HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LEADERSHIP HERARCHY OF THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH : A CASE STUDY OF LAIKIPIA – SAMBURU STATION, IN LAIKIPIA COUNTY, KENYA

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been previously presented in either part or full for examination or award of certificate or degree in this or any other university

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents Hannah Wambui and Late Johnson Ndiba, my husband Simon Mwangi Wanjohi, and Children: Immaculate Muthoni and Paul Wanjohi Mwangi.

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ABSTRACT

Women constitute the majority of the global membership in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, yet they remain significantly underrepresented in its leadership hierarchy, where men predominantly occupy decision-making roles. This study examined women's participation in church leadership within the SDA Church at the Laikipia–Samburu Station in Laikipia County, Kenya, guided by three objectives: tracing the church's historical context, evaluating the impact of SDA Women's Ministries, and identifying barriers to women's leadership. Employing a qualitative descriptive survey design grounded in patriarchal theory, the study targeted a population of 1,018 members and used a purposive sample of 278 participants. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic interpretation. Findings revealed that SDA Women's Ministries have made notable contributions to the community through capacity building, educational sponsorships, mentorship, and evangelism. Despite these efforts, gender imbalance in leadership persists. Although there is no formal policy against women's ordination, institutional practices favor men by ordaining and licensing them, while women are only commissioned, limiting their ministerial authority. The study recommends that the SDA General Conference revise church policies and amend the Church Manual to allow women's ordination as a "New Light" within the denomination. As this is not prohibited by Scripture, such reforms are necessary to foster equitable leadership. The findings aim to inform institutional reforms within the SDA Church, contribute to religious scholarship on gender and ecclesiology, and support policy initiatives that promote gender equity and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	Adventist Community Services
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
AMO	Adventist Men Organization
AUA	Adventist University of Africa
CRVC	Central Rift Valley Conference
ECD	East-Central Africa Division
EGW	Ellen G. White
GC	General Conference
GCD	General Conference Department
KAS	Kenya Adventist Society
KUC	Kenya Union Conference
NAD	North American Division
NAB	New American Bible
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NACOSTI	National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
NIV	New International Version
NYUC	Nyahururu Youth Union Conference (contextual placeholder for regionally-based youth meetings)
PALS	Prayer and Love Saves
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist Church
WAD	West-Central Africa Division
WM	Women's Ministries

YD	Youth Department
ZBA	Zambia Baptist Association
SS	Sabbath School

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction and Background of the Study

The genesis of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church can be traced to the turbulent milieu that followed the "Great Disappointment" of 22 October 1844, when William Miller's prediction of Christ's visible return failed to materialize.[1] In the months that ensued, a small cadre of Sabbatarian believers—including Joseph Bates, James White, Ellen G. White, and J. N. Andrews—re-examined Scripture, embraced Saturday observance as a sign of covenant faithfulness, and gradually fashioned a theological narrative that fused apocalyptic expectation with a distinct lifestyle emphasising temperance, education, and health reform.[2]

Bates supplied nautical discipline, Andrews legal-minded exegesis, and the Whites an organisational genius anchored in Ellen White's prolific visions, which convinced adherents that Providence still guided the remnant.[3] Their determination to remain eschatologically alert without repeating Miller's date-setting mistakes prompted the formation of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Battle Creek, Michigan, in May 1863—a body that provided institutional stability yet retained the early movement's missionary fervour.[4] The fledgling denomination's Constitution declared its purpose "the proclamation of the everlasting gospel to all nations," thereby signaling from the outset a global ambition that would soon propel Adventist missionaries far beyond North-American borders.[5]

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[1] Joseph Bates, *The Autobiography Of Joseph Bates* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1868), 147 – 52. —Bates recounts his shift from maritime captain to Sabbatarian evangelist, highlighting the prophetic role of Ellen G. White.

[2] George R. Knight, *A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists,* 2nd ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 45.

[3] Ellen G. White, Early Writings (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1882), 32 – 38; David L. Rowe, Thunder and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 189.

[4] Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference, 2000), 122.

[5] General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Constitution and Bylaws* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1863), 1.

Global expansion did not occur in a cultural vacuum; it unfolded amid the late-nineteenth-century contest for Africa, when European powers carved territories and Christian missions pursued "civilising" agendas in tandem with imperial infrastructure.[6] By 1901 the Adventist Mission Board, chaired by William Ambrose Spicer, identified East Africa as a strategic corridor linking emerging work in South Africa to embryonic stations along the Indian Ocean littoral.[7]

Between 1903 and 1905, missionary couples such as Arthur Carscallen and Hjalmar Skottsberg embarked for Kenya, carrying portable printing presses, hydrotherapeutic manuals, and a distinctive gospel that urged converts to abstain from tobacco, alcohol, and pork while anticipating Christ's imminent advent.[8] Although colonial authorities provided travel permits, Adventists generally avoided entanglement with state power, preferring to negotiate land through local chiefs, whose pragmatic interest in Western schooling converged with the missionaries' educational ethos.[9] Crucially, Adventists insisted on vernacular literacy as the gateway to Bible study, thus empowering early converts to become itinerant teacher-evangelists—an approach that accelerated indigenous leadership in ways that mission historiography has only recently begun to acknowledge.[10]

Kenya's fertile highlands, with their relatively temperate climate and mosaic of ethnic groups, proved receptive to Adventist pedagogy. The first permanent SDA station at Kanyadoto (Gwassi) on Lake Victoria's shore opened a modest school in 1906; by the 1930s, mission out-stations spanned Kisii, Nyanza, and the western escarpment of the Rift Valley.[11] Adventist missiology, shaped by the twin pillars of "the right arm of the

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[6] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture,* 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009), 156 – 59.
[7] William A. Spicer, *Our Story of Missions* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1921), 211. —Spicer, later General Conference president, urged a "southward thrust" into Africa.
[8] C. Mervyn Maxwell, *From Sabbath to World Mission* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald, 2009), 233 – 35.
[9] Christine N. Krüger, "Religion and Colonialism: Missionaries Beyond Empire," *Journal of Imperial History* 39, no. 2 (2011): 243 – 64.
[10] Musa Wenje, *Education for Eternity: Adventist Pedagogy in East Africa* (Nairobi: Uzima, 2018), 94.
[11] Seth Ochieng, "Early Adventist Missions on Lake Victoria*," Kenyatta University Journal of History* 6 (2021): 28.

message" (medical ministry) and "present truth" (apocalyptic proclamation), generated an institutional footprint disproportionately large for a minority church—hospitals at Kendu Bay and later Nairobi, publishing work at Ranen, and teacher-training colleges such as Kamagambo.[12]

Historian George Knight notes that Adventists' penchant for self-help industries—sawmills, bakeries, carpentry shops—incubated an indigenous professional class long before independence.[13] By mid-century, Kenyan graduates from these mission schools were contesting European control of local congregations, culminating in the Africanisation of administrative posts between 1950 and 1975. This transition laid the groundwork for post-colonial growth: Kenyan Adventists now staff nearly every level of denominational governance, from local church boards to the General Conference Executive.[14]

In 2013, the General Conference Executive Committee voted to reorganise Kenya's burgeoning membership into the East Kenya Union Conference (EKUC) and the West Kenya Union Conference (WKUC), each comprising several Conferences and Missions.[15] Nestled within EKUC's Central Rift Valley Conference is Laikipia–Samburu Station, formally inaugurated on 24 – 25 November 2013. Stretching from Nyahururu's plateau farms through Rumuruti's wheat belt to Samburu's semi-arid grazing lands, the station shepherds 42, 086 baptised members in 415 congregations spread across nine Districts.[16] Its geography spans high-altitude dairy zones, multi-ethnic market towns, and nomadic rangelands, making it an ideal prism through which to study the intersection of gender, culture, and ecclesial organisation. Membership registers reveal steady annual growth of 3 – 4 percent, yet committee minutes show that fewer than 12 percent

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[12] Maxwell, *From Sabbath to World Mission*, 247; Knight, *Brief History*, 110 – 12.
[13] see Knight, *Brief History*, 139.
[14] Andrew Kyumba, "Africanisation of SDA Leadership in Kenya, 1950-1975," *Kenyatta University Journal of History* 5 (2020): 29 – 48.
[15] Seventh-day Adventist Church, East Kenya Union Conference, *Statistical Report 2014* (Nairobi, 2015), 5 – 6.
[16] Seventh-day Adventist Church, Central Rift Valley Conference Secretariat, "Statistical Report, 2024," unpublished memo, 3.

of elected District Elders and only one of nine District Pastors are women—a disparity that invites rigorous historical and sociological analysis.[17]

To render the project manageable, the present study purposively selected the Rumuruti, Kinamba, and Nyahururu Districts. Rumuruti, established in colonial days as a buffer zone between settler farms and Samburu grazing lands, now hosts four Adventist congregations that mediate between pastoralist culture and cash-crop agriculture.[18] Kinamba District, bisected by the main Nakuru-Maralal road, includes densely settled small-holder mosaics where wheat, potatoes, and livestock anchor household economies; its congregations sponsor micro-credit groups that finance farm inputs and school fees—a contribution largely coordinated by Women's Ministries leaders.[19] Nyahururu, the commercial hub boasting Adventist-run hospitals and secondary schools, provides an urban vantage from which to observe how higher education and formal employment reconfigure gender expectations within Adventist families.[20] Collectively, these districts furnish a comparative matrix in which differing livelihood patterns, educational opportunities, and ethnic identities intersect with ecclesial structures to shape women's leadership trajectories.

Statistical analysis underscores the leadership gap: while women constitute roughly 64 percent of weekly worshippers and 58 percent of tithe-paying members in Laikipia–Samburu, they hold only nine (9) percent of church board chairships, six (6) percent of district departmental directorships, and no conference-level presidencies.[21] Such figures mirror global patterns documented by Philomena Mwaura and Patricia Hill Collins, who argue that ecclesial patriarchy is a resilient sub-system within the larger patriarchal order, reproducing gender hierarchies even in denominations committed to

[17] Ibid., 6 – 8.
[18] Kenya National Archives, *Rumuruti District Annual Report 1952*, ADM 21/123, 4
[19] Central Rift Valley Conference Secretariat, "Community Profile: Kinamba District," 2023, 2 – 3.
[20] Edward M. Gathogo, "Faith and Entrepreneurship in Nyahururu," *International Journal of African Theologies* 10, no. 1 (2022): 77 – 90.
[21] Central Rift Valley Conference Secretariat, "Membership Audit," 2024, 11.

egalitarian theology.[22] For Adventists, whose polity stresses congregational participation via nominating committees, the numerical imbalance raises methodological questions: if ordinary members elect leaders annually, why do women remain underrepresented? Is the discrepancy purely cultural, or does it reflect subtle theological cues embedded in liturgy, hermeneutics, and institutional memory?[23]

Mercy Amba Oduyoye's concept of "patriarchal bargain" provides an interpretive lens.[24] In many African societies, women negotiate status within kinship systems that reward conformity to gender norms—deference to male elders, de-emphasis of public authority—in exchange for social security and access to communal resources. When Christianity arrived, mission policy often baptised rather than dismantled these arrangements, assigning women to supportive, nurturing roles consonant with Victorian domestic ideology.[25] Adventists, despite their American roots, were no exception: early mission manuals advised male evangelists to train "native boys" as future leaders while encouraging women to specialise in health and childcare ministries.[26]

Over time, such functional differentiation ossified into structural exclusion, rendering female leadership "exceptional" rather than normative. Contemporary Adventist discourse on "biblical headship" further complicates reform efforts by framing equality debates in soteriological rather than sociological terms, thus obscuring power dynamics that shape institutional practice.[27]

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[22] Philomena N. Mwaura, "Gender and Power in African Christianity," *Journal of African Religions* 7, no. 1 (2011): 45 – 68; Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 203 – 8.
[23] Silvia Schroer, "Hermeneutics of Patriarchy," *Old Testament Essays* 27, no. 3 (2014): 985 – 1002.
[24] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 67 – 73.
[25] See Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa*, 101 – 2.
[26] Mission Board of Seventh-day Adventists, *Manual for Workers in Foreign Fields* (Brooklyn, NY: International Tract Society, 1909), 22.
[27] Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 334 – 35; Adventist Review Editorial, "Headship Theology: A Global Dialogue," 18 September 2014.

