council or any government institution in carrying out community development work. A participant from the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe highlighted that city council cites lack of funding as an excuse for not supporting or partnering with churches in community development projects. The community members or churches are forced to shoulder the financial burden alone. She lamented:

Njenge Bulawayo City council bahlala bakhala ngokuthi abalamali. Kungathi kungavele kudubuke amapipes okumele alungiswe yibo njengomsebenzi wabo kuba yiproblem ngoba bayafona bahle balitshela ukuthi vele asila zinto zakhona. Umuntu abasesithi ukuthi ngihlale isikhathi sonke lesi ngingelamanzi akuvumi, ngibhalelani zonke izinto ezifunakalayo ngiyezithengela. Sebebhala phansi sesiyazithengela then sebebuya bezofaka. Esikwaziyo yikuthi ungabatshela bathi vele ilizwe kalilamali manje izinto kuyabe kumele zenzakale. Nxa besehluleka ukuncedisa icommunity ngokwayo pho amabandla bengabancedisana njani lawo? Kuyamele bafake okuthile nxa kusetshenzwa ndawonye ngoba ibandla lingacina selingani selisetshenziswa ngoba nxa kulungiselelwa ama elections imali iyaphuma sebecampaigner. (As of Bulawayo City Council, lack of funding is an ongoing excuse. Whenever there are burst pipes, of which fixing them is part of their job description, they tell you that they don't have equipment to fix the problem. The person affected has an option to either buy the needed equipment or stay without water. After buying the materials then Bulawayo City Council can come and fix the problem. If the City Council is failing to help community members on things that are mandatory to do, what of partnering with churches for community development? For this partnership to be tenable, they also have to contribute something to avoid appearing as if they are abusing the church, because they seem to have money only when government is campaigning to be voted into power)(Key Informant, EFZ).

This reveals how the economic challenges in Zimbabwe are not only affecting individual members of the community, but government institutions as well. The Key Informant from the Bulawayo City Council confirmed that they are also limited by a lack of funding to partner with churches. They stated that they do not usually partner with churches although at times they do when there is an emergency. He stated that:

What I have realised happening is that churches do come up with their own programmes that they implement, as I said, within the church and outside the church in assisting the community. They just organise their programmes in the community. Here and there they do invite us as the stakeholders in the community, but sometimes they just do it on their own as a church and there is nothing wrong about that because the church, apart from worshipping, they also have a responsibility to assist those who are in need. It's part of the church and it's part of the church's Acts of goodwill to assist members of the community who are facing certain challenges. They do their own thing, and we don't disturb them (Key Informant, Bulawayo City Council).

It can be deduced from this assertion that the Key Informant from the Bulawayo City Council perceives the rendering of community assistance by churches as something mandatory. As ascertained in chapter 4, women are the ones who bear the burden of community development activities as they are the majority in church congregations. The attitude of the Key Informant from Bulawayo City Council confirms what was observed by Kongolo (2009), that women also suffer abuse in the hands of policy makers. Regardless of their immense contribution, policy makers see women as a source of unpaid labour for development initiatives and their socio-economic input goes unnoticed.

It is apparent from the above statement that churches are playing a significant role in community development, and this resonates with what was highlighted by Magezi (2017) that churches are key community institutions that play a crucial role in community development although they are not recognised. It can be deduced from the researcher's interactions with the Key Informant from Bulawayo City Council that they have never prioritised the church as a critical partner in community development and they have not thoughtfully considered partnering with churches as a strategy to alleviate poverty in communities. They are, however, sometimes forced by crises or emergencies to work together. The Key Informant from City Council highlighted that:

We sometimes work with churches when there is an emergency. We have had work that we have done with churches for instance where they partook in assisting people who are facing different challenges in the community. For instance, I will cite the, I AM FOR BULAWAYO COVID BANNER which is a grouping of churches from the city and they came together pulled their resources and mobilised the resources again from other stakeholders and they responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by assisting those who were affected by the subsequent lockdowns ever-since the pandemic started. So it was a grouping of churches and as such, they came together and they mobilised resources and we worked with them. We were part of that committee as we were rolling out some assistance to those who were affected by the lockdown (Key Informant, Bulawayo City Council).

Therefore, it is clear from the researcher's interactions with Bulawayo City Council that the relationship between churches and the government (whether local or national) for partnership is not so strong, and churches rarely get support from the Bulawayo City Council as the responsible institution for community development. This obviously affects the full participation of women in community development. However, strong partnership forged through community development activities can usher in new explicable approaches that reinforce trust, enhance public engagement, promote leadership, and promote activities and actions that are more socially and politically tolerable (Phillips & Pittman, 2014).

5.5.2 Conflict

It is important to note that conflict can be healthy or unhealthy. Healthy conflict is progressive, however, unhealthy conflict limits progress and negatively affects the relationship between the entities involved. The researcher felt that assessing whether the conflict that exists between the churches and government is healthy or unhealthy was necessary to understand the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe. The Key informant from Bulawayo City Council confirmed that there is unhealthy conflict that exists between some church organisations and the government of Zimbabwe on certain issues. He highlighted that the government has never had problems with church congregations but with church related pressure groups which oppose government regulations. He stated that:

From my personal observation I haven't encountered anything that's frosty between churches as congregations and the government. However, churches as they are right

now have different departments or wings. Within churches there are wings or departments that are responsible for humanitarian work, and these are the arms of the church responsible for rolling out humanitarian work to the vulnerable members of the church and the community. Churches also have their own umbrella bodies including the Council of Churches in Zimbabwe which has got a charter here in Bulawayo for instance. These other church related organisations which are responsible for overseeing the activities of the church within the city obviously advocate for the rights of church going people and the community. Those ones of course I realised that here and there, they agree to disagree sometimes with government on certain issues because they are more of a pressure group of churches but otherwise, I'm trying to have a differentiation between the church as the congregates who go to worship and these other affiliates organisations of the church. For instance, recently they were up in arms against the government on COVID-19 regulations which were stipulating that church members should be vaccinated for them to access church services and that umbrella body was against that and had to take government head on (Key Informant, Bulawayo City Council).

The above comment reveals that churches as congregations rarely have direct confrontation with the government of Zimbabwe, however, churches have confrontations with the government through church-related pressure groups or para-church organisations or faith-based organisations. The key informant from EFZ confirmed this to be true and stated that the greatest challenge is that the government does not consult the church when making crucial decisions that affect the church, she shared the following;

Inkinga esihlangana layo njengamabandla yikuthi iGovernment iyenza izinqumo ingasibuzanga and lokho kuyaphoxa ubudlelwano bethu. Nga kuyenzeka baqale bahlale lamachurch labafundisi phansi, kwenziwe idecision yokuthi nxa sisithi kuleproblem enje singayenza njani ngabe kuright. Ngoba khonokhuyana on its own kuyalulazisa ibandla kucommunity ngoba igovernment ingavela ikhulume, sokungani uNkulunkulu kakho labafundisi sebelulaziswa ukuthi hayi lani hanti selihlezi yi lockdown iGovernment sitshonjalo. Lani you are not allowed to go anywhere siyafanana. Lokho kuyaxabanisa amachurches leGovernment kudunge lobudlelwane Phakathi kwechurch leGovernment. Sokungungani ichurch ayilamandla, kanti ke akusiloqiniso, ibandla lilamandla, loNkulunkulu ulamandla. Kukanti bona even kuGovernment khonangale bayawadinga amandla avela kuNkulunkulu lenhlakanipho

evela kuNkulunkulu bakwazi ukuthi how can they lead abantu bakaNkulunkulu. Manje bengathathi church bayihlanganise lamabhawa, bayihlanganise lentozonke lamasocial clubs vele akwenzi.(The problem that we face as churches is that the government makes unilateral decisions without consulting churches and that spoils the relationship between government and churches. If possible, they should consult with churches and pastors so that they make collective decisions. The challenge is that decisions imposed on churches causes churches to be disrespected in the community because when the government decides on certain issues that affect the church, they usually ignore God and pastors. Pastors also feel disrespected as they are forced to abide by government regulations. This causes chaos between churches and the government, and the relationship is strained. The government behaves as if the church is weak although this is not true as we know that the church has power and God is powerful. To lead the people of God, the government also needs power and wisdom that comes from God as such they can't treat the church the same way they treat beerhalls and social clubs) (Key Informant, EFZ).