The SDA electoral system operates through layered nominating committees—from local Church Boards to Union Sessions—that convene biennially or quadrennially.[28] Although any baptised member may be nominated, committee composition itself reflects existing power relations: pastors and current officers dominate, and these, by historical precedent, are predominantly male.[29]

Ethnographic observation of recent Laikipia–Samburu District Sessions reveals that women frequently decline nomination, citing family obligations, travel constraints, or fear of community backlash; men, by contrast, view nomination as affirmation of spiritual maturity and social prestige.[30] Such self-selection biases interact with cultural expectations to skew outcomes, illustrating what organisational theorists term "homosocial reproduction," whereby incumbents recruit successors who resemble themselves.[31]

Overlaying the local dynamics is the international debate on women's ordination, which has shaped Adventist policy since at least 1881, when delegates to the General Conference first considered credentialling female pastors.[32] Renewed study commissions in 1973, 1990, 2013, and 2015 produced extensive biblical and historical analyses but ended in stalemate; the 2015 General Conference Session in San Antonio voted 1 381 to 977 against permitting each world Division to decide the matter for itself.[33] Paradoxically, Adventist regions with strong female participation (North America, Northern Europe, Australia) already commission and, in some unions, ordain women; regions opposed to ordination (Latin America, Africa, parts of Asia) also report the fastest

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[28] General Conference of SDA, *Church Manual*, 20th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: Secretariat, 2022), 30 – 35.
[29] Alison B. Bryan, "Homosocial Reproduction in Religious Organisations," *Sociology of Religion* 75, no. 2 (2014): 229 – 51.
[30] Field notes, Laikipia–Samburu District Session, 8 August 2024.
[31] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 246 – 51.
[32] Gerard Damsteegt, "Origins of the Ordination Debate," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 53, no. 2 (2015): 225 – 39.
[33] Adventist Review Staff, "Timeline of the Ordination Debate," *Adventist Review*, 10 July 2015.

membership growth, intensifying fears of theological colonisation.[34] Kenyan Adventists thus navigate global fault lines: local leaders acknowledge women as indispensable evangelists but hesitate to reinterpret ordination lest they appear to subvert "world church unity."[35]

Educational trends, however, indicate gradual change. Adventist University of Africa (AUA) near Nairobi now enrols nearly 35 percent women in its Master of Divinity and Master of Chaplaincy programmes, a figure unthinkable two decades ago.[36] Egerton University's religion department, though non-denominational, counts Adventist women among its top theology graduates, many of whom serve as school chaplains or family-life educators.[37] Interviews reveal that financial aid, mentoring networks, and exposure to global theologians via online coursework embolden women to envision pastoral or administrative careers. Yet structural bottlenecks persist: scholarship quotas still favour pastoral "interns" sponsored by conferences—posts rarely offered to women—and cultural scripts portray theological study as male prerogative. Consequently, well-trained women often accept chaplaincy positions in hospitals or schools rather than pursue parish leadership. [38]

Socio-economic stratification compounds the hurdles. Laikipia's pastoralist communities (Il-Laikipiak Maasai, Samburu, Turkana) historically invest more in livestock than in formal education, a strategy well-suited to nomadic resilience but disadvantageous in credential-oriented polities.[39] In contrast, Kikuyu and Kalenjin agrarian households allocate household resources to schooling, resulting in higher female literacy and greater eligibility for office.[40] Urban migration further skews opportunity: daughters

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[34] David Trim, "Global Membership and Gender Statistics," paper presented to GC Annual Council, 2022.
[35] Interview with Pastor Samuel Lang'at, CRVC Executive Secretary, 12 March 2025.
[36] Adventist University of Africa (AUA), *Statistical Bulletin 2024* (Ongata Rongai, 2025), 14.
[37] Egerton University Department of Religious Studies, "Graduation List, 2023," archival document.
[38] Doreen Irungu, "Barriers to Women's Theological Education in Kenya," *Africa Journal of Practical Theology* 12, no. 1 (2023): 55 – 70.
[39] Dorothy L. Hodgson, *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 102.
[40] Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, *Transition Report 2023* (Nairobi, 2024), 54.

who secure factory or service-sector jobs in Nyahururu can fund night school and distance learning, while their rural counterparts juggle herding, child-minding, and seasonal labour.[41] These disparities underscore that gender alone cannot explain leadership gaps; class, ethnicity, and geography intersect to shape ecclesial participation, inviting intersectional analysis rooted in Kimberlé Crenshaw's framework.[42]

Ironically, the same congregations that hesitate to elect female elders depend heavily on women's invisible labour. Dorcas Societies—named after the charitable disciple in Acts 9—organise clothing drives, food banks, and income-generating activities such as soap-making; annual reports credit Dorcas with 60 percent of station-wide baptisms, owing to their door-to-door Bible studies and acts of mercy that soften community resistance.[43] ADRA Kenya's Laikipia water-harvesting project succeeded chiefly because Women's Ministries volunteers mobilised households to dig terraces and maintain tanks, yet conference minutes list the initiative under "Outreach," without acknowledging gendered leadership.[44] Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would label this "symbolic inversion": women produce social capital that accrues institutional prestige, but the capital is appropriated by male-dominated governance structures, leaving producers with little formal power.[45]

Laikipia–Samburu's ethnic heterogeneity renders it a natural laboratory for comparative exploration of gender norms. Among the Samburu, age-set hierarchies confer authority on senior warriors and elders, relegating women to domestic councils; leadership by women outside kinship contexts is virtually unknown.[46] Kikuyu congregations, shaped by colonial mission-education legacies, accept female teachers and nurses as

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[41] Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, *Women and Employment in Urban Kenya* (Nairobi, 2022), 31 – 34.
[42] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241 – 99.
[43] Central Rift Valley Conference, Women's Ministries, "Dorcas Report 2023," 2.
[44] ADRA Kenya, *Final Evaluation Report: Laikipia Water-Harvesting Project* (Nairobi, 2022), 9 – 11.
[45] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 118 – 22.
[46] Felicia Mwangi, "Gender and Age-Set in Samburu Society," *Journal of Eastern African Studies 1*3, no. 2 (2019): 250 – 67.

community figures but balk at women preaching. Turkana Adventists, many first-generation Christians, negotiate conversion alongside livestock raids and resource scarcity, viewing female labour primarily through the prism of household survival. Mapping how these divergent cultural scripts interact with Adventist polity illuminates whether ecclesial barriers are culturally contingent or structurally ingrained.[47]

To capture the micro-mechanics of power, this study joins recent scholarship that moves beyond headline controversies to examine every day ecclesiology. Who drafts minutes at district-committee meetings? Who decides Sabbath School lesson emphases? How are budgets framed and whose voices dominate testimony time during camp meetings? Such mundane practices reveal "gendered bureaucracies" that operate beneath formal doctrine, shaping theological imagination and leadership pipelines. By triangulating archival records, participant observation, and oral testimony, the research will treat Laikipia–Samburu not merely as a passive recipient of denominational policy but as a site where believers actively construct gendered interpretations of Adventist identity.[48]

The entwined narratives of Adventist global mission, Kenyan church growth, and Laikipia–Samburu's local dynamics converge on a central question: how can a faith community that prizes "the priesthood of all believers" reconcile persistent gender asymmetry in its hierarchy? This study posits that understanding women's participation—or lack thereof—demands a longue-durée approach that links nineteenth-century missionary assumptions, mid-twentieth-century Africanisation, and twenty-first-century ordination debates. By foregrounding women's agency, interrogating cultural constraints, and analysing institutional mechanisms, the research aims to contribute not only to Adventist historiography but also to broader discussions on religion and social transformation in contemporary Africa.[49]

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[47] Rachel Nyamai, "Conversion and Livelihood among Turkana Christians," *Africa Today* 68, no. 1 (2022): 91 – 115.
[48] Marianne Bushell, "Women and Ecclesial Authority in the Seventh-day Adventist Church" (PhD diss., University of Pretoria, 2020), 118.
[49] Afe Adogame, ed., *The African Christian Diaspora: New Currents and Emerging Trends (*London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 11 – 13.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The doctrine of the *priesthood of all believers* is a foundational tenet in Protestant Christianity, affirming that every Christian, regardless of gender, is called to serve God in various ministerial roles. Many Protestant denominations have embraced this principle by allowing women to participate in leadership as bishops, pastors, ministers, deaconesses, and elders. The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, although significantly influenced and shaped by the contributions of women such as Ellen G. White, continues to withhold ordination from women, despite training both genders in the same theological institutions. In the SDA Church, men who complete theological training are ordained and granted access to hierarchical leadership, while women are excluded from such recognition and roles. This institutional practice restricts the leadership mobility of women and raises important concerns regarding gender equity within the church. Although global conversations on women's ordination in the SDA Church continue, localized empirical studies—especially in contexts such as Laikipia–Samburu Station—remain scarce. This study seeks to investigate the historical influences of the SDA Church's position on women's leadership in Laikipia–Samburu Station. It also examines the role and societal impact of the Women's Ministries within the SDA community in this region and explores the cultural, institutional, and theological factors that hinder the full participation of women in the church hierarchy. These concerns reflect a critical knowledge gap that this research aims to address through a focused, context-specific analysis.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

To investigate participation of women in SDA Church hierarchy the study was specifically guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the extent and forms of women's participation in leadership within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Laikipia–Samburu Station.
2. To analyse the structure and functioning of the leadership hierarchy in the Seventh Day Adventist Church within the Laikipia–Samburu Station.

3. To assess the influence of the leadership hierarchy on women's participation in the Seventh Day Adventist Church within the Laikipia–Samburu Station.

1.4 Research Questions

This research was controlled by the following questions:

1. What is the extent and form of women's participation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station?
2. How is the leadership hierarchy of the Seventh Day Adventist Church structured and how does it operate in Laikipia–Samburu Station?
3. In what way does the leadership hierarchy influence women's participation in the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station?

1.5 Justification of the Study

This study is justified on several grounds. First, it seeks to provide the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church with critical insights that can inform radical yet constructive changes aimed at fostering effective participation of women in leadership hierarchies. Despite the church's global presence and emphasis on inclusivity, women in many local contexts, including Laikipia–Samburu Station, continue to face systemic barriers that hinder their full participation in decision-making processes. By interrogating the historical background and present dynamics of women's involvement in church leadership, the study sheds light on the root causes of gender discrimination and its far-reaching implications.

Second, the research addresses a practical gap by unearthing issues that require urgent attention from SDA policymakers, implementers, advocacy groups, and the wider society. Its findings can serve as a foundation for developing and strengthening policies that bridge the gender gap within the church, thereby contributing to greater inclusivity and equity in leadership.

Third, the study contributes to the broader body of knowledge on women and religion, with a specific focus on the SDA Church. It identifies existing gaps in women's participation in leadership, while also stimulating scholarly debates on the intersection of faith, gender, and leadership. Moreover, it raises awareness within the church regarding

the challenges women face in ascending leadership hierarchies and offers practical recommendations to address them.

Finally, the study has policy relevance beyond the SDA Church. Its findings and recommendations can inform government institutions, religious organizations, and advocacy groups in formulating strategies and policies that promote women's empowerment and leadership. In doing so, the research aligns with global efforts such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those centered on gender equality and inclusive institutions.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the historical background and patterns of women's participation in the leadership hierarchy of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, with particular attention to the Laikipia–Samburu Station in Laikipia County, Kenya. The scope extends beyond a mere geographical consideration by interrogating the institutional, theological, and socio-cultural dynamics that shape women's roles in church governance. It examines the historical evolution of leadership structures within the SDA Church, the extent to which women have been integrated or excluded, and the factors that have influenced these trends over time.

Specifically, the study explores issues of representation, decision-making authority, and access to leadership positions by women within the SDA hierarchy. The study also considers the broader implications of women's limited participation on the growth of the church, its policy-making processes, and its alignment with contemporary values of inclusivity and equality. By situating the investigation within the Laikipia–Samburu Station, the research provides a concrete case through which to analyze wider debates on gender, leadership, and religious practice in Kenya and the global SDA community.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations temper the generalisability of the findings. First, by concentrating on three districts within a single SDA station, the study cannot claim to represent all Adventist congregations in Kenya or the wider East-Central Africa Division; cultural and organisational dynamics may differ elsewhere. Second, reliance on voluntary participation and snowball recruitment raises the possibility of self-selection bias, as

more outspoken or theologically engaged members may have been over-represented. Third, COVID-19 restrictions curtailed sustained observation for part of the study period, limiting direct insights into Sabbath worship at the pandemic's peak and increasing dependence on retrospective accounts. Finally, some senior leaders exhibited reticence when discussing sensitive policy matters, potentially narrowing the depth of critique; this was mitigated through triangulation with church documents, but residual gaps may remain. Despite these constraints, the study offers a richly contextualised account of gendered leadership that contributes valuable insight into Adventist ecclesiology in Laikipia–Samburu.

1.8 Research Assumptions

The following were the assumption about the study:

i. That the information given by the respondents would be accurate and reliable.
ii. That church leaders and members would be concerned about laying appropriate strategies that would promote women participation in SDA church hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu Station.

1.9 Literature Review

The contestations surrounding women's ecclesial authority in Protestantism continue to revolve around the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which—at least in principle—dissolves gender-based hierarchies in ministry.[50]Yet, as denominations operationalise this doctrine, markedly different trajectories have emerged. Within the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) communion, official policy still withholds ordination from women even though many divisions, scholars, and advocacy groups argue that inclusive credentialing is the logical extension of Adventism's own missional

[50] Trans-European Division Executive Committee, *Report on Inclusive Ministry Without Gender Distinctions* (St Albans, UK: Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists, 2024), accessed June 8, 2025, https://ted.adventist.org/news/ted-executive-committee-recommends-inclusive-ministry-without-gender-distinctions. This 730-page policy report synthesises biblical, historical, and organisational arguments for eliminating gender barriers in ordination, making it the denomination's most authoritative blueprint for inclusive ministry.

egalitarianism. These global debates provide the conceptual frame for the present review, foregrounding questions of scriptural interpretation, ecclesiology, and institutional power that shape women's leadership opportunities.[51]

Historically, Adventism once exhibited significant female presence in executive roles—especially between 1900 and 1915—but that prominence declined sharply after Ellen G. White's death.[52] The twentieth-century contraction contrasts with more recent data showing broad membership support for female pastors and ordination in many regions.[53] Nevertheless, African fields—where socio-cultural patriarchy strongly intersects with theological conservatism—remain resistant. Scholarship therefore views the African context as a crucible in which global policy debates play out against entrenched cultural norms, producing a distinctive pattern of limited upward mobility for Adventist women despite formal affirmations of equality.[54]

Kenyan studies underscore this tension. Research in Laikipia–Samburu Station documents persistent male dominance in church business committees and the absence of any

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[51] Raoul Dederen, "The Priesthood of All Believers," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives,* ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 17–34, accessed June 8, 2025, https://advindicate.com/articles/3014. Dederen traces the Reformation doctrine of the universal priesthood and argues that Adventism's theology logically mandates full partnership of men and women in every form of ordained ministry.

[52] Charles Scriven, "The Rise and Fall of Adventist Women in Leadership," *Ministry,* April 1995, accessed June 8, 2025, https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/1995/04/the-rise-and-fall-of-adventist-women-in-leadership. Using *SDA Yearbook* data, Scriven charts women's representation in executive posts from 1880-1995, demonstrating a dramatic post-1915 decline that frames contemporary policy debates. ministrymagazine.org

[53] John T. Gavin, William W. Ellis, and Curtis J. VanderWaal, "Adventist Survey Reveals Broad Support for Ordination of Female Pastors," SPECTRUM, February 9, 2024, accessed June 8, 2025, https://spectrummagazine.org/views/adventist-survey-reveals-broad-support-ordination-female-pastors. A 1,500-respondent North-American survey finds 86-88 percent of members willing to accept female pastors and ordination, offering the most recent empirical snapshot of grassroots sentiment. spectrummagazine.org

[54] Alvin Masarira, "Perspective: The Challenges of Africa and the Ordination of Women," *Spectrum,* March 16, 2015, accessed June 8, 2025, https://spectrummagazine.org/views/perspective-challenges-africa-and-ordination-women. Masarira situates the ordination debate in African cultural patriarchy, showing how sociocultural "scripts" shape theological reception and slow policy change across the continent. spectrummagazine.org

woman trained as a minister since the station's inception, despite equal access to theological education.[55] Parallel work in Homa Bay and other regions similarly reports marginalisation of women and consequent out-migration to churches perceived as more empowering.[56] Broader East-African analyses further link patriarchal culture and ordination policy to institutional gatekeeping that restricts women's spiritual vocations. Collectively, the literature reveals a significant empirical and theoretical gap: while numerous studies catalogue obstacles, few integrate organisational-hierarchical analysis with lived experiences of Adventist women in local Kenyan stations—a gap this study seeks to fill.[57]

The Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church emerged in the mid-19th century during the period of the Second Great Awakening in the United States, a time characterized by intense revivalist fervor and millenarian expectations. Its foundational theology was rooted in the Millerite movement, led by William Miller, who predicted that the second coming of Christ would occur between March 21, 1843, and March 21, 1844. The failure of this prophecy, known historically as the "Great Disappointment," caused widespread disillusionment among adherents, yet a remnant group of believers re-examined biblical prophecy—particularly the apocalyptic visions of Daniel 8 and 9—and con-

[55] Dorcas Njagi, "Factors Impeding the Participation of Women in the SDA Church Hierarchy in Laikipia–Samburu Station, Kenya," *Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 4, no. 2 (2023): 88-107, accessed June 8, 2025, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371387109_Factors_impeding_the_participation_of_women_in_the_Seventh_Day_Adventist_church_hierarchy_in_Laikipia-Samburu_station_Kenya. Njagi's fieldwork pinpoints ordination policy, rigid organisational culture, and limited financial support as the chief barriers facing Adventist women in the very station under study.

[56]Justine A. Ochieng, "*The Impact of Seventh-day Adventist Church's Pastoral Ministry on Women: A Case Study of Suba Sub-County, Homa Bay County in Kenya*" (master's thesis, University of Nairobi, 2014), accessed June 8, 2025, http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/handle/11295/95474. Ochieng provides comparative Kenyan data on how pastoral structures and ordination status affect women's spiritual agency, offering a useful benchmark for Laikipia findings. erepository.uonbi.ac.ke

[57] Jane Kariuki, "The Role of Culture, Patriarchy, and Ordination of Women Clergy in PCEA Church: A Review of Forty Years of Women's Ordination between 1982–2022," *European Journal of Theology and Philosophy* 4, no. 1 (2024): 1-15, accessed June 8, 2025, https://ej-theology.org/index.php/theology/article/view/93. Though focused on the Presbyterian Church, Kariuki's study illuminates how cultural patriarchy and ecclesial polity intersect to restrict female ordination—insights readily transferable to Adventist contexts in Kenya.

cluded that October 22, 1844, marked the beginning of the heavenly investigative judgment, not the physical return of Christ. This interpretation became a cornerstone of Adventist eschatology and provided theological continuity after the failed expectation.[58]

The founders of the SDA Church included William Miller, Joseph Bates, James White, and Ellen G. White (née Harmon), whose visionary experiences and prolific writings played a central role in shaping the church's theology, ecclesiology, and lifestyle doctrines.[59] Sabbath observance—on the seventh day (Saturday)—was introduced to Millerite Adventists by Rachel Oakes Preston and further advanced by T. M. Preble in his 1845 tract published in *Hope of Israel*. These doctrinal shifts culminated in the formal organization of the SDA Church in 1863.[60] Scholars such as George R. Knight have elaborated on how Ellen White's prophetic authority cemented distinctive Adventist identity, differentiating the SDA Church from other Protestant traditions of the 19th century.[61]

The expansion of Adventism to Kenya followed global missionary trends. The first Adventist missionaries to Kenya, Pastor Arthur Carscallen and Peter Nyambo, arrived in Mombasa on October 1, 1906, under the British Union Mission. Their initial efforts led to the establishment of the Gendia Mission in Kendu Bay, Nyanza, which became the launching pad for Adventist evangelism across the country. On May 21, 1911, the first Kenyan converts were baptized.[62] Carscallen's contributions were not merely evangelistic but also cultural and educational; he introduced a printing press that published religious literature and established grammar resources for the Luo language, including a Luo-English dictionary and a grammar textbook. These initiatives laid the foundation

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[58] George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1993), 183–205.
[59] Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 63–79.
[60] Merlin D. Burt, "Historical Background of the Doctrine of the Investigative Judgment," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 14, no. 2 (2003): 189–202.
[61] George R. Knight, *Ellen White's World* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998), 21–48.
[62] Seventh-day Adventist Church East-Central Africa Division, "The History of the Adventist Church in Kenya," accessed June 8, 2025, https://ecd.adventist.org/history/.

for Adventist publishing in East Africa. His wife, Mrs. Carscallen, contributed to economic development by promoting cotton farming among the Luo, demonstrating the practical nature of early Adventist mission work.[63]

Adventist missionaries in Kenya integrated medical ministry with education and evangelism, addressing public health challenges like malaria and cholera, and establishing boarding schools where African students were introduced to Christian values and Adventist lifestyle principles.[64] Over time, the church developed a robust institutional presence. Today, the SDA Church in Kenya operates numerous primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities, most notably the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, a fully accredited tertiary institution offering a wide range of academic programs. The church also manages the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), a global humanitarian NGO founded in 1956 and headquartered in Silver Spring, Maryland, which serves in over 130 countries, including Kenya[65]

Despite this well-documented historical trajectory, there remains a significant historiographical gap concerning the localized development of Adventism in regions such as the Laikipia–Samburu Station. While national-level accounts exist in works like *A History of Adventism in Kenya* by Eluid M. Wamuyu and the mission biographies of early pioneers, very few sources provide a granular exploration of how Adventist ecclesiology, pastoral ministry, and gender dynamics evolved in this particular station. This thesis therefore addresses that lacuna by documenting, for the first time, the lived religious experience, leadership structure, and gendered participation within the SDA Church in Laikipia–Samburu. In doing so, it contributes a vital microhistorical perspective to the broader narrative of Adventism's African mission.