It can be deduced from the above statement that there is unhealthy conflict between the church and the government because the church feels undermined when the government makes critical decisions that affect the church without consulting them. The Key Informant from EFZ further lamented that efforts to lobby the government have proven unfruitful, she highlighted that:

Inkinga esilayo yikuthi ichurch vele kabafunikuzwa ukuthi ikhulumani. Amachurch acina ezenzela abona angani kungcono kibo. Khathesi amaChurch ayavumela ukuthi labazalwane abangekho vaccinated labo babuye ezinkonzweni and lokho kungaba luhlupho ngoba igovernment yakhuluma ukuthi okumele babuye echurch ngabahlabileyo.i Government ngabe layo iyahlonipha uNkulunkulu(The challenge is that they don't want to listen to the pleas of the church. Churches end up doing what they think is best. Now churches are accommodating non-vaccinated members of the church, and this is a potential crisis as the government stipulated that only vaccinated members are allowed to attend church services. The Government should show reverence to God) (Key Informant, EFZ).

The churches are frustrated that the government disrespects them, and the government threatens to use force when churches do not comply with stipulated regulations. This creates tension between the two institutions. A participant from Agape Missions Church also highlighted that

they have had disagreements with the government of Zimbabwe over free housing and feeding it offered to displaced persons during Operation Murambatsvina and since then, their relationship has not been fully mended. The participant stated that:

The church has a mandate to be the voice of the voiceless and speak against injustices. However, the church should remain non-partisan and we have strived as a church to do that, but the government is still suspicious of us. This has strained relations to some extent with the government. It has also adversely affected the church's community work because of fear of victimisation from political parties especially towards elections. There is need for dialogue between the two institutions, that is between the church and the government (Key Informant 1, Agape Missions)

It is apparent from the above statement that churches are limited by fear of being victimised by the government. There is a lack of trust between the government and church leaders. The participants from Roman Catholic Church also indicated that they had confrontations with government through their peace structure, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP). One participant highlighted that:

Our church has had disagreements with the government entities especially on issues of poor governance and human rights violation. The church has moral authority as well as divine powers to do so in line with Luke 4:18. The fact that the church through our leaders confronts the government over these injustices has strained relations between the church and the government. Some programmes of the church are viewed with suspicion by the government especially Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) which we now call the Social Teaching of the Church. I think it takes mutual respect not to treat politics as an enemy of the church (Key Informant, Roman Catholic Church).

A participant from an FBO called Christian Alliance also stated that the relationship is benefit oriented and is only maintained when it's the government benefiting. She highlighted that:

It's a funny relationship. Their interest centres around what they can benefit from you, so sometimes when they see that there is an advantage to associate with you and play with you, they will keep you close but if they see you as a threat of some sort then they put you in your place. So, it's an unfair relationship. The government will often give the picture that they are appreciative of the role that churches are playing in communities, they appreciate that we are a Christian nation. But I think its mostly about

what can we benefit from the church. If you look at the numbers, to say how many people go to church, it's really a significant number. If you look at it now we are going towards elections and this has been the precedence we have seen in the past, that if its towards elections the government officials start attending church services wearing their party regalia to solicit for votes from the members of the church. This is really about how can we sort of like manipulate the church, If I associate with these people, they are mostly likely going to vote for me. I feel like sometimes the church is abused by people from the government. It's an unfair relationship. We as an organisation have tried to work with the government so that they realise that this organisation is not fighting us, the agenda is how can we develop communities and how can we make life better for the ordinary citizens within a community (Key Informant, Christian Alliance).

Therefore, this reveals that the government is generally sceptical of church leaders, and the government is not comfortable with churches interfering in political affairs of the nation unless it's for the good of the government. The tension that exists between churches and the government is not new. The late former President of Zimbabwe, Robert Gabriel Mugabe's government was frequently in conflict with churches and church leaders. In year 2007, he was captured saying:

Once the bishops turn political, we regard them as no longer spiritual and our relations with them would be conducted as if we are dealing with political entities and this is quite a dangerous path they have chosen for themselves (Harare Reuters, 2007).

This was a threat to stop the pastors' involvement in political affairs of the nation. Mugabe's government banned many FBOs which were deemed political. The churches were accused of sponsoring the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). There were reports that the government used security laws to target public events and prayer rallies of religious groups, particularly those events and rallies that the government reportedly perceived as politically motivated (Zimbabwe International Religious Freedom Report, 2017). The church, however, continues to advocate for peace and justice. The Apostolic Jerusalem church of God, however, indicated that they have never had any nasty encounters with the government. A possible explanation for this might be that they are not active in advocating for the rights of their community members as they are not very active in community development.

It can be deduced from the above discussion that there is general animosity between churches and the government of Zimbabwe, although the participants highlighted that the relationship

differs from one church to another depending on the church's level of participation in community development, especially in relation to advocacy on human rights issues. Women from denominations or FBOs that are considered political are blocked by the government from providing any humanitarian assistance to community members because of the fear of vote-buying in favour of the opposition political parties. This kind of relationship obviously limits the full participation of women in churches in community development.

5.6 Other factors limiting the meaningful participation of women in churches in community development

The participants have revealed that besides church structures and the relationship between churches and government, there are other obstacles that limit meaningful participation of women in churches in community development.

5.7 Themes

The factors limiting the full participation of women in churches are presented in this section under the following themes: Funding, Doctrinal differences, Patriarchy and Poor coordination as depicted in Table 5.1

Table 5. 1: Other factors limiting the full participation of women

Themes	
Funding	Patriarchy
Doctrinal differences	Poor coordination

Source: Fieldwork Research Data

5.7.1 Funding

The findings revealed lack of funding as a major factor that limits the full participation of women in churches in community development. A participant from Agape Missions Church stated that:

Women usually fund themselves through fundraising like jumble sales, sell of meals after church services or workshops and the money is never enough to carry out all planned community activities (Participant 4, Agape Missions Church, FGDs, Males)

Another participant also added that:

I think when it comes to funding community development, women do the best they can but it's never enough because of financial constraints. Our country is also going through economic challenges. I think there are many vulnerable people in our community than those who can help. Many people don't have enough for their families so it's difficult to help others (Participant 5, Agape Missions Church, FGDs, Females).

Another participant also stated that:

The challenge that we face is that most of the work is self-funded, and in very few cases do women solicit for external funds from friends and other well-wishers. In the first place, it is the responsibility of the government, and the levels of poverty are growing

in this country. Women can only do what they can (Participant 2, Agape Missions Church, FGDs, Females).

It is apparent from the above sentiments that women fund themselves from very limited resources and they lack the necessary skill to harness alternative sources of funding. Another participant from Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God also decried:

Kuyashota esikwenzayo nxa sikhuluma ngokuthuthukisa isigaba sethu, sibonangani kuncane esikwenzayo ukunceda abantu abaswelayo njengabomama. Nga kumbe siyazuza udonor, sibeoproject eyokuthunga, ukufuya amabroiler lenkukhu zamaqanda ukwenzela ukuthi lathi sizuzimali yokiziphilisa size siphilise lecommunity (Very little is done by women in offering support to those in need and in contributing to community development. If only we could get a donor to fund projects such as sewing or poultry then we could be assisted and our capacity to also assist the community will be enhanced) (Participant 8, Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God, FGDs, Females).

Therefore, it is evident that women's charity work does not mean that they have plenty of resources, but they give out of benevolence and philanthropy although they themselves are financially unstable. This is due to economic pressures that most Zimbabweans are contending with. Another participant from the Roman Catholic Church also echoed that:

Lack of finances and economic hardships are a huge hindrance to us as women. If women could get financial support to maybe start certain projects to empower women that would help. Projects like agriculture could be helpful. Women have the capacity to do more and better, but resources are letting them down, but efforts that women display without the funding shows that they can do so much more (Participant 6, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Females).

Another participant also added that:

Most women are doing voluntary work. Funding has been very difficult to get and where it is available, it is normally coming from non-Governmental agencies. With the advent of COVID-19, funding has been very scarce. Women are therefore, doing reasonably well considering the lack of funding. We do fund ourselves but these days it's so difficult for us because our pockets are empty because of the pandemic (Participant 3, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Females).

Birdsall and Kelly (2005) and Rodriguez-Garcia *et al.* (2013) accredit this to poor coordination and lack of necessary capacity to harness funding within the church. The researcher, however, observed that although it may be true that women in churches lack capacity to harness funding, what worsens their case is that donors are also sceptical of funding church related community development initiatives. However, the fact that women in churches are already doing something to contribute to community development reveals their potential and that given the right kind of support in terms of funding, they would effectively contribute to community development. However, caution must be exercised as highlighted earlier that women in churches lack the power for decision making in top leadership structures. Unless this situation is rectified, there is a risk of women not being fully in charge of the administration of the funds. As a result, this kind of funding will further entrench women to patriarchal oppression and further detriment women's efforts in community development.

5.7.2 Patriarchy

The participants from the three church denominations highlighted that patriarchy which is embedded in church structures, is a major factor that impedes the full participation of women in churches in community development. This confirms what was stated by Maponya (2022), that patriarchy is a reality, and it exists in religion. Patriarchy is a hierarchical system of social organisation where men hold positions of power over women; a system where men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Johnson, 2014). This domination manifests itself in the values, attitudes, customs, expectations, and institutions of the society, and is maintained through the process of socialisation. Patriarchy upholds the view that men have superior control over women (Jeffreys, 2002). The following was an observation from a male participant from Agape Missions. He stated that:

There is no clear-cut distinction between male and female. In fact, everyone can exercise their gifting to minister freely. However, the inherent culture of honouring masculinity ahead of females tends to impede on the freedom of women. But otherwise in principle all are the same (Participant 3, Agape Missions Church, FGDs (Males)).

In general, churches usually deny any existence of patriarchy within their church structures but in practice, churches are still patriarchal. It is clear as acknowledged by Participant 3 from Agape Missions Church, that masculinity is honoured in churches, and this resonates with what

was highlighted by Landman (2009), that patriarchisation of the church results from male-centredness. Another participant also added that:

There are certain initiatives that are suggested by women, for example, extended social welfare for the elderly and orphans is superintendent by women. However, precedence has shown that a male Pastor usually offers advice to the group. Probably because of the patriarchal overtones in the jurisdiction (Participant 2, Agape Missions Church, FGDs (Males)).

Another participant also highlighted that:

From time immemorial our church has been patriarchal as seen in the bible in 1 Corinthians 14 verses 33-35. However, when you look at all congregations across the globe, women make up 75% of the congregation. It makes sense to me that there should now be equality in the roles of men and women in the church (Participant 4, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Females).

Another participant also stated that:

This thing of patriarchy is a serious issue because women in our church are not allowed to preach in a church service, catholic doctrine dictates preaching by the priest and priests are male however during other religious ceremonies such as small Christian community meetings gender does not dictate ability or right to share. Although we live in an age of gender equality the reality is the church is a derivative of aristocratic society which is like our current African society which is patriarchal in nature. Male and female mentality has not evolved to the point of full acceptance or gender equality and a female lead on a platform such as the church may be polarising (Participant 2, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, females).

One would note, however, that there are women in churches who perceive that there is nothing wrong with the patriarchal structure of the church. A female participant from the Roman Catholic Church expressed her sentiments that:

Sincerely I believe that women should learn in silence and allow the men to lead especially in Mass or church service. Not belittling the ability of women to lead but I am guided by scripture in the book of Corinthians. Yes, women can preach to an audience of both males and females in the absence of a priest in places like funerals (Participant 5, Roman catholic Church, FGDs, females).

This reveals that church doctrines also significantly influence the perception of some women within the church. The participant's reasoning confirms what was observed by Macdonald (2010), that women's gender subordination is deeply rooted not only in the existing structures, but also in the minds of both women and men, and it makes both women and men believe that women's inferior position is normal and natural. It is poignant to note that women face patriarchy at two levels, both in the church and at home. For women whose husbands do not go to church, for example, the husband has absolute control over activities that the wife can participate in at the church. The key Informant from Agape confirmed this and stated that:

I think what hinders the full participation of women in church to community development is the whole spousal issue. Some women in our local church do not have their husbands within the church so the appreciation of community work for the church is less from the other spouse. Baqala bayebuza obaba endlini (women need to get permission from their husband first at home) (Participant 3, Agape Missions Church, FGDs, Females).

This proves that the church system depends on male figures, regardless of whether the man is part of their church system or not. There is a strong belief that a woman should always be subordinate to a man. A key informant from EFZ explained this as she lamented that:

Inkinga esilayo yikuthi omama bakhangelelwa phansi ngobaba ngoba lasezimfeni ukusukuma utshumayeke ungumama angazi. Abantu bayabe behamba up and down, you find out ukuthi nxa ungumama uyathutshumayela benathu tshwala. Bayabe becabanga ukuthi umama engasitshelani. So kulokudelela okunjalo. Mina umkami ngumfundisi. Kwathi sokubhubhe umzalwane babuya bedinga ubaba ukuthi azotshumayela emfeni bamswela, bathi akuselamfundisi, umfundisi ubani laye simswela manje siyakuthini kodwa mina ngangikhona njengomamfundisi but babengamboni ngoba ngingumuntu ongumama, ngathi linto kumele iphele (The problem is that women are looked down upon by men. Even during funerals when you are preaching as a woman, men will be moving up and down, and some will be drinking beer whilst you are preaching. They will be thinking that a woman cannot teach us anything. My husband is a pastor, when one of our church brethren passed away, they came home looking for my husband to officiate at the funeral, but they did not find him. They said there is no more pastor to preach because we have also tried to contact pastor so and so and he is also not available. However, in the meantime I am available, and I am a pastor's wife, but I am

not considered as a pastor to officiate at the funeral because I am a woman. I said to myself, this thing must come to an end) (Key Informant, EFZ).

This is evidence that patriarchy exists in churches as well as in the community and it limits the full participation of women in churches in community development. The Key Informant from EFZ further explained how her mother suffered in the hands of patriarchal men in the church after the death of her father who was a pastor. She stated that:

Ubabawami wayengumfundisi, kwathi sebhuhile kwathiwa manje ngubani osezakhokhela ibandla, kwacina kuthwe ngumkhwenyana wakhe besitsho umkami ngenxa yokuthi ngumuntu ongubaba. Into eyayibuhlungu yikuthi umama ubesaphila kodwa akulamuntu owabona efanele ukuthi akhokhelelibandla ngoba engumuntu wesifazane. Mina ngaphoqelelwa ukuthi ngibe ngumfundisi kamama. (My father was a pastor, when he died there was a discussion about who will succeed him in the ministry. They finalised that my husband (his son in law) will take over the church because he was a man. What was painful was that my mother was still alive, but no one considered her as a qualifying candidate to take over from her husband because she was a woman. I was forced to be my mother's pastor as a result) (Key Informant, EFZ).

Therefore, it is apparent from the above interactions with participants that church structures do not encourage the full participation of women in community development and that patriarchy, which is embedded within the church structures, makes it difficult for women to penetrate to the top. This concurs with Rakoczy's (2004) observation that patriarchal power is embedded within church structures and such power hinders women from fully executing their obligations within and outside the church.

5.7.3 Doctrinal differences

The paradox is that although the three church denominations use the same Bible as their reference point and inspiration, there is a significant diversity in its interpretations, due to differences in church doctrines. In the persuasive words of West (2002:13), "one of the weaknesses of the church is the neglected crucial dimension of biblical interpretation". At Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God, the researcher was informed that their church doctrine does not permit women to attend church services during menstruation. This was confirmed by a male Key Informant who emphasised the spiritual dangers associated with admitting menstruating women in church. He stated that:

Ungathi ubona iNkosi uJesusu Kristu wathi ethinthwa umphetho wengubo zakhe ngumama owayelomophelo ebhayibhili amandla ahutshuka, wena ungubani? (If the Lord Jesus Christ lost power when the woman with the issue of blood in the Bible touched the helm of his garment, who are you?) (Participant 1, Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God, Focus Group Discussion, Males).

According to this participant, the healing of a menstruating woman caused Jesus to lose power, insinuating that menstruating women negatively affect the spiritual flow of power in the church. Thus, women in this church suffer from stigma and discrimination as a result of menstruation. The scriptures used to justify this doctrine are derived from the synoptic gospels: Mark 5: 24–34; Luke 8: 42–48 and Matthew 9: 19–22, which read:

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, who touched my clothes? (Mark chapter 5 verses 25-30, King James Version)

It is apparent from the researcher's interactions with participants from the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God that there is menstrual stigma and religiously based menstrual restrictions imposed on women. Throughout Christian history the taboo has been the main cause for excluding women from positions of authority. Women occupy subordinate roles because of the ritual impurity attributed to them because of menstruation. This fear of defilement of the sacred by women is demonstrated by the fact that the altar sanctuary is a male only preserve. Congregational segregation is common with separate doors for each sex. Only after the removal of this persistent taboo would religious bodies come to treat women as full participants. The challenge is that menstrual practices create gendered roles and expectations and channel women's sexuality for specific reproductive purposes (Cohen, 2020).