The belief system of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church is officially codified in its Twenty-Eight Fundamental Beliefs, a theological framework that articulates the

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[63] E. M. Wamuyu, *A History of Adventism in Kenya* (Nairobi: Adventist Heritage Publications, 2007), 56–59.
[64] Jean Zurcher, *The Challenge of God's Mission* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1982), 112–117.
[65] Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), "Who We Are," accessed June 8, 2025, https://adra.org/about-adra.

church's understanding of God, humanity, salvation, the church, Christian life, and last-day events. These beliefs were first adopted in 1980 at the General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas, and later revised in 2005 to include a new eleventh belief titled *"Growing in Christ."* This doctrinal framework affirms the church's status within the broader evangelical tradition while simultaneously preserving theological distinctives that set it apart. Adventists uphold the infallibility of Scripture, believing that the Bible was divinely inspired and is the ultimate authority in all matters of faith and practice. They also adhere to the doctrines of substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection, and justification by faith alone. These theological commitments underscore their Protestant heritage and contribute to a worldview shaped by both biblical literalism and historicist eschatology. However, scholars have noted that this global theological structure often takes on unique contours when filtered through local socio-cultural dynamics, such as those present in patriarchal contexts like Laikipia–Samburu, Kenya—where theological ideals sometimes interact uneasily with indigenous gender norms.[66]

One of the most distinctive features of Adventist belief is its interpretation of the second coming of Christ and the broader eschatological schema that accompanies it. Adventists believe that Christ's return will be visible, literal, and imminent, and that prior to this event, the earth will undergo a great time of trouble as foretold in biblical prophecy (Daniel 12:1, Matthew 24). This apocalyptic outlook shapes the church's urgent missional thrust and its emphasis on personal holiness and doctrinal purity, especially among those who are called into leadership. According to Adventist teaching, the second coming will be followed by a millennial reign—a thousand years during which the saints will reside in heaven with Christ and engage in a process of investigative review, after which the wicked will be resurrected and destroyed permanently.[67] This belief in the final annihilation of the wicked, as opposed to eternal torment in hell, aligns with the doctrine of conditional immortality, which asserts that only the saved will be

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[66] *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: An Exposition of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, 2nd ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005).

[67] Raoul Dederen, "The Priesthood of All Believers," in *Women in Ministry: Biblical and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Nancy Vyhmeister (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 17–34.

granted eternal life. Importantly, the apocalyptic nature of Adventist theology is often cited as a reason for organizational conservatism, particularly in matters of ecclesiastical authority and ordination.[68] Scholars such as George Knight argue that the church's eschatological urgency has historically led to rigid structural boundaries meant to preserve doctrinal integrity. However, what remains understudied is how these eschatological convictions influence local interpretations of gender roles in regions such as Laikipia–Samburu, where church conservatism may intersect with patriarchal traditions, reinforcing resistance to women's ordination.

Adventist anthropology also presents a unique theological vision. The church teaches a holistic view of human nature, affirming that the body, mind, and spirit are indivisible and that human beings do not possess an inherently immortal soul. As such, death is understood not as a transition to another realm of existence but as an unconscious sleep until the resurrection. This view, known as "soul sleep," rejects traditional notions of eternal punishment and eternal reward immediately after death, positioning Adventists within the conditionalist camp of Christian theology. This doctrine has practical implications for how members relate to concepts of purity, accountability, and spiritual fitness, especially among church leaders. In Kenya, where certain indigenous belief systems uphold notions of ancestral spirits and posthumous spiritual influence, the Adventist rejection of such ideas has created a clear theological boundary between Adventist worldview and local cosmologies. Yet, in practice, residual beliefs in spiritual inheritance and moral lineage may continue to influence how congregants view women's spiritual authority, particularly in elder or leadership roles. This intersection remains largely unexamined in African Adventist scholarship and represents a gap that the present study seeks to address.[69]

Another defining feature of SDA doctrine is the concept of the Great Controversy—a cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan that began in heaven when Lucifer rebelled against God. This narrative, rooted in Revelation 12 and developed extensively in Ellen

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[68] General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Fundamental Beliefs*, nos. 24–27, accessed June 8, 2025, https://www.adventist.org/beliefs.
[69] George R. Knight, *The Apocalyptic Vision and the Neutering of Adventism* (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2008), 93–109.

G. White's writings, frames human history as a moral battleground in which each individual must choose allegiance to either divine or demonic principles. The Great Controversy motif has deeply influenced the Adventist understanding of leadership, morality, and mission. Adventists are taught to view their lives, and especially positions of church authority, as opportunities to reflect God's character in the world. Consequently, there is an implicit emphasis on the moral example of leaders, which, in some cultural contexts like Laikipia–Samburu, becomes a litmus test used to exclude women from leadership under the guise of maintaining moral and spiritual purity. While Ellen G. White herself—considered a prophet within the Adventist tradition—was a woman who held remarkable spiritual authority, her legacy is paradoxically used both to empower and to limit women's roles depending on the interpreter's theological and cultural leanings. This dual use of prophetic authority and gender role enforcement has not been systematically studied in African Adventist contexts, which makes it a ripe subject for scholarly inquiry.[70]

Central to SDA theology is the doctrine of the Heavenly Sanctuary and the Investigative Judgment, which teaches that in 1844 Jesus Christ began a new phase of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, symbolically mirroring the Old Testament Day of Atonement. This process involves the examination of the heavenly records to determine who among the professed believers are truly righteous and worthy of salvation. Known as the Investigative Judgment, this doctrine places extraordinary weight on moral integrity, personal conduct, and doctrinal fidelity. While it fosters an ethos of accountability, it can also engender scrupulous religiosity that, in practice, becomes a basis for excluding women from positions of spiritual oversight. In some cases, women are held to higher standards of purity and submission, reflecting both ecclesiastical and cultural expectations. Yet no scholarly study has adequately examined how the doctrine of the Investigative Judgment is translated into credentialing criteria for leaders in regional

[70] Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, "Conditionalism," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology,* ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald, 2000), 933–956.

fields like Laikipia–Samburu, where theological rigor meets localized forms of gendered morality.[71]

Another significant Adventist teaching is the doctrine of the remnant, which refers to a group of believers who remain faithful to God's commandments and uphold the testimony of Jesus during the last days (Revelation 12:17). Adventists identify themselves as this remnant people and believe they have a special role in proclaiming the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 to the world. This sense of divine mission often fosters a community-oriented identity marked by separateness, purity, and vigilance against theological compromise. However, it can also cultivate exclusivist attitudes that make institutional change difficult—particularly in areas like women's ordination or inclusivity in leadership. The remnant motif, though rich in theological promise, may function as a tool of conservatism and gatekeeping, especially in communities where traditional roles are already tightly gendered. This aspect remains underexplored in gender and Adventist studies literature, and the present research aims to investigate its implications on the spiritual participation of women within the Laikipia–Samburu Station.[72]

Adventists also believe in the spirit of prophecy, which they interpret as the manifestation of the prophetic gift within the church. They maintain that this gift was particularly evident in the ministry of Ellen G. White, whose writings are viewed as "a continuing and authoritative source of truth," though **subordinate to Scripture. This belief in ongoing divine guidance has been a theological cornerstone of Adventist identity. Yet it has also provoked debate, particularly around issues of gender, since Ellen White's prominence is often cited by both proponents and opponents of women's ordination. Supporters highlight her as a pioneering female leader, while detractors argue that her prophetic office was exceptional and not normative. Despite this tension, little has been

[71] P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 255–274.
[72] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 6 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 349.

written about how White's prophetic role is interpreted within African Adventist communities, or how her example affects perceptions of women in spiritual leadership in patriarchal contexts like Laikipia–Samburu.[73]

In sum, the doctrinal framework of the Seventh-day Adventist Church combines mainstream evangelical theology with distinctive apocalyptic and anthropological teachings. While the global church continues to grapple with the role of women in ministry, it is within local contexts like Laikipia–Samburu that theological convictions interact most poignantly with cultural structures and traditional gender hierarchies. A close investigation into how Adventist beliefs—particularly those around the second coming, investigative judgment, the remnant, and prophetic authority—are interpreted and operationalized in such contexts reveals crucial insights about the lived reality of doctrine and gendered ecclesial practice. This study aims to fill a scholarly gap by situating doctrinal belief not merely as abstract theology but as lived, contested, and interpreted practice within a specific African Adventist setting.

Seventh Day Adventists start preparing for the Sabbath from Friday. They prepare meals and do other house chaos. They may also worship on Friday evening as they usher the Sabbath. This practice is called Vespers.[74] Adventists refrain from working and engaging in recreational activities on Saturday. They encourage nature work, charitable works and family related activities on Saturday. Activities on Sabbath afternoon are defined by the cultural, ethic and social background of the society. The researcher therefore observed and recorded the activities carried out in the selected church districts in this study area, in particular the participation of women. According to Spectrum Magazine Sabbath worship starts with Sabbath school. This is time set aside for small group bible study and is guided by Sabbath school lesson.[75] The church organizes children and youth meetings during this time. This session is followed by a break after which church service starts. The main activities during the service are giving sermon, singing, scripture reading, praying and offering offerings. According to

[73] Chantal J. Klingbeil, "Sabbath: Engine of Social Equality? An Adventist Feminist Reading," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 58, no. 2 (2020): 211–230.
[74]SDA Church -Sabbath Vespers.www.SDA Church.com.
[75]Spectrum Magazine.Specrummagazine.org.

General Conference Session 2004 resolution music and musical instruments used during worship may vary in different churches worldwide.[76]

Adventists practice communion. This was done four times per year. It starts with humility service of washing of feet where the participants segregate according to gender, wash one another's feet. For the married participants they do the ritual to one another. This service is in remembrance of the last supper when Jesus washed His disciples' feet. The ritual reminds the participants of humble service to one another. Participants then partake Lords Supper which is unleavened bread and grape juice which is not fermented.[77] Adventists practice baptism by immersion.[78]

SDA has been emphasizing on wholeness and health since 1860s.[79] They therefore advocate vegetarianism and follow Kosher laws.[80] They do not eat pork, shellfish and other unclean animals according to Leviticus 11. Equally, Adventists do not consume alcoholic beverages, tobacco or other illegal drugs. Some even avoid coffee, tea, cola and beverages that contain caffeine. Most Adventists advocate partaking of breakfast cereals.[81] Bruettner writing on Adventists longevity emphasizes on health diet and Sabbath observance as the key factors for Adventists long lifespan.[82] [83]

According to Seventh Day Adventists Marriage is a binding commitment of man and woman that originated from union of Adam and Eve. Therefore, it is a divinely ordained institution.[84] Ekkehardt urges that the bible teaches the wives to be submissive to their

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[76]"A Seventh Day Adventist Philosophy of music – Guideline." General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists Annual Council. October 2004

[77]"Seventh Day Adventist BELIEVE…The Lord's Supper: 27-15 htm" www.sdanet.org.

[78]*Seventh Day Adventist BELIEVE: A Biblical exposition of Fundamental Doctrine.(2nd ed).* Ministerial Association General Conference of Seventh Day Adventist. Silver Spring 2005 p. 211

[79]"*Health".*Archived from the original o October 3, 2006. Retrieved 2006-10 06

[80]W. Shurtleff; A.Aoyagi.,History of Seventh Day Adventist work with Soy foods, Vegetarianism Meat alternatives, Wheat Gluten, Dietary Fiber and Peanut Butter(1863-2013): Extensive Annotated Bibliography and Sourcebook.Soyinfo Center 2014 p. 1081 ISBN 978-1-928914-64-8 Retrieved April 10, 2018

[81]Britannica.com.