The female participants from Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God were not adamant in advocating for the jettisoning of this doctrine, they decried that those who are connected to the spirit say menstruating women disturb their connection to the spirit of God and hence women

should not come to church during menstruation. A female participant from Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God stated that:

Abalomoya bathi nxa omama besesikhathini kuyabayehlisa esikalini sokukhuleka lokuxhumana lomoya, njalo vele akulahlupho ngoba ukhutha kuphela isonto elilodwa ngamanye amasonto uyabukhululekile ukukhonza. Thina futhi lezambatho zethu zimhlophe ngakho sikubona kulungile ngoba kuyasinceda ukuthi singangcolisi isambatho siziyangise enkonzweni (Those that are led by the spirit say menstruating women decrease their level of prayerfulness and connection to the spirit of God. Failing to attend just a single Sunday service is not an issue because one can attend all other church services. We perceive this as an advantage because our church garments are white in colour. Therefore, this doctrine helps us to avoid spoiling our garments and embarrassing ourselves in church) (Participant 5, Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God, FGDs, Females)

Their reasoning portrays that menstruation is still associated with humiliation. The researcher also sensed some form of discomfort and uneasiness from male participants emanating from the discussion about menstruation. What is baffling is that menstruation is a natural physiological phenomenon which is necessary for producing children. The discomfort on this subject reveals that there is a serious need to demystify menstruation and to break the stigma around it. This concurs with Shah and Madiha's (2017) observation that menstruation and women need attention because negativity about menstruation subjects women to ridicule, dismissal and trivialisation.

Feminists believe menstruation is the main reason used to prevent women from occupying higher positions in the ministry. Menstrual taboos are, thus, a product of the prevalence of patriarchal values in society to the detriment of gender equality in any society (Kamat & Tharakan, 2021). Furthermore, the stigma associated with menstruation violates human rights, especially human dignity and also the right to non-discrimination, equality, bodily integrity, health, privacy, and the right to freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment, abuse and violence (UNICEF, 2019)

Although the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God strictly adheres to the doctrine of restricting menstruating women from attending church services, at Agape Missions and Roman Catholic Church, it is considered a trivial issue. The participants from the two church denominations expressed that menstruation is a private matter that should not hinder the full participation of

women in any church activities and in community development. The participants from Agape and Roman Catholic Church criticised those churches that limit women because of menstruation stating that they are ignorant. This concurs with Magezi's (2017) view that churches have strong differences in doctrines and consequently relationship challenges arise from this. A male participant from Roman Catholic Church stated that:

That is a private matter which the church should have no interest in. It's just like if a man has flue, would we stop him from coming to church and doing church activities? The Catholic Church has no issues with that. I have never heard it being mentioned as a taboo (Participant 4, Roman Catholic Church, Focus Group Discussion, Males).

A female participant from Roman Catholic church lamented that:

We need to do away with some of these falsehoods about menstruation. I doubt if anyone would know if a woman is menstruating unless if that woman messes her clothes or makes a public announcement. Menstruation should not have anything to do with whether or not a woman should be attending a church service (Participant 2, Roman Catholic Church, Focus Group Discussion, Females).

Another participant from Agape Missions Church also expressed that women should not be limited by menstruation. He stated that:

In any case these are private issues. Who could move around checking such and what effects could such conditions affect the discharge of ministry? (Participant 3, Agape Missions Church, Focus Group Discussion, Males).

These differences in church doctrines cause churches to look at each other with suspicion and to undermine churches that are believed to be holding on to false doctrines. To a greater extent, they limit women's full participation in community development activities as highlighted by one participant who stated that:

If we would consider partnering any church, what we would not ignore is what that church believes. We believe in God so we cannot partner a church that believes in the worship of ancestors or a church which has some weird doctrines with cultic tendencies. The Bible says can two walk together unless they agree. I think it would be safe for us to partner organisations or churches that share the same beliefs or doctrines with us. That is why it is a necessary condition from the church leadership to first of all get approval from the church before executing any community development work so

that they evaluate the doctrines of the partnering organisation or church. (Key Informant 2, Agape Missions Church)

It is clear from the above assertion that the leadership's approval is necessary to protect the church from associating with churches that believe in false doctrines. The church leadership dictates modalities for execution. One would, however, note that the Roman Catholic is not as strict on who to associate with in community development. A Key Informant from Roman Catholic Church stated that:

Although we might differ in certain things, social responsibility goes beyond denominational differences, and this is in line with the Christian teachings which place an emphasis on unity. For the sake of the people who are suffering we are flexible to work with any church if such vulnerable people can access help (Key Informant 1, Roman Catholic Church).

Another participant also stated that:

Women partner with other women from other churches through Small Christian communities. Women embrace the whole community regardless of the various denominations or religion, especially when it comes to home-based care initiatives. In the community we don't look at who is coming from which church. So, we do partner with other churches although it is something that doesn't happen frequently (Participant 3, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Females)

A participant from Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God also expressed the same sentiments and stated that:

Thina esingakho yikunceda umphakathi. Yikho sihlanganyela lamanye amabandla njengaku EFZ. Asilandaba ukuthi ukhohlo lwabo lwehlukene mbijana lathi, abachothozi ukhohlo lwethu lokho kwenza kube lula ukuthi sisebenze ndawonye. Nxa sihlangene kumameetings awamachurch, bayakhokhela inkonzo ngendlela yabo asilandaba labakwenzayo thina siyabe silande ukuthi sikhulumisane njengamabandla ukwenza into engasiza isgaba sethu. (Our focus is to help vulnerable community members. As a result, we meet with other churches through EFZ. For the sake of community development, we ignore the fact that their beliefs differ from ours. They also respect our beliefs; they don't criticise our doctrines when we are around them to make us feel uncomfortable. As such, it is easy for us to work with them. During the meetings they

worship their own way, and we also respect that because our mission will be to assist our community) (Key Informant 2, Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God).

This reveals that it is not all churches that are divided in opinion on who to associate with based on doctrinal differences. Whilst other churches are particular with who they associate with, others are willing to compromise for the sake of community development. As such, differences in church doctrine can hinder the full participation of women in churches to community development especially if the church leadership does not approve the partnership because of doctrinal differences. This concurs with James (2009a) who emphasised the importance of relationships among churches in their work in communities.

5.7.4 Poor coordination

Data gathered revealed that poor co-ordination of community development activities in churches hinders the full participation of women in churches in community development. This confirms what was observed by Birdsall and Kelly (2005) and Rodriguez-Garcia *et al.* (2013), that in addition to funding constraints, churches suffer from poor coordination and integration. Poor coordination of faith inspired work looms large as a barrier to development effectiveness (World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD) policy brief, 2013). The participants stated that poor coordination stems from time constraints, lack of knowledge in executing community development activities and economic challenges. Consequently, women scale down on activities and occasionally respond to community needs whenever there is a compelling need. A participant from the Roman Catholic Church has revealed that what results in poor coordination of community development activities in their church is the failure to find the time that is convenient for everyone to attend community related meetings. She stated that:

What results in poor coordination of development activities at our church is time constraints. Women would rather use the time they have to fend for their families because of the economic situation. Several women in our church work and some of them even work during weekends as nurses, secretaries etc. Although the majority of women are not gainfully employed, they are still limited by the household chores. Sometimes we tend to trivialise the burden that is exerted on women by household chores. Culture puts pressure on the woman in ensuring that the family stays in a clean environment and food is cooked. Married women are the most affected by this culture. Because of that, you find that we end up just doing community development activities when a critical need arises. For example, we once saw in our local newspaper that Engutsheni

hospital had crisis and needed help for their disabled patients. Women from our Small Christian Community arranged a meeting and asked that each home contribute a certain amount to buy food stuff, toiletries, clothing and detergents for cleaning. Sometimes we operate like that because we fail to coordinate ourselves and to consistently support community development work in the community because of time constraints (Participant 1, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Females).

A participant from Agape Missions Church also added that:

I think what makes coordinating women's activities difficult nowadays is that most women are in the working class, and they might not be able to function or participate in anything that demands their availability because of the work schedule. Sometimes women work even on weekends especially when they work in the medical field as nurses or doctors (Participant 1, Agape Missions Church, FGDs, Males).

Another participant also added that whether working or not, women are also faced with many responsibilities at home. He highlighted that:

Although not all women work, some are stay at home wives. They are faced with the responsibility of taking care of children, house chores and other things and they also take care of the sick and this hinders the full participation of women in community development. In such a situation coordinating women becomes a problem especially for women whose husbands are not Christians. They expect the wife to adhere to her wife duties or else they end up preventing the woman from coming to church entirely. (Participant 5, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Males)

Another participant from the Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God also decried that finding time to sufficiently execute community development is limited by economic pressures. She lamented that:

Omama badlula ebunzimeni obukhulu. Ngeke abantwana belale ngendla, Iskhathi siyaphela ugijima udinga ukuthi uziphilise lemuli. Phela kulenzisuku sokuncediswana, akusekho okokutshona uhlezi umelele imali yestshebo kubaba. Ngakho omama balobunzima bokuthola iskhathi sokwenza umsebenzi wokunceda umphakathi (Women are faced with a lot of challenges. They would rather allocate considerable amount of time to fending for their families than focus on the broader community needs because nowadays women also work to help the husband. Gone are the days when women used

to wait for money for relish from their husbands, so women find it difficult to also allocate time for community development activities) (Participant 8, Apostolic Jerusalem Church of God, FGDs, Females).