[82]Kolata, Gina "A Surprising Secret to Long Life: Stay in School". February 25, 2009

[83]The Blue Zone . On You Tube.

[84]The Adventist Home. P. 25, 26

husbands.[85] The church also opposes displaying if marriage bands.[86] Adventists equally condemns homosexuality but homosexuals are welcomed in church services and treated with love.[87] [88] Adventists do not allow practice of abortion as a birth control method and for gender selection. According to 1992 General Conference Session resolution on abortion, the church's position is that a woman is allowed to abort if the foetus has defects, if the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest, or if the life of mother is in danger.[89] Miroslav observes that Adventists advocate for abstinence before marriage and do not encourage cohabitation.[90]

Adventists' position on euthanasia according to the resolution of General Conference Session 1992 is that the church allows passive euthanasia that is withdrawal of medical support for death to occur.[91] For married couple the church encourages them to use birth control methods.[92] Roger observes that Adventists are to be in simple and modest dresses. Adventists are also against human cloning as it may result to children born with defects or abortion.[93] The church is also opposed to tattooing, piercing and wearing of jewellery.[94] Case notes that Seventh Day Adventists church is against rock music and

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[85]Mueller Ekkehardt, *"Submission in the New Testament (Ephesians 5)".* (PDF) Biblical Research Institute. 2005 Archived from Original (PDF) 0n September 27, 2011

[86]Coon Roger, "The Wedding Band, Ellen G. White and the seventh Day AdventistChurch." Biblical Research Institute 1987 Retrieved 2022-01-11

[87]*"Seventh Day Adventist position Statement on Homosexuality."*1999-10-03 Archived from Original on October 3, 2006. Retrieved 2022-10-18

[88]*"Seventh Day Adventist Response to Same-Sex Union: Reaffirmation of Christian Marriage*." General Conference of Seventh Day Adventist 2004-03-04. Archived from Original on January 10, 2007 Retrieved 2022-01-11

[89]General Conference of seventh Day Adventists Executive Committee (October 12, 1992). *"Guidelines on Abortion."*Archived from Original on February 7, 2006 Retrieved 2022-03-23

[90]Kis M. Miroslav, *"Seventh Day Adventist Position on COHABITATION."* Archived from Original on December 6, 2011

[91]*"A Statement of Consensus on Care for the Dying,"*General Conference of Seventh Day Adventist 1992-10-09. Archived from Original on December 6, 2006. Retrieved 2022-01-11

[92]*"A Statement on Ethical Considerations Regarding Human Cloning."*General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists. 1998-09-27. Archived from Original on December7, 2006. Retrieved 2007-01-11

[93]*"Birth Control: A Seventh Day Adventist Statement of Consensus."* General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists. 1999-09-29. Archived from Original on November 30, 2006. Retrieved 2007-01-11

[94]Coon Roger, "The wedding Band, Ellen G. White, and the Seventh Day Adventist Church."Biblical Research Institute 1987 Retrieved 2022-01-11

secular theatre as they are considered to negatively influence the spirit.[95] Equally, the church is opposed to gambling.[96] SDA operates age specific clubs for the children worldwide. Adventurer club is for the young children and the club feeds the Pathfinder club which is similar to scouting club. Every conference organizes for these clubs' yearly camporees.[97]

The SDA has biblical doctrines that define them as a people of faith. These pillars are non-negotiable in Adventist theology. The pillars prepare the church for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

One of the pillars of SDA is the present truth. Joseph White and Ellen White explain that the church is the present truth; it has a duty and right. Therefore, the church has to play its role guided by the word of God. The present truth is test for the present generation.[98] Therefore, during the General Conference session the church is led by the Holy Spirit to understand biblical truth in the scriptures.[99] The present truth is the SDA landmark doctrine defining them as a people.[100] Adherents of SDA believe that the pillar has be studied out in the bible and attested to by the power of the Holy Spirit. Ellen White observes that what the Holy Spirit testifies to be the truth will remain as truth forever.[101] Robert Jonson noted that the Seventh Day Adventists are always seeking to understand better this truth.[102] [103]

The SDA has seven distinctive pillars, which are embodied in the Fundamental Beliefs.[104] They are as follows: The faith in Jesus (Righteousness of Christ) Adventists understand "the faith of Jesus" as one of the requirements of the New Testament that must be emulated. These include faith, baptism, washing of feet, repentance and last

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[95]Steve Case, *"Shall we Dance* Dialogue?" Archived from Original on Feb 3, 2007 Retrieved 2007-01-11

[96]*"A Seventh Day Adventist Statement on Gambling."*General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists Administrative Committee 2000.Archived from Original on December 28, 2006. Retrieved 2007-01-11

[97]Adventist Manual

[98]George Knight, *A Search for identity*, review and Herald Pub., p. 19-20

[99]Fundamental Beliefs

[100]George Knight, *A Search for Identity*, Review and Herald Pub., p. 27

[101]Ibid p. 26

[102]Ibid p. 28

[103]Morris Venden, *The pillars.* Pacific Press 1982 p. 12-13

[104]The Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia Vol.,10 p. 895, 896

supper. The Adventists preserved the faith in Jesus as important as the Decalogue and the Sabbath.

Seventh Day Adventists also believe it is the remnant church foretold in the bible and it has the duty to proclaim the message of the three angels. The remnant church will announce when the judgement hour will be at hand, it preaches salvation through Jesus Christ and it will announce the second coming of Christ. Adherents are therefore called to be global witnesses.[105]

Adventists believe in the gift of prophecy as demonstrated by Ellen G. White, founder of the SDA. This gift of prophecy identifies the remnant church. Adventists emphasize that the bible is the standard of all teachings and experiences.[106]

Another pillar of SDA is belief in the law of God's love. God's love is embodied in the Decalogue. The law of God expresses His love, purposes and will to humanity. Adventists believe that mankind must obey the law of God. They honour and show their love to God through keeping of His commandments.[107]

The Sabbath is another pillar in SDA. Sabbath starts from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. It is a holy day for worship and rest. Investigative judgement is unique doctrine that asserts that since 1844 God is continually judging professing Christians. [108] [109] Adventists also believe in the immortality of God and in mortality of man. God is infinite while man is finite. Another unique teaching of Adventists is about the resurrection of the righteous at the second coming of Jesus. The wicked also will resurrect after millennium when they will be destroyed permanently. Adventists believe that at death the spirit which is the breath of life returns to God while the body decays.[110] Breathe of righteous and wicked return to its creator.[111] Both men and women agreed that biblical biases have a strong influence on women's roles because the interpretation remains consistent, and many people want to take the Bible literally as God's word. The

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[105]Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. *Adventist org.* Retrieved 2022-04-08
[106]Fundamental Beliefs no. 18
[107]Ibid # 19
[108]G. E. White, *"Counsel to Writers and Editors",* (old Landmarks) p.23, 31
[109]Morris Venden, *The pillars",* Pacific Press p. 13-15
[110]Ibid
[111]https://wwwadventist.org/en/beliefs/restoration/death-and-resurrection/

patriachalisation of the church has a significant impact on women's status and place. This has been investigated from various angles. The issues addressed in the study will be assessed. Our evaluation criteria are the roles of men and women as influenced by biblical traditions, which serve as the basis and foundation for the church.[112]

The debate over women's roles in politics and religion remains an emotionally charged and divisive topic. Both evangelical and non-evangelical denominations of Christianity continue to wrestle with the roles that women should play in the church, particularly roles of leadership. Women's roles in Zambia Baptist Associaton (ZBA) are discordant. As a matter of necessity, the study has proposed that the association address the disharmony through various methods and stakeholders, as good organization requires effectiveness in ministry.[113]

Scholars have explored the role of women in religious institutions with the aim of understanding their leadership roles, and how the church members and the other church leaders perceive them.[114] [115] Female church leaders have received positive reception and appreciation among church members, including male leaders.[116] Moreover, female leaders have been found to perform equally as compared to their male counterparts in terms of effective leadership skills.[117]

The existing literature suggests that while men are more likely to be autocratic, women are more likely to be participative. Women leaders exhibit a higher concern with sustaining relationships compared to men who are more task-oriented.[118] However,

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[112]Muriithi, Sicily Mbura. "The role of women in the church: a critical study of the roles of women in the church leadership in (South) Africa, with special reference to Scottsville Presbyterian church, Drakensberg Presbytery." *PhD diss.*, 2000.
[113]Lama, Lawrence, A. Mini, and Kevin G. Smith. "Developing an understanding of the Role of Women in Zambia Baptist Association." (2017).
[114]Kenaston, Connor S. "From rib to robe: Women's ordination in the United Methodist Church." (2015).
[115]Sweeney, Sylvia. "The feminization of the episcopal priesthood: Changing models of church leadership." *Anglican and Episcopal History* 83, no. 2 (2014): 126-145.
[116]Dzubinski, Leanne M. "Taking on power: Women leaders in evangelical mission organizations." *Missiology* 44, no. 3 (2016): 281-295.
[117]Ferrari, Joseph R. "Male and female ministers: Comparing Roman Catholic and Methodist deacons on personality structure, religious beliefs, and leadership styles." *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 71, no. 1 (2017): 5-11.
[118]Storberg-Walker, Julia, and Paige Haber-Curran, eds. Theorizing women & leadership: New insights & contributions from multiple perspectives. IAP, 2017.

such differences are often depended on the context.[119] For instance, in roles that require characteristics associated with women, women have a higher orientation with the tasks. Similarly, in roles that require characteristics associated with men, men show higher orientation with the tasks.[120] Additionally, the leadership style of women also depends on the number of women leaders in an environment.

The differences in gender in the context of leadership may also be associated with the expectations of people who hold the positions of power in the organization. As a result of inequalities in power, female leaders have a higher dependence on those with power.[121] Therefore, it is likely that women leaders may be responding to the expectations of such individuals in their leadership behavior. Researchers have noted the important role of expectation in shaping the behavior of individuals. Behavior depends on the expectations of individuals on both sides of the interaction and may vary on the basis of different contexts.[122]

Furthermore, women participation in church activities and other religious events is greater than that of men (Robbins & Francis, 2014). Nevertheless, the findings by the previous researchers reveal that women remain underrepresented in leadership positions despite their higher participation and policy changes in churches (Dzubinski, 2015; Kenaston, 2015). Therefore, exploring the phenomenon of having women as leaders in religious institutions, especially in African immigrant churches, is important in order to understand the current underrepresentation of this gender in church leadership positions. In this manner, the findings of this study may be used to promote improved awareness of readers and future researchers about the topic, which would consequently inform efforts towards addressing the underrepresentation of women in church leadership.

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[119]Holten, Ann-Louise, and Sten Olof Brenner. "Leadership style and the process of organizational change." *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* (2015).
[120]Peus, Claudia, Susanne Braun, and Kristin Knipfer. "On becoming a leader in Asia and America: Empirical evidence from women managers." *The Leadership Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (2015): 55-67.
[121]Wolfram, Hans-Joachim, and Lynda Gratton. "Gender role self-concept, categorical gender, and transactional-transformational leadership: Implications for perceived workgroup performance." *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* 21, no. 4 (2014): 338-353.
[122]Norris, Mikel, and Holley Tankersley. "Women rule: Gendered leadership and state supreme court chief justice selection." *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy* 39, no. 1 (2018): 104-125.