Some participants from Agape Missions Church also intimated that although time constraints is the major aspect that causes poor coordination, there is lack of commitment among women in their church and women cannot be forced to participate in any community activity because it is voluntary. A participant stated that:

There are some people who genuinely have no time to respond to a call to attend a community development meeting because of work-related or other commitments, but for others it's just excuses. Since most of the work women do is voluntary, what can you do if they decide not to come? No one can be held responsible for anything. If you call a meeting, they sometimes decide not to come or other things are given priority, what can you do? This situation can only be improved through encouragement (Participant 4, Agape Missions Church, FGDs, Females).

Another participant also added that:

The excuse of lack of time is just that people are not committed to the work of God. They don't take the work seriously; it is as if they are doing it to sooth their conscience, since it's instructed in the word of God. Most activities require time and self-sacrifice, and very few of us have these attributes and people cannot be forced to participate because most church activities are voluntary. You cannot reprimand people for not participating (Participant 6, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Females).

What further contributes to poor coordination in churches is a lack of knowledge or strategies in implementing community development initiatives. One participant echoed that:

The challenge is that women have limited interest to know and appreciate the reason why people are vulnerable or poor. Otherwise, they will be simply offering ambulance services without addressing the critical issues. Women in churches lack the necessary skills or strategies for carrying out successful and consistent changes in people's lives. As such, women are generally discouraged from consistently participating because the results are not encouraging, so they lack motivation. This causes coordination of community activities to be a challenge (Participant 2, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Males).

Another participant also added that:

Women need to be empowered from a very early age, starting with socialisation. Children learn from a very early age to give to the church or to volunteer to help another child. These things are not learnt in adulthood. Also, children learn charity at home and not in school. That becomes the future adult who knows to do charity work. The challenge is that we lack the necessary tools and resources to empower women and women are ignorant of principles and strategies that have proven to work in communities, hence, community work is usually done out of zeal without knowledge. And as such fewer success stories are known. No one really goes to check on what happened to people who got food. It's usually a once off thing and those people are left without knowing how they can sustain themselves and churches are not really giving it much thought to plan on how to successfully contribute to community development (Participant 2, Roman Catholic Church, FGDs, Females).

To emphasise that women in church need to be empowered to contribute to community development effectively and efficiently, a participant from Agape Missions Church lamented that:

Most women are prayer warriors but being prayer warriors alone is not enough. Confidence needs to be built along with prayer, reading and continued learning. Lack of proper education and exposure hinders much of the community work by women. There is great need to encourage continued learning and expose women to other national or global women's initiatives in development. There has to be deliberate teaching on the key roles that women play being caregivers, burden bearers and production and involving them in decision making. Women really need to be empowered to successfully handle responsibility of the vulnerable community (Participant 3, Agape Missions Church, FGDs, Males).

These findings concur with Krige's (2008) observation that there is little understanding of a faith-based developmental and community-empowering approaches in churches. Mentorships are lacking; institutional capacity and good governance are lacking; spiritual and practical matters are separated; and women are not utilised efficiently (Krige, 2008). One can conclude from these research findings that churches are grossly affected by poor coordination which emanates from lack of empowerment in executing community development activities. As a

result, poor coordination hinders the full participation of church women in community development.

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the factors that limit the full participation of women in churches in community development based on three research questions of this study. The first research question was: How do structures in church organisations encourage or prevent the participation of women in churches to community development? The themes that were generated to answer this question were leadership structures and decision-making structures. The second question was: How is the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe and how does that relationship affect the participation of women to community development? The themes that were generated to answer this question were partnership/support and conflict. The third question was: Do women in churches participate fully in community development in Bulawayo? The themes that emerged to answer this question were funding, patriarchy, doctrinal differences and poor coordination. From the researcher's interactions with participants, it can be concluded that although churches differ in terms of church doctrines, generally the roles of women are peripheral and are characterised by restricted leadership. There is a dominant male ideology that has ensured that women continue being abstract as leaders and more visible as clients in these churches. This patriarchal ideology that approves male headship has been highly influential in placing women at the fringes. Their full participation and exercise of leadership is, therefore, hampered and restricted in community development.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS TO NEW KNOWLEDGE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis was to analyse the contribution of women in churches to community development in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The researcher discussed the lived experiences of church women. Further, the input of men in churches was also considered invaluable, which is consistent with the GAD theory. There is increasing evidence that gender equality will not be achieved without partnering with men (Lusey *et al.*, 2017). The thesis emanated from an appreciation that there has been a lot of attention given to churches as appropriate institutions to steer community development, yet churches have not been adequately explored and they lack adequate recognition in social scientific analysis (Magezi, 2017; Ndambiri, 2018).

This study was anchored on two research gaps, the first being that churches themselves have not been significantly researched. The other gap emanated from an understanding that although women are a significant group in terms of church membership, and are heavily involved in church activities, there is scarcely documented information or recognition of their efforts in community development. Yet, the participation of women in community development is a critical issue as it determines the success or failure of development initiatives (Magezi, 2017). There is an appreciation that women's participation in development is critical. A concrete example being that SDG's have a stand-alone Goal number 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This chapter is, therefore, an analytical account of emerging debates and new knowledge contributions of the study.

This concluding chapter consolidates the various arguments from the earlier chapters to illuminate the researcher's theoretical understanding. The chapter is organised into three broad sections. The first one is an outline of the thesis, which highlights the major aspects of each of the chapters in the thesis. The second section demonstrates how this thesis contributes to the body of knowledge. The findings of this research are compared to the GAD theoretical perspectives. Lastly, through the recommendations provided, the researcher suggests how the findings of this thesis contribute to conceptual debates around the subjects of women, community development and churches.

6.2 Summary

To have a comprehensive understanding on the contribution of women in churches to community development, the researcher felt that it was necessary to recap the discussion so far. Chapter 1 focused on introducing the study. In this chapter, the researcher illuminated the research problem and provided a brief background to the research project through discussion and contextualisation of the study. The researcher then presented the objectives and research questions and gave a brief discussion on the emergence of community development, relevance of FBOs and churches, and the role played by women in churches.

In Chapter 2, the researcher provided a detailed analysis of extant literature on community development, women and churches. Community development and the history of community development were discussed. The two main principles of community development, which are participation and empowerment were examined. The role played by communities in community development, the role of the church in community development and the role played by church women in community development were articulated. Factors that hinder the full participation of church women in community were also highlighted. The debates about dismantling patriarchy through feminism and the need for decolonial feminism were illuminated. The last component of the chapter focuses on the theoretical framework on which the thesis is anchored. The GAD theory was considered the most appropriate in explaining the experiences of women in churches.

In Chapter 3, the research methodology adopted in conducting this research is described in-depth. The methodology chapter reflected on the methods and methodologies through which data which informed this thesis were collected. Issues of research philosophy were illuminated through the research onion model, giving attention to interpretivism as the research philosophy on which this study is anchored. Further, it was indicated that this study was inductive because it is qualitative in orientation. The case study research design was employed, and cross-sectional time horizon used. The data collection methods used were in-depth interviews with key informant interviews, FGDs, and semi-structured questionnaires. In this chapter, the challenges that were experienced in data collection were described, especially because the study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic with various lockdown restrictions, which rendered face-to-face physical interactions with participants almost impossible. As a result, data were collected through WhatsApp and via email. Ethical issues were also incorporated with informed consent being obtained from the participants and confidentiality

being ensured. The researcher ascertained that participants were not exposed to any form of danger because of their participation in this study. Thematic analysis was the data analysis method. Validity and reliability of data was ensured through triangulation.

In Chapter 4, the context for discussing the findings of the research was set. It was highlighted that the participants mostly understood community development in view of helping poor members of the community, hence most churches adopted the welfare approach to community development. In this chapter, the empirical findings on the role played by church women in steering community development were presented, answering the following research question; What is the role played by women in churches in community development in Bulawayo? It was highlighted that women contribute to community development at two levels. That is, through their various activities in the church and in wider community.

The role that women play within the church and in the community was analysed and the themes that were generated were church upkeep, spiritual/psychosocial support, education, and women empowerment, whilst the themes that were generated from the role of women in the community were charitable giving, psychosocial/spiritual support, education, and health. It was ascertained that church women play a critical role in community development both within the church through various activities, which include, but are not limited to cleaning, decorating the house of God, ushering, preaching, and fundraising. They also played an important role in the community through such activities as evangelism, charity work with vulnerable members of the community and responding to community disasters.

Chapter 5 further presented an analysis of the factors limiting the full participation of women in churches in community development by responding to the following research questions; How do church structures encourage or prevent the participation of women in community development? How is the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe and how does that relationship affect the participation of women in community development? Do women in churches fully participate in community development in Bulawayo? On the first research question about how church structures encourage or prevent the participation of women in churches in community development, the themes that were generated were leadership and decision-making structures. On the second question on how the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe affects the participation of women in community development, the themes that emerged were partnership/support and conflict. On the third research question about ascertaining whether women fully participate in community

development, the themes that emerged were funding, patriarchy, doctrinal differences and poor coordination.

6.3 Conclusions of the Study

Based on the case study data evidence derived from the findings of this study, the researcher drew the following conclusions according to the outline of the objectives of the study:

6.3.1 Conclusions about the role played by women in churches in community development

This study revealed that women play a critical role in directly working in the community and indirectly through their different roles within the church. Women clean the church, construct and maintain church structures/buildings, contribute their financial resources through various fundraising activities. Women also provide psychosocial support and spiritual support to each other and vulnerable community members. All these spiritual activities, therefore, contribute to the maintenance of stable church membership and the spiritual growth or maturity of church members. Women pray for their communities to experience peace and peace is the most fundamental asset to community building, to personal growth, and to the very survival of the planet. Besides praying for their communities, women also pray for one another. The companionship and prayer support provided has shown to reduce stressful experiences that have been shown to increase the risk of developing physical and mental health problems. When women are physically healthy and are in a healthy mental state, they can contribute positively to community development as mental health is integral to overall human health and well-being and thus it is essential for sustainable community development (Francis 2014).

Women in churches are playing an enormous role, not only by empowering each other spiritually but economically. Women assist each other with start-up capital to initiate income-generating projects. Hence, women empower one another to alleviate poverty. The community at large also benefits when women from church share the acquired knowledge and skills with other community members. This contributes to community development. The findings of this study also revealed that older women in churches are promoting peace in marriages through biblical teachings, therefore, leading to a reduction in cases of domestic violence. Families are what constitute communities, as such when there is peace at the family level, there is peace in the community. The findings also indicate that women contribute to the education system by

paying school fees for orphaned and vulnerable children and standing as proxy for their parents. Education is key for community development as it is the gateway to social cohesion, peace, harmony and development and it promotes community development in several ways. Women are also involved in charitable giving, and they provide spiritual support as well as psychosocial support to the sick and distressed members of the community. They provide unremunerated home-based care services to the sick members of the community, especially the chronically ill. This contributes to community health. It can be concluded that women in churches play a critical role in community development in Bulawayo. Their roles are significant and diverse; however, they need to adopt strategies like collaboration for greater impact.

6.3.2 Conclusions about church structures

The findings indicated that church leadership and decision-making structures are designed to relegate women to non-influential positions in the church. This kind of situation renders women powerless and confines them to a situation where they are not able to make critical decisions in church. Most women are afraid to challenge this order because of fear of being rebellious against God. The top leadership positions are occupied by men, and they are the final authority in churches. Although women are increasingly occupying leadership positions, the glass ceiling prevents them from ascending into elite leadership positions.

The justification for limiting women to lower leadership positions is church doctrines. In such contexts, questioning male leadership does not only imply questioning social patriarchal constructions but also questioning the sacredness of religious doctrine. Women exercise authority when leading other women, nevertheless, the top leadership positions belong to men. Women may also hold positions of authority because o/f their husbands' positions as bishops. Such women may exert influence although it is still limited.

It is apparent from the findings that Church leadership structures consign women to the periphery and women occupy lower leadership positions in the church, and this affects their decision-making capacity in the church and in the community. Women do not make any critical decisions in the church, and they are not consulted when critical decisions are made, women are just accepted as part of the church membership but when decisions are made their ideas are not considered. It can be concluded from these findings that church structures do not encourage the participation of women in community development, it hinders them. Patriarchy which is embedded within the church structures makes it difficult for women to penetrate to the top.

6.3.3 Conclusions about the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe

The findings indicated that church congregations do not usually get any assistance or support from Bulawayo City Council or any government institution in carrying out community development work. It can be concluded that the government has never prioritised the church as a critical partner in community development and they have not thoughtfully considered partnering churches as a strategy to fight poverty in communities. Assessing the level of collaboration or partnership between churches and the government gave insight into the kind of relationship that exists between the two institutions. The findings indicated that there was unhealthy conflict between the church and the government because the church feels undermined when the government makes critical decisions that affect the church without consulting them.

The churches are frustrated that the government does not listen to them, and the government threatens to use force when churches do not comply with stipulated regulations. This creates tension between the two institutions. Churches are limited by fear of being victimised by government as there is a lack of trust between the government and church leaders. The findings indicated that the government of Zimbabwe is generally sceptical of church leaders, and the government is not comfortable with churches mingling in the political affairs of the nation unless it's for the good of the government.

There is tension that exists between churches and the government. It can be concluded that there is general animosity between churches and the government of Zimbabwe, although the relationship differs from one church to another depending on the church's level of participation in community development, especially in relation to advocacy on human rights issues. Women from denominations or faith-based organisations that are considered political are blocked by government from providing any humanitarian assistance to community members because of fear of vote buying in favour of the opposition political parties. This kind of relationship obviously limits the participation of women in churches in community development

6.3.4 Conclusions about the participation of church women in community development

It can be concluded from the research findings that church women in Bulawayo do not meaningfully participate in community development initiatives. Besides church structures and the relationship between churches and government, there are other obstacles that limit meaningful participation of church women in community development. Lack of funding was mostly stated as a factor that limits the meaningful participation of women in churches in community development. Women fund themselves from very limited resources and they lack the necessary skill to harness alternative sources of funding. Women sacrificially give although they are financially unstable themselves. This is also due to economic pressures that most Zimbabweans are contending with. Donors are also sceptical of funding church related community development initiatives.

Patriarchy also limits the meaningful participation of women. It was revealed that churches usually deny any existence of patriarchy within their church structures but in practice, they are still patriarchal. Masculinity is honoured in churches. Patriarchy also manifests through placing restrictions on women. The findings indicated that some church doctrines are given as an excuse for placing restrictions on women, for instance, menstruating women. This obviously limits meaningful participation of women in community development as it places a limitation on what they can do.

Some churches are not comfortable with associating with certain congregations because of differences in doctrines, as such they limit women in their churches from associating with such groups and that also hampers women's community development activities. Poor co-ordination of community development activities in churches was also highlighted as a factor that hinders meaningful participation of women. Poor coordination of development activities acts as a barrier to development effectiveness. The poor coordination stems from time constraints, lack of knowledge in executing community development activities and economic challenges. Consequently, women scale down on activities and occasionally respond to community needs whenever there is a compelling need.

It can be concluded therefore, that church women in Bulawayo are not meaningfully participating in community development as highlighted by Gilchrist (2004), that participation involves the active involvement of people at grassroots level in the choice, execution and evaluation of programmes designed to improve their livelihoods and those of their community members. Apparently, women in churches have no power of decision making because of patriarchal tendencies in the church, and decision-making power is key for meaningful

participation (Roodt, 2001). Women in churches are not empowered. They need to be empowered to overcome the above-mentioned obstacles. They need to be empowered to challenge patriarchal structures that hinder their progress in community development.

6.3.5 Overall Conclusion

Although churches are progressively recognising women's efforts. However, the roles of women are peripheral and restricted leadership. It is evident that women play a significant role in community development, however, the dominant male ideology has ensured that women continue being abstract as leaders and more visible as clients in churches. It can be concluded that patriarchy among other factors is the prime cause and other causes are primarily the by-product of patriarchy, that women in churches are mostly hindered from contributing meaningfully to community development. This is evidence that only gender mainstreaming cannot ensure women's full participation in development. That is the reason why despite some recent reforms purporting to improve women's status, there is no real change in the situation of patriarchal domination, and this explains why even after decades of promoting women emancipation, women are still suffering the effects of gender bias. In other words, the Gender and Development approach itself has failed them by not being able to enhance their welfare.

6.4 Contribution to debates and knowledge

This thesis has exposed an important nexus and a detailed perspective on the role of women in churches and the obstacles that hinder their meaningful participation in community development. This is significant as it was highlighted in Chapter 2 that although there is increased attention given to churches in development, the role of women in churches is often ignored or not given much attention in mainstream development literature. Moreover, there is relatively less literature that focuses on the contribution of church women to community development in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, most studies on the contribution of women in development have a bias towards researching on rural women while the contribution of urban women remain largely unknown. This study sought to bridge gap by focusing on the contribution of women in an urban setting, and a study such as this one is unprecedented in Bulawayo.