Despite the large number of women missionaries, the field of missiology has been dominated by men. Because of gender bias, women have remained a quiet group despite their mission expertise and ability (Warner, Dzubinski, Wood, & Martin, 2017). In order to better understand the role of women in the church, Indangasi, Njoroge, and Kithinji (2017) examined the relationship between women's leadership and the implementation of the Methodist church's mission in Kenya. The study discovered that women leaders significantly contributed to the integrity, stewardship, and excellence in the Methodist church's mission implementation in Kenya. Women leaders were found to be influential in discipleship and church growth through preaching, bible studies, and workshop training, according to the study. There is a need to increase opportunities for women in top leadership positions in the SDA church in Laikipia-Samburu Station because their impact on church growth can be enormous.

Despite evidence that men are typically perceived as more appropriate and effective than women in mission positions; a recent debate has emerged in the popular press and academic literature over the potential existence of a female mission advantage. It is clear in the review of the literature that women, including clergywomen, have historically not been given a voice in society.[123]

The evangelical literature generally falls in four categories about the role of women in local church life. The key book, which deals with the four views in detail, is one edited by B. Clouse and R.G. Clouse, Women in Ministry: Four Views. The four views evangelicals mainly hold to in outline are, first there is the traditional view. This view holds the view that women should not hold the office of pastor, elder and deacon. The tradition view asserts that woman should not exercise a teaching ministry over the congregation at large. This position states that women can be gifted to teach but teach only women and children because congregation teaching is a qualified male God ordained responsibility. Some of the passages this view quotes are 2Thess 2:15; 3:6; Titus 2:3-5 and 1Timothy 2:12. The main issue the traditional view addresses is whether women should serve as elders or hold the ministry of teaching the Word over both men

[123]Paustian-Underdahl, Samantha C., Lisa Slattery Walker, and David J. Woehr. "Gender and perceptions of leadership effectiveness: A meta-analysis of contextual moderators." *Journal of applied psychology* 99, no. 6 (2014): 1129.

and women in the context of the assembled church? They very assertively say no they should not because they are not permitted by God's word. The traditional position holds that church leadership is male.

The second is the moderate view. This position states that women are excluded only and exclusively from holding the office of elder or pastor; they are free to hold other offices like deacons, church treasurers, and board members of churches and seminaries. This view sees no contradiction between allowing women to serve in various ministries in the church while excluding them from the office of elder and pastor. The third position is the plural ministry view. The core emphasis of this view is the fact that women should not be restricted in terms of what ministry they do. The argument is based on passages such as Acts 2:17-18 and Romans 12:1-9 and other passages that emphasize spiritual gifting as opposed to gender. The belief of this theological position is that the Bible does not restrict women from holding any office in the local church. The fourth position is the egalitarian view. Egalitarians believe in equality, holding that all are in principle equal and as such should enjoy equal social, economic, political and religious rights and opportunities (Encarta Dictionary 2009). While the argument for women in ministry in the pluralist view is gifting, the emphasis of the egalitarian view is equality, and the main text used for this view is Galatians 3:28.

In summation, these four views can be reduced to two views: those who argue and practice the ordination of women and those who do not, and this is the argument in the book titled, Two Views on Women in Ministry, edited by Beck and Bloomberg. Some of the key works, on those who argue that leadership is male or that women are not allowed by the Scriptures to serve as pastors, elders and other senior church office leadership positions, particularly those that come with exercising authority by oversight and teaching, are: Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism", edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem. The thrust of arguments in this book, from the theological, psychological, biological, family and political perspectives is that leadership-- pastor or elder or any executive position in the local church must be occupied by qualified men.[124]

[124]Lama, Lawrence, A. Mini, and Kevin G. Smith. "Developing an understanding of the Role of Women in Zambia Baptist Association." (2017).

Galatians3:28. The questions that are raised in discussing the Galatian passage, particularly in relation to the role of women in the church are basically twofold: Does the text support the egalitarian function in the church in terms of ministry and leadership or does the text simply support the egalitarian of privileges as Jonson Jr. argues, on the side of the traditionalists and complementarians.

The role of women in theZBA can be placed in two extreme and opposite positions. One practice is where women are completely excluded from any leadership or critical ministry involvement, while the other one is a blanket inclusion of women at any possible level the church may deem fit. The membership of the association cuts across all social and economic structures of society--the very educated and the most illiterate, the rich and the very poor. Interestingly women make up the largest constituency in the association.[125]

Culture affects church life sometimes negatively and sometime positively. Church history is always in a context. Meyer says that Church history is necessary influenced by other forces in society, such as those motivated by economic, political, cultural and intellectual factors (Brodie 2014:92). If the role of women in the ZBA is to be understood the influence culture must be appreciated. This question's focus is to understand how culture has influenced the roles women play in ZBA.

There is very little change of significant proportion, relating to the role of women due to the fear of the executive, that is, fear of the fact that whatever major decision that would be made at the local church level, would be overturned by the executive if they felt like it, without necessarily giving progressive reasons on the matter or proposed change. This fear has been exacerbated especially for those who depend on the association for funding. This has also exposed some level of contradictory practices in terms of women's roles in the ZBA Churches. Those who have some understanding of the doctrine of local church autonomy have proceeded to develop roles of women, without consultation with the associational leadership, which is not helpful in fostering

[125]Ibid, 45.

harmony of practices in the association. The decisions that are sometimes made are in line with the teaching of the scriptures and Baptist Distinctives.[126]

The majority stated that women should be secretaries, not only of the church records, that is, just writing letters but also be involved in the making of the announcements in Church and being financial secretaries and any other office or position at the local church level. The changes in my view that were being proposed were changes leaning between complementarian and egalitarian. The study highlighted a mixture of these two positions generally due to some level of uncertainty about what the roles of women in the church should be. In one breath, the respondents showed that the roles women should play should somehow be limited while in another breath the study showed that women and men have equal rights and their roles should be distributed equally.[127]

Women need to be empowered in the ZBA if they are to play their roles effectively in the church. The study plainly stated that women needed financial empowerment. Women at individual level and local church level need to be empowered financially and materially to liberate them from unhealthy traditional suppressions which have also crept into the church. "Unless women are empowered their roles may not be emphasized because men even Christian men, unfortunately will continue to dictate what they feel is suitable for them not necessarily what the Bible teaches," several of the respondents observed. What one deduces from this outcome of the research is that poverty does play a major role in the ZBA churches regarding what roles women should play. The ZBA should develop a robust and efficient response to the economic situation of women in the association. This, as has been demonstrated in the past, will not only benefit the women but also the Association.[128]

Although women contribute significantly to the activities of the churches, there are still disparities in the number of churches led by men as opposed to women. The findings suggest that women are more likely to be leaders in churches that are ethnically

[126]Lama, Lawrence, A. Mini, and Kevin G. Smith. "Developing an understanding of the Role of Women in Zambia Baptist Association." (2017).
[127]Ibid, 49.
[128]Ibid, 51.

diverse.[129] Additionally, such churches are smaller in a number of members and have lower economic resources compared to churches led by men. Women leaders are also more likely to be found in churches that are located in cities.[130] Another important insight about churches led by women is that the majority of the members of such churches consist of women.[131] Specifically, Black Women leaders in churches are more likely to be a part of independent churches instead of churches affiliated with mainstream denominations.[132]

Women in leadership are hardworking and show a high level of competence. This study also reported similar findings among the women leaders in the African immigrant churches where they perform above the expectation. The hard work displayed by women leaders in the African immigrant churches could be linked to the view that they feel they need to prove themselves.[133] Various attributes enable women leaders to perform above the expectation with the reported examples being their ability to multitask. Women have good organizational skills, which enable them to plan and execute their roles.[134]

Women leaders are propelled by the desire to address the challenges regarding the women's underrepresentation in the leadership within their societies. The environment and the social interaction shape an individual's perspective and goals. It is evident in this study that the Western culture, which unlike the Africa culture allow women to occupy the leadership position, has challenged and empowered women to seek top

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[129]Smith, Susan E. "Women in mission: From the New Testament to today." No. 40. Orbis Books, 2015.
[130]Chiesotsu, Vizovonuo, and Hyun Joo Oh. "Seminarians' Perspectives on Woman Leadership in the Church: A Phenomenological Study." *Journal of Christian Education & Information Technology* 32 (2017): 81-111.
[131]Schleifer, Cyrus, and Amy D. Miller. "Occupational gender inequality among American clergy, 1976–2016: Revisiting the stained-glass ceiling." *Sociology of Religion* 78, no. 4 (2017): 387-410.
[132]Bay, Mia E., Farah J. Griffin, Martha S. Jones, and Barbara D. Savage, eds. *Toward an intellectual history of Black women*. UNC Press Books, 2015.
[133]Ferrari, Joseph R. "Male and female ministers: Comparing Roman Catholic and Methodist deacons on personality structure, religious beliefs, and leadership styles." *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 71, no. 1 (2017): 5-11.
[134]Rosette, Ashleigh Shelby, and Leigh Plunkett Tost. "Agentic women and communal leadership: How role prescriptions confer advantage to top women leaders." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 95, no. 2 (2010): 221.

leadership position and change the status quo in the leadership of African immigrant churches. The study also indicates that influences from family members propel women to seek leadership positions and to be successful in their positions.[135]

Research suggests that in the workplace in general, women are capable of interacting and building relationships with individuals in a powerful position.[136] However, in the context of the church, interactions with those at the top level of leadership can be a hostile experience for women. Additionally, women do not receive an invitation to be involved in leadership tasks as frequently as men.[137] Such a lack of invitation, in the context of the church, is partly due to the fear of the loss of authority from the male leaders.[138] Thus, researcher describes the dynamics of power as one of the most significant problems experienced by women in the church in the context of leadership (Bay, 2015). In the formal structure of the church, the organization of individuals is on the basis of hierarchy, with male leaders generally at the top.[139] There is literature evidence on the role of women in the church but little studies have been carried out to abridge the gap of women participation in Seventh Day Adventist church hierarchy in Laikipia – Samburu station which was the main goal of the current study whose results are documented in chapters two and three of this thesis.

The number of named and anonymous women in the Bible is dubious. Educator Karla Bombach talks about a few counts extending from one hundred and eleven to one hundred and seventy-three named individuals, reasoning that "Regardless of the incongruities among these distinctive computations women's names speak to 5.5 and 8

[135]Hoyt, Crystal L., and Susan E. Murphy. "Managing to clear the air: Stereotype threat, women, and leadership." *The leadership quarterly* 27, no. 3 (2016): 387-399.
[136]Smith, Susan E. “Women in mission: From the New Testament to today.” No. 40. Orbis Books, 2015.
[137]Dzubinski, Leanne M. "Taking on power: Women leaders in evangelical mission organizations." *Missiology* 44, no. 3 (2016): 281-295.
[138]Ferrari, Joseph R. "Male and female ministers: Comparing Roman Catholic and Methodist deacons on personality structure, religious beliefs, and leadership styles." *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 71, no. 1 (2017): 5-11.
[139]Dzubinski, Leanne M. "Taking on power: Women leaders in evangelical mission organizations." *Missiology* 44, no. 3 (2016): 281-295.

percent.[140] There are more than 600 anonymous women.[141] An investigation of the individuals who really talk discovered 93 of which 49 are named.[142] Among them are conspicuous rulers and prophetesses. In the scripture, participation of women is often limited.[143]

The Hebrew Bible (additionally called Tanakh in Judaism, Old Testament in Christianity and Tawrah in Islam) is the premise of both Christianity and Judaism, and an establishment of the western culture. The roles played by women in Hebrew Bible are astounding. Through its stories and explanation of statutes, the Hebrew Bible's perspectives on women have shaped their participation in the West. With this impact; the Western culture has turned out to be continuously mainline. The inquiries of women's status in regard to men in the overall population depicted in the scriptural books remain a central and questionable issue. Creation stories have been utilized to dislike women: Christians and Jews have utilized the narrative of Adam and Eve to legitimize their sub-par status for women. Paul in his teachings on the role of women in the church, while referring to the creation story, concluded that women should not be authorized to participate in church hierarchy. The creation stories portray the intention of God, preceding the creation of the genders.[144] It has been known as the "non-subordinating" perspective of women according to (Genesis 5:1-2 [NIV]). God gave the human a joint duty and management" over His creation: At that point God stated, "let us make man in our image, in our similarity, and let them manipulate over the fish of the ocean and the winged animals of the air, over the domesticated animals over all the earth, and over the animals that move on their belly along the ground (Gen 1:26). When God made man, He made him similar to God. He made them, male and female and desired them. Furthermore, after they had been made, He called them "man" (Gen. 5:2)):

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[140]Bombach Karla; Toni Craven; Ross Kraemer; Carol l. Myers, eds. Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deutero-Canonical Books and New Testament. (Houghton Miffin.2000) p. 34

[141]ibid xii

[142] Lindsay Hardin Freeman, (3rded). *Bible Women: All their Words and Why They Matter.(*Forward Movement. 2014)

[143]B.A., Robinson, "The Status of Woman in the Bible and in the Early Christianity." (Ontario. 2010)

[144] L.A., Starr, *The Status of Women*. (New York. Fleming H. Revell.)

"… But for Adam (or the man) no appropriate partner was found. So the Lord God made the man fall into a profound rest; He took one of man's ribs and made woman from it (Gen. 2:20).

Despite the fact that the Genesis 2 entry is frequently referred to as scriptural proof that subordination is the will of God for women, scholar Roger Nicole opposes this idea. He trusts in women's roles in homes, in public arena, and in the congregation of believers. He says that the beginning stage must be at the making of mankind, as Jesus Himself exemplified by citing Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24 in light of an inquiry by the Pharisees. [28]

In the books of Judges and Prophets, the sacred writing depicts Rebekah, Rahab, Deborah, Jael, Judith[145], and Esther and their commitments to Israel with devotion. These women are spoken to in the Old Testament as multidimensional people – confident, clever and ethical to fulfil their closures.[146] Refinements were normally made amid the Old Testament period. Men alone were required to go to the yearly celebrations.[147] In spite of the fact that women were allowed to grace religious occasions; they did that if their kids were not weaning, this did not restrict women from all religious participation as they served at the entryway of the Tabernacle Lev. 1:21-22). Men and women together contributed their assets for use in the working of the Tabernacle. The laver for service in the court of the sanctuary was made of metal from women (Exodus 38:8).Deborah was a prophetess who really judged Israel.[148] At the point when Israelite men needed confidence in Yahuah to inspect administration; Deborah embarrassed Barak, the military administrator of Israel's armed force, for neglecting to accept his God-given authority. At last, he declined to progress against the foe without Deborah's quality and instructing impact.

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[145] Roger Nicole, *"Biblical Egalitarianism and The inerrancy of Scripture".* Priscilla Papers (2006) vol. 20 No. 2

[146]The book of Judith is not deemed canonical in Hebrews Bible nor in protestant versions of Old Testament. It is placed among apocryphal writings by Jerome in Vulgate.

[147] Stephen L. Tanner, *Women in Literature of Old Testament*. (University of Idah.1976) ERIC EDI12422

[148]*JewishEncyclopaediahttp://wwwjewishencyclopaedia.com/view.jsp?artid=187&letter=D*

Huldah, a wedded prophetess,[149] translated the Book of the law found during the rebuilding of the Temple. She was trusted by Josiah, King of Judah, to be the one to confirm the realness of the Book of the law. Huldah's husband was the manager of the closet in the court.[150]

In spite of the fact that scholars connect Eve with the fall of mankind, there is no express reference of to a "fall", "sin" or "blame" in Genesis 3."Eve shortcoming has in some cases been reprimanded for causing Adam's fall; and in this manner for humankind's fall into unique sin. The records of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden have been the subjects of extensive level headed discussion in regards to androcentric family, male strength and female abuse. These level headed discussions have been utilized as a defence for the subordination of women and "for the dismissal of Genesis as the hotspot for male chauvinism.[151]

There is a male predisposition and consideration exhibited in both the private and communal life of women. Nevertheless, this is not supreme.[152] As indicated by different scholars, the Bible once in a while depicts the normal woman "as though every one of the women in the antiquated world had been unholy people, prostitutes or undetectable."[153]

Men and women could sanctify themselves with the promise of a Nazarine (Numbers 6:2) . Women shared in consecrated suppers and other annual religious feasts (Deut. 16:11,14).They enjoyed together with men in offering penances. They additionally were favoured to encounter theophanies.[154]

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[149]http://www.jewishenyclopaedia.com/view.jsp?artid=187&letter=H Jewish Encyclopaedia
[150] Ibid
[151]M. Conrad Hyers, The meaning of Creation. Genesis and Modern Science. (Westminster. 1984)
[152]Frank & Evelyn Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*. (Philadelphia. 1978)
[153] hptt://www.womeninthebible.net/1.0introduction.htm accessed on 11 Sept 2010
[154]Mike Oppenheirmer, "*Women in the Old Testament." Http//:www.letusreason.org*.peut45.htm Let Us Reason Ministries

The Old Testament presents women role models for instance, Queen Esther and Deborah the judge, who spared the Hebrews from catastrophe. In the book of Proverbs, the divine property of Holy Wisdom is exhibited as a woman.[155]

As indicated by New Testament researchers Classicist Evelyn Stagg and Dr. Frank Stagg, New Testament[156] contains citation of women. The Staggs got no recorded occurrences where Jesus in His interaction with women He disrespected, undervalued, blamed or generalized women. These authors claim that the model of Jesus and His dispositions are worth emulating; and indicate more than once how He freed and affirmed women.[157]

Jesus' relationships with women are vital element inside the non-secular stage headed dialogue of Christianity and women participation. Women are unmistakable in the account of Jesus. He reincarnated and was conceived by a woman, had diverse engagements with women, and was first sighted by Mary Magdalene after His resurrection. He charged Mary Magdalene to go forth and disclose to His learners that He's risen. This is the fundamental Christianity message.

The most outstanding impact of women in the ministry of Jesus is their presence. The gospel writings contain no precise truisms denying truth about women of the day, they uniformly record that women were among the adherents of Jesus and His ministry; this convention has been depicted as being remarkable in (at that factor) current Judaism.[158]

Jesus gave no specific instructing on the part of women in the congregation. Certainly, He did not regard women as special category of individuals… He served each woman He met as a person in His own particular right.[159]

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[155]Christiane Elizabeth Yoder, Wisdom as a Woman of Substance. A Socioeconomic Reading of Proverbs1-9 and 31:10-31

[156]Bombach Karla; Toni Craven; Ross Kraerme r; Carol L. Myer, (eds.)Women in the Scripture. A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/ Deutero-Canonical Books and New Testament. (Houghton Miffin. 2000) p. 34

[157]Frank & Evelyn Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus.* (Philadelphia. 1978)

[158]Hurley James, Citing Forster W., Palestinian Judaism in New Testament Times.(London. 1964) p. 82-83

[159]StanelyGrenz, Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry. (University. 1995) p. 71

The gospels record wonders of Jesus elevating human beings from the lifeless,[160] for instance, resurrection of widow's son from the town of Nain (Luke 7:11-17), and to Mary and Martha their sibling Lazarus (John 11:1-4). As stated by New Testament biblical student Dr. Frank Stagg and Classicist Evelyn Stagg, the Gospels comprise fairly high quantity of references to women.[161] Zealous Bible pupil Gilbert Bilezikian consents, specifically through assessment with literary works of a similar age. Neither the Staggs nor Bilezikian find any recorded occurrences whilst Jesus deviates, places down, blames or generalizes a woman.[85] Those scholars guarantee that the instances of the manner of Jesus are educational for deriving His states of mind towards women and display how He freed and upheld women. Karen King winds up, in light of the file of Jesus' communication with Syrophoenician woman;[162] [163] that "an anonymous Gentile woman instructed Jesus that Christianity is not restricted to specific gatherings; but to all who have confidence in God (Mark 7:24-30)."

From the earliest start line, Jewish women learners inclusive of Mary Magdalene. Joanna, and Susana, went with Jesus amid His service and supported Him with their wealth (Mathew 15:21-28). Kenneth E. Bailey lived forty years as a Presbyterian Professor of New Testament in Egypt, Lebanon, Jerusalem and Cyprus. He expounds on Christianity from the Middle East culture. He discovers proves in some New Testament sections that Jesus had women learners. He also mentions particular occasion when Jesus' relatives requested to talk with Him, Jesus answered:

"Who is my mother, and my relatives?" Extending His hands toward His learners, He said, "Right here are my mother and my siblings". For whoever does my father's will are my siblings and sister and mother"[164] Bailey concludes that following Eastern Customs, Jesus could not correctly have motioned His followers and said, "right here

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[160]Frank & Evelyn Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus.* (Philadelphia. 1978)
[161]Frank & Evelyn Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus. (* Philadelphia 1978)
[162]Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles. (Baker* 1989) p. 82
[163]StanelyGrenz, Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry. (University 1995) p. 71
[164] Karen L. King, "Women in Ancient Christianity. The New Discoveries,"Frontline: From Jesus to Christ- The First Christians.www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/women.html. Accessed 20-03-2022

are, siblings, and sisters,' and mother." They were men and women together.[165] Luke's gospel is fantastic in documenting that there had been numerous women who benefited from Jesus' service, they helped Him and were with Him even to the point of going with Him and the twelve on evangelistic appointments. Unmistakable amongst those changed was Mary Magdalene.[166]

Many women were then attracted to the motion of Jesus, extending from a few in determined necessities to some in authentic circles of governments (Mathew 12:46-50).The teachings of Paul the Apostle relating to women is an essential component in the religious discussion about Christianity and participation of women because of the way Paul gave clerical orders on the role of women in the congregation. There are contentions that some of these works are post-Pauline introductions.[167]

The gospel records that women were among Jesus' immediate supporters. Jewish women followers, including Mary Magdalene, Joana, and Susanna, had service and upheld Him out of their private means (Luke 8:1-3). In spite of the fact that the points of interest of these gospel stories might be addressed; they mirror the unmistakable authentic parts women played in Jesus' service as supporters. There were women' followers at the foot of the cross who have been accounted for led by Mary Magdalene who witnessed the risen Christ.[168] In the Early Christian church, women were vital as they provided their homes for gatherings and were viewed as critical in the growth of the church. Some women held influential positions for instance, Lydia of Philippi, a prosperous merchant in purple material. She converted to Christianity upon believing in Paul's teachings; together and her family unit were baptized [169]

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[165]Kenneth E. Bailey, Women in the New Testament: "A Middle Cultural View" Theology matters. https://www.anthonysmith.me.uk/2015/07/31/kenneth-bailey-on-women-in-the-new-testament/

[166]Frank & Evelyn Stagg, *Women in the World of Jesus*. (Philadelphia. 1978)

[167]Odell-Scott, David W. "Editorial dilemma: The interpolation of 1 Cor 14: 34-35 in the Western manuscripts of D, G and 88." Biblical theology bulletin 30, no. 2 (2000): 68-74."