The spiritual contribution of women in churches to community development is scarcely documented and has largely been undermined as evidenced by the scarcity of research on how spirituality could be integrated into community development (Razak *et al.*, 2021). Very little

is currently known about the effects of spirituality on community development. As highlighted by Belshaw (2002), development should be seen as more than a secular process but a spiritual one as development indeed has a background based on church principles and these principles promote and shape our present-day world (De Temple, 2012). In this study, the researcher has provided an overview of the importance of spirituality in community development and has brought the spiritual contribution of church women to the fore and highlighted how spiritual activities, which include inter-alia; evangelism and prayer are related to community development. This was significant as much of the literature in the field of community development ignores the concept of spirituality.

This study has also provided a detailed analysis on how the voluntary activities by women in churches that include but are not limited to cleaning the church, building church structures, evangelism, ushering, fundraising, and preaching are essential for community development as these activities are the actual life of the church. It is apparent that a large proportion of the unpaid work, which supports a community is carried out by women, but it is often disregarded or undervalued (Norrish, 2006). Further, there is no comprehensive study on volunteerism that exists (Norrish, 2006).

Therefore, this study is critical in terms of unveiling and acknowledging the voluntary activities of church women in the community. The contribution of women is not trivialised or undervalued because of the realisation that they sacrifice their time that could be used to advance their personal or family life. Not only do women volunteer their time but their own resources. As such, recognising churches as important in driving community development while trivialising the voluntary activities of church women is discriminatory.

6.5 Application of the GAD theory to the findings

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first detailed study to use the GAD theoretical framework to understand the contribution of women in churches to community development. It was highlighted through this study that the gender perspective is something that is still abstract within church circles (Chisale, 2020). There is generally no gender planning in churches. However, as highlighted by Haddad (2016), if the church is to engage with development issues, it is crucial that theoretical perspectives on development are considered because any theoretical discussion on development must intentionally adopt a gendered lens. For the church to play any meaningful role in the development of communities, there must be

a sound theoretical understanding of development because development is not neutral but is a gender issue (Momsen, 2010).

The gender perspective in this thesis was brought to the foreground through the GAD theory. This study was, therefore, necessary because there are a few comprehensive studies that provide a gender analysis on the role of church women using development theories such as GAD, especially from an African perspective. This was evidenced by the discussion on the need for decolonial feminism in Chapter 2, considering that the negative effects of colonialism are still alive in Southern Africa, especially in former White settler states like Zimbabwe (Mpofu & Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019). Much of the scholarship about gender, churches and community development is Eurocentric. This study was therefore, essential in illuminating the contribution of church women to community development from an African perspective and setting.

One would realise that white garment churches are mostly popular in Africa. Hence, the conditions for churches in Europe may not be the same as conditions for churches in Africa because of the influence of culture. African culture has a lot of influence over any institutions through concepts such as “Ubuntu”. Failing to incorporate concepts such as of Ubuntu can be disastrous in development literature as people from such a culture can resist any of the imposed methods emanating from the west and African culture sometimes permeates religion. In sum, the primary focus of GAD is to examine why women have been systematically assigned inferior and/or secondary roles. The findings confirm the notions central to the GAD theory, namely that women are still suffering from patriarchy and that this limits their contribution to community development. As expressed through the GAD theory that leadership structures hinder the full participation of women in development, it was confirmed that leadership structures and decision-making structures in churches are dominated by men, which limits the participation of women in decision making.

This study confirmed that patriarchy which is embedded in church structures limits the potential of church women and this resonates with the GAD theory, particularly that patriarchy is a limiting factor. The GAD approach recognises that patriarchy knows no class as it affects all women, this was confirmed through this study as the pastors’ wives were also victims of patriarchal practices in the church. It was confirmed through this study that indeed patriarchy knows no class as it affected women who also held influential positions such as being a pastor’s

wife, and church doctrine was used to enforce it. This study revealed that despite one's employment status, women are treated as lesser important vessels in churches.

However, given the legacy of patriarchy throughout society, the task of translating existing gender equity structures and legislation to real social change for women on the ground has proven to be a complex task. Church doctrines also make it more complex, as they make it harder for church women to challenge what is considered to be God ordained roles. In churches, spiritual matters are a powerful force to reckon with, more than anything to do with upholding human rights. For example, as was mentioned in Chapter 2, menstrual taboo has been a major reason to keep women from positions of authority in Christianity (Phipps, 1980). It was highlighted through this study that some churches restrict women from based on natural processes such as menstruation, which is a breach of women's rights.

Through the GAD theory, it was confirmed that women, mostly those from white garment churches are restricted from participating in church activities during menstruation because of church doctrines. As such, church doctrines can override the GAD perspective of reforming institutions so that equal rights and opportunities by both men and women are realised. As it was discovered through this study that it may be easier for a circular institution to embrace gender than a church institution because of church doctrine, the GAD perspective was in this instance found to be too general and weak in challenging the power of church doctrines for effective change and emancipation of church women.

However, the GAD approach was instrumental to understanding the relationship between the government of Zimbabwe and churches. According to the GAD perspective, it is the duty of the government to provide social services that are provided by women in churches for free. Community work which is usually a burden to women is the responsibility of the government, yet, because of the government's lack of funds, communities are obliged to assist in moving the development agenda forward.

Although the government should be proactive in promoting women's participation, the study revealed that the government is almost always up in arms against the church and there is barely any meaningful partnership strategies. This limits the full potential of women in churches. It was confirmed through this study that BCC does not offer any meaningful assistance or accord recognition to women in churches in their community development efforts. The study confirmed the notion by GAD analysts that women's labour is indeed unrecognised, undervalued, and exploited.

6.6 Recommendations

Based on the above findings, several recommendations are made.

6.6.1 Recommendations for theory

As highlighted above that the church does not seem to follow any defined strategies to address gender issues. The researcher opines that it is necessary for churches to have a gender framework approach and there is need to create an awareness in development literature on the need for churches to adopt meaningful development theories. However, the researcher recommends adoption of gender theories that are context specific to African realities because churches in the West are exposed to different cultural realities when compared to churches in Africa.

The GAD theory is anchored on Western philosophies as evidenced by its emphasis on upholding human rights, as such it's interpretations on gender roles do not incorporate the importance of African cultural ideologies such as "ubuntu". The opinions that are prevalent in the GAD theory draw from a Western perspective from Western socialist feminists. The researcher recommends the need for a decolonial understanding in gender scholarship to enable African women scholars to develop theories that are context specific to the African setting and culture, articulated from the experiences of those in the global south.

The researcher opines that the GAD theoretical framework is too general to address the issue of church doctrines that hinder the full participation of women in community development. The GAD framework ignores or generalises the spiritual dimension in gender studies and underestimates it's potential to limit the participation of church women in community development. The researcher is of the idea that the only way gender studies can penetrate the church and its doctrines is not through circular development theories from theorists that are anti-church or are hostile to church beliefs such as circular feminists or atheists but from religious clerics who value spiritual matters and respect God's divine authority. Such individuals can influence others as they will be basing their arguments from the Bible and not undermining the basis of Christian faith, which is the reason why the church always resists the influence of the circular world.

The above is evidenced by changes that are already taking place in such churches as the Roman Catholic where women are increasingly occupying positions of authority in the church due to

the surge of religious feminism. If religious church leaders are constantly mobilised through inter-denominational structures by other church clerics, the researcher opines that there will be transformation, which may culminate in the emancipation of church women. In that matrix, the envisaged outcome is the meaningful contribution of church women for the greater good of the communities within their sphere of influence. The clerics should be given an opportunity in development literature to contribute theories that are biblically balanced and do not undermine belief in God.

6.6.2 Recommendations for practice

There is need for transformation of church leadership and decision-making structures because it was discovered that patriarchy is imbedded in church structures. There is need to empower church women so that they can be able to challenge doctrinal interpretations that are meant to foster their subordination and promote patriarchy. It was also discovered that women mostly from white garment churches were restricted from participating in church activities during menstruation because of church doctrine. There is need to empower women from such denominations so that they will have an awareness that this is a form of gender discrimination that must be changed. Furthermore, church leaders from other church denominations should openly condemn such practices using the Bible, which is the basis for every Christian church denomination.

Based on the current findings, the national government is not proactive in promoting women's participation, and it is almost always up in arms against the church and there is barely any meaningful partnership strategies to promote the participation of church women in community development. Considering that it is the duty of the state to provide community services that are provided by church women for free, there is need to lobby and sensitise the government about the importance of promoting the work executed by women in communities, not to trivialise women's contribution because it is vital for community development.

It also emerged that church women suffer from lack of funding, which limits their potential to execute community development initiatives, hence the researcher recommends that it may be beneficial to switch between WID and GAD approaches to address this challenge, depending on the situation on the ground. The researcher recommends that the WID approach, which prioritises funding women's programmes should be evoked when it comes to financing women's projects. Apparently, adopting the GAD approach in this case has proved to be a

disadvantage to women because of the difficulties associated with correcting the system of patriarchy especially in churches where church doctrines are used as an excuse to marginalise women. GAD critics have argued that the approach is more theoretical and less practical, hence the researcher recommends adopting both the WID and GAD approaches to complement each theory's weaknesses instead of treating them as separate ideologies.

Poor coordination in churches was also identified as an obstacle that hinders the full participation of women. The participants stated that poor coordination stems from time constraints, lack of knowledge in executing community development activities and economic challenges. Consequently, women scale down on activities and occasionally respond to community needs whenever there is a compelling need. To address time constraints, the researcher recommends that there is need for churches to embrace new technologies. For example, social media platforms have made it almost unnecessary for people to meet in person because meetings can be conducted online. Women are also able to interact on relatively cheap social media platforms such as WhatsApp.

As revealed in Chapter 4, women in churches empower each other mainly through knowledge dissemination, this is one indicator of empowerment according to Kabeer (1999). However, this is not adequate as concepts such as gender equality and social norms that detriment women's efforts have not been addressed (root causes of women's disempowerment). As a result, church women's community initiatives are not properly coordinated. Therefore, women in churches should be empowered to resist patriarchy in church systems. They should also be empowered with community development skills and strategies to enhance their capacity to harness resources for the successful execution of community development activities. There is need for churches to collaborate when implementing community development initiatives. This is important because it increases effectiveness and helps to avoid duplication of efforts (Magezi, 2017).

6.6.3 Recommendations for further research

As highlighted in this study, church doctrines keep women oppressed and most women are afraid to challenge them because of the sacredness of religion. The researcher recommends further research on how doctrines that promote the subordination of women in churches can be disbanded. There is need for further research about the extent of the influence of spiritual

matters in community development and how spirituality affects the participation of church women in community development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Sample Letter to Request for Permission to Conduct Interviews

PERMISSION LETTER

Request for permission to conduct research at Agape Missions Church

Title: *Women, Churches and Community Development in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe*

02/10/2020

Agape Missions Church
Suite 2 106 Astra Complex
Department of Women's Fellowship

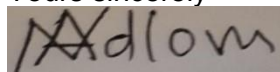
Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Angel Ndlovu. I am doing research towards a Doctoral degree in Development Studies at the University of South Africa. I am conducting research to discover how women in churches have contributed to community development and to expose any barriers that hinder their full participation in community development initiatives. This study is expected to collect important information that could inform and enhance community development policy and practice within and without the church.

Your organisation/church has been selected to be part of this study because it is a church affiliated organisation and I am interested in finding out how women within church organisations participate in community development activities. The study will entail interviewing some of the church members about the contribution of women. The benefits of this study are that it can lead to increased awareness and recognition of women's efforts in community development and this study can also expose any structures that hinder women from fully participating in community development. The information obtained will be treated with the strictest confidentiality and will be used solely for this research.

I shall be pleased if you grant me the permission to carry out the study. Feedback procedure will entail sending an email of the findings of the study on request to the church email. For further details, I can be contacted on +263 715 455 582. My supervisor Prof B. Mpofu can also be contacted on +27 72 042 1596 or email address mpofu@unisa.ac.za

Yours sincerely



Angel Ndlovu
Director (Consecrated Work Trust)

Appendix 11: Letter Granting Permission to Conduct the Study



Stand Number 2786 Nketa 7

P. O. Nkulumane

Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

13 October 2020

Angel Ndlovu

Consecrated Work Trust

27 Josiah Chinamano & Bristol North Rd

Belmont, Bulawayo

Zimbabwe

Dear Madam

Ref: Request for permission to interview members of our church

It is noted that you requested permission to interview some of our church members in order to understand how women in church organisations contribute to community development.

Please be advised that permission is hereby granted in accordance to your request.

Yours Faithfully

Reverend S. Moyo (Agape Missions Church)

Signature

A rectangular area containing a handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to be 'S. Moyo'.

Appendix 111: Consent Form

I _____ confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this research has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and am prepared to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

I am aware that the findings of this study will be processed into a research report, journal publications and/or conference proceedings, but that my participation will be kept confidential unless otherwise specified. Considering this, I hereby volunteer to participate in the study and grant the researcher permission to interview me for the purpose of data collection. I agree to the recording of the responses.

Participant Name & Surname.....

Participant SignatureDate.....

Researcher: I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Researcher's Name & Surname.....

Researcher's signature..... Date.....

Principal Researcher: Angel Ndlovu (Cell: +263715455582; Email: angel_ndlovu@yahoo.co.uk)

APPENDIX 1V: Interview Questions for an FBO

1. How are churches contributing to community development?
2. How is the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe and how does that relationship affect community development?
3. Do you collaborate with the government or other organisations in pursuit of community development?
4. What is the role played by church women in community development in Zimbabwe?
5. Do women in churches participate fully to community development in Bulawayo?
6. What have you done to support church women in community development?
7. What are the challenges that women are facing in community development and what do you think can be done to solve these challenges?

Appendix V: Focus Groups Interview Questions for Women/Men in Churches

1. Have women in your church given any assistance to any community members, community groups or organisations? Please name the kind of assistance?
2. What other church activities do women participate in within the church besides their work in the community?
3. Do women partner with women in other churches in assisting the community?
4. Who funds community development initiatives of women in your church?
5. How frequent do women in your church participate in community development activities and why?
6. Do you think women are doing enough to uplift the lives of vulnerable community members?
7. What do you think hinders the full participation of church women in community development and what do you suggest could be done to improve this situation?
8. Is the participation of women in your church linked to spiritual beliefs of the church?
9. Do you think women should lead men at church?
10. Are women in your church allowed to hold any leadership position?
11. Are women allowed to make critical decisions in the church?
12. Are women consulted when making crucial decisions about the church?
13. Are women in your church allowed to preach to an audience of both man and women during a church service?
14. Are there any clearly defined roles/ responsibilities between men and women in your church?
15. Do women in your church need approval to execute any community work and who approves community development activities?
16. Do you think women should be allowed to attend church services or participate in church activities during menstruation?

APPENDIX V1: Interview Questions for the Local Government

1. Have you ever had any disagreements with churches in the past in how they conduct their development activities in the community? And how has that affected development work and women activities in particular?
2. What are the procedures/ requirements for carrying out development work in the community? Does the church follow those procedures? Have women been affected by these procedures?
3. Does the church collaborate with government institutions that are responsible for advancing community work?
4. What assistance have you offered to the church in its mission of community development?
5. Do you think women in churches have received appropriate recognition for their efforts in community development?

Appendix V11: Interview Questions for an Interdenominational Church Organisation

1. In your view, are churches contributing to community development?
2. How is the relationship between churches and the government of Zimbabwe and how does that relationship affect community development?
3. Do you collaborate with the government or other organisations in pursuit of community development?
4. What is the role played by women in church in community development in Zimbabwe?
5. Do women in church organisations participate fully in community development in Bulawayo?
6. What have you done to support women in community development?

APPENDIX V111: Questionnaire for a leader of an African Independent Church/ Mainline Church/ Pentecostal Church.

(Please tick as applicable)

1. What is your age group(years)?

18-30	31-45	46-60	Above 60
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Sex

Male	Female
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Marital Status

Single	Married	Widowed	Divorced
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. What's your level of education?

ZJC	"O" Level	Advanced Level	Degree	Post- Graduate Degree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Are you employed

Employed	Unemployed	Student	Pensioner
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. For how long have you been with this church?

0-5 years	6-10years	Over 10years
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Is your church involved in community development activities? Please explain

.....
.....
8. Who suggests these activities.....

9. Who are the target beneficiaries of these projects and how are they selected?.....
.....

10. Do you partner with other churches in assisting the community?

Yes No

11. Please give reasons.....
.....

12. Does the church collaborate with government institutions that are responsible for community development?
Explain.....
.....

13. Is your participation to community development linked to your spiritual beliefs?

Yes No

14. Please explain.....
.....

15. Are women within your church allowed to hold any leadership positions?

Yes No

16. Do you think it is appropriate for women not to occupy leadership positions in the church? Please explain.....
.....
.....

17. What is the role of women within the church?
.....
.....

18. Are there any clearly defined roles/ responsibilities between men and women in your church

Yes No

19. If you answered yes, what are they and why? Please explain.....

20. Are women in your church allowed to participate in church activities during menstruation? Please explain

21. Have women in your church given any unpaid assistance to any community members, community groups or organisations?

Yes No

22. If yes, briefly explain the kind of assistance:
.....
.....
.....

23. What has the church done to support community development initiatives by women in the community?.....

24. How do women plan and execute community activities?
.....
.....

25. Who finances community development activities by women in your church?
.....
.....

26. What do you think hinders the full participation of women in churches in community development?.....

27. What do you think can be done to ensure the full participation of women in community development in Bulawayo?.....

WOMEN, CHURCHES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

ORIGINALITY REPORT



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