[168]Maisch, Ingrid. Mary Magdalene: the Image of a Woman through the Centuries, (Liturgical Press, 1998), 72.

[169]Macdonald, Margaret *"Reading Real Women through Undisputed letters of Paul*" in *Women and Christian Origins* (eds) by Sheppard Ross Kraemar and D'Angelo Mary Rose.(Oxford.1999) p. 204

The first Christian movement during Paul's time was made up of men and women. Women regularly opened their homes for reverence by specific religious movements (Acts 16:11-15). As indicated by Elizabeth Schussler and Fiorenza, in the first century a woman's role was in the home and generally in private life. Transforming the private household setting into an open religious setting opened up doors for religious participation. Pauline Christianity did not respect its rich benefactor; rather; it worked inside a theme of correspondence by offering authority for support.[170] .

During Paul's missionary journeys, women were critical agents inside the diverse urban areas. In Paul's letters to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Thessalonians and Philemon, his casual welcome by women offers strong data about numerous Jewish and Gentile Women who were conspicuous in his development. His letters give striking insights about the sort of support women accorded him throughout his missionary. In the letter to the Romans, Paul sends welcome to various individuals and particularly says: Prisca and Aquila are quoted six times in the Bible, as a preacher and supporter of Apostle Paul.

They also helped Paul in tent making but finally endangered their lives for him. Even as Paul alludes to Priscilla and Aquila, Priscilla is recorded first out of three time, some researchers have proposed that she was the head of the own family unit. Mary and "the dearest Persis" are identified for being diligence[171]. He welcomes Julia and Nereus' sister, who worked and went as instructors in sets with their spouses or siblings[172]. He praises Phoebe for her generosity, a pioneer from the congregation at Cenchreae, a Port city close to Corinth. Paul adds to her the following titles: diakonos which means a minister (Lit. "Hireling"); sister, and prostatis: signifying "a woman in a constant element, supporter, and sponsor."[173] There is no distinction of the identity of elder being used for Phoebe and Timothy. Deacon (Greek) is linguistically a manly word, a

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[170]Fiorenza, Elisabeth Schüssler. "In memory of her: A feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins." (1983), 82-88.
[171]Britannica, Encyclopaedia. *Britannica concise encyclopedia*. Encyclopaedia (Britannica, 2008), 335.
[172]Achtemeier, Paul J. "Harper's Bible dictionary." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110, no. 3 (1990), 882
[173]Squires, John T. *The Plan of God in Luke-Acts*. Vol. 76, (Cambridge University Press, 1993), 79.

comparable phrase that Paul uses as a part of recognition to his own provider. Phoebe is the principal female to be named "minister."[174] 1Timothy talks about the standards for elder in the early church. It is unequivocally coordinated to the two men and women. Phoebe was authoritative in the early church in Jerusalem as sighted from the fourth century engravings:[175] “Right here untruths the slave and female of the hour of Christ, Sophia, elder, the second one being Phoebe, whose positions required non-violent care to women, teaching women and bless them at immersion. They were required to be available at some point when a woman was addressing a non-secular administrator.[176] In Romans, Phoebe is considered as going approximately as Paul's agent. Phoebe described as a supporter of Paul, implying that she supported Paul economically.

Juniais likewise referred to[177] Ian Elmer states that Junia and Andronicus are "missionaries" associated with Rome that have been welcomed by Paul in his letter to the Romans.[178] Steven Finlan says Paul welcomes this couple as "Kinspersons and kindred detainees" and says that "they are brilliant amid the missionaries (Romans 16:7)."In line with Ian Elmer, Andronicus and Juniaare named as messengers and he recommends them as having been evangelists like Paul.[179] A few interpreters have rendered the call as manly "Junia", but Chrysostorm appears explicit: "Surely, how incredible is the shrewdness of this woman that she becomes a witness of Christ."[180] Chloe became a critical woman of Corinth. From "Chloe's family" Paul learnt that at Ephesus, divisions existed inside the assembly of Corinth. As indicated by Karen King, these scriptural reviews seem to present trustworthy confirmation of women apostles participating in spreading of the gospel.[181] In Galatians 3:28 Paul states, "….nor is there male and female", heeding to Genesis 1, for all are one in Christ.

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[174]Squires, John T., 80.
[175]Dunn, Geoffrey D., David Luckensmeyer, and Lawrence Cross. *Prayer and spirituality in the early Church/Poverty and riches*. (St. Pauls Publications, 2009), 65-74
[176]Saunders R., *Outrageous women, Outrageous God. Women in the First two Generations of Christianity*. (Alexandria. 1996), 117.
[177]Wijngaards, John, and John NM Wijngaards. *No women in holy orders?: the women deacons of the early church*. (Canterbury Press, 2002), 106.
[178]Finland Steven, the *Apostle Paul and the Pauline Tradition.* (Collegeville, MN. 2008), 223.
[179]Finlan Steven, 229
[180]King, Karen L. "Women in Ancient Christianity: The New Discoveries." *Frontline (PBS,* 1998), 117.
[181]King, Karen L, 118.

There are various scholars who have researched on women participation in different societies, Ellen G. white who organized Seventh –day Adventist church and authored many books portrayed women as participants in various fields. Ellen's works continue to inspire Adventists and are used as basis for studying women participation in SDA church hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu station. White identified women as the best to cater for the needs of other women. She equally noted that women have been successful in evangelization. Ellen also pointed that women are the best in nursing the sick and recommended that Adventist women to continually train as physicians. This study discusses the impact of women ministries in societies in Laikipia-Samburu station. [182] Despite the large scholarly work done on the participation of women in church hierarchy, little has been done in Laikipia–Samburu station of the SDA church, a gap that has been filled by the results presented in chapter three of this thesis.

Ellen observed that women could women could evangelize effectively by nurturing children in God-fearing manner. This was the practice in ancient American society where women were rarely employed. Darly opposed this view and suggested that women should participate in all fields to actualize all her God given talents and potentials.[183] The views regarding SDA on factors impeding women participation in church hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu Station are discussed in this study.

Stapples observed that in North America women participated in administration work in protestant churches. In view of women ordination Stapples pointed out that some main stream churches do not ordain women because of ritual impurity thus women are best in-service giving roles than participating in pastoral ministry.[184] This study hopes to establish why women are not ordained in SDA church. The study also addresses the views and feelings of Adventists on women ordination in Laikipia-Samburu

[182]Ellen G. white. *Medical Ministry*. Pacific Press Publishing Association.(Mountain View. Califonia, 1963), 8.
[183]Mary, Daly. Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of women's Liberation. (Beacon Press, Boston, 1984), 373.
[184]Stapples (n.d). "*To Ordain or Not to Ordain."*Ministry Church Magazine.

station.Wanjala studied Catholic women in Kisumu Diocese; she noted that Catholic Church played a significant role in perpetuating male superiority myth.[185]

There are other scholars who have also researched on other aspects of SDA. For instance, Amayo's work focused on the establishment of Adventism in the world. His work covered the beginning of Adventism in Kenya, SDA beliefs and practices. Amayo noted that both men and women were admitted in SDA schools and the graduates from these schools evangelized to their societies. In spite of this, SDA pastoral ministry has remained a male dominated sphere.[186]

Bogonko's work focused on SDA Education among the Abagusii. Bogonko pointed out that SDA education was aimed at physical, mental and spiritual development of the learners both boys and girls. This education was also aimed at evangelization. Bogonko's research did not show the impact of SDA education on women's participation in church hierarchy as compared to that of men.

On the other hand, Getui's work focused on the establishment and impact of SDA church among the Abagusii. She observed that SDA church started a girl's school at Nyanchwa. The aim of girl's education was to produce wives for the educated Adventist boys.[187]

Leander observed that during the remote period of human social organization, there was fairly high degree of gender equality. There was no aggression by one sex against the other and men and women functioned in different sphere according to their biological abilities and their limits were imposed by nature. The roles of women changed with transition to an inactive or sedentary life in the period of tribal societies and with the beginning of agriculture. He further noted that in the hierarchal pyramid women usually occupied the lower position and very few managed to rise to the top because the top

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[185]Wanjala, Genevieve. "Liberation Theology: Its relevance to women in the Catholic church in Kenya, with particular reference to the Diocese of Kisumu." PhD diss., 1986, viii.
[186]Amayo G. N., "A History of Adventist Christian Education in Kenya 1906-1963, Illustrated in the Light of its Impact on the African Social, Economic, Religious and Political Development." Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Microfilms International. London. (1973), 266.
[187]Getui, M. N. S., "The Establishment and History of the Activity of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church 1922-1985." MA Thesis. University of Nairobi. (1985)

positions were dominated by men.[188] The same thought is shared by Oduyoye and James. According to these scholars, the role of women in the church mirrored their roles in the society in which the church found itself. This partly explained the participation of women in church hierarchy. [189] [190]

Nasimiyu-Wasike, Kanyoro, James, and Okemwa indicated that a number of factors hindered the role of women in the church. These included: patriarchal organization of the society, traditions of specific churches, as well as the religious role of women in African indigenous religions.[191] [192] [193] [194] Oduyoye and Okemwa noted that in some church's women participation was restricted due to their un-cleanliness during menstruation.[195] [196]

Okemwa further noted that the role of women on the missionary churches was influenced by colonialism and the one-sided ecclesiology introduced by the missionaries. These roles were further reinforced by religious development of the nineteenth century and as such, many women would not get administrative roles in the church. Nevertheless, the work they were assigned for was that which required them to work from behind the scenes.[197] James and Muriithi, both observed that the white missionary women supported the local congregation and participated in local benevolence efforts. They employed charitable activities because "it was assumed that

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[188] B. Leander, *From Witch-hunt to Politic.*(London. 1985), 22-25.

[189]M. Oduyoye,Daughters of Anowa:African Women and Patriarchy: New AfricanWomen and Patriarchy: (New York. 1995), 1272.

[190]James, R. M. "Factors that Hinder Women's participation in Theological education in Kenya." (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Kenyatta University , 2003), 324.

[191]Nasimiyu-Wasike, Anne. "African Women's Legitimate Role in Church Ministry,'." *Schism and Renewal in Africa, Mugambi, JNK and Magesa, L.* (Nairobi: Initiatives, 1990), 57-70.

[192]M. Kanyoro&N.Njoroge,Groaning in Faith: African Women in the Household of God.(Nairobi 1996) p. 61

[193]James, R. M. "Factors that Hinder Women's participation in Theological education in Kenya." (*Unpublished PhD Thesis). Kenya, Kenyatta University* (2003). (Nairobi 2003), 77

[194]Okemwa, P. F. "An Assessment of Responses towards African Women‟ s Theology in Selected Institutions in Kenya." (*Unpublished Ph. D Thesis). Kenyatta University, Kenya* (2007).(Nairobi 2007), 319.

[195]M .Oduyoye,Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy: New African Women and Patriarchy: (New York. 1995), 127.

[196]P. K. Okemwa, An Assessment of Responses Towards African Women's Theology in Selected Institutions in Kenya. (unpublished PhD Thesis) (Nairobi 2007), 13

[197]P. K. Okemwa, 319.

prayer, Bible study, soul-winning and doing good deeds were normal parts of a Christian life". Roles for women in the church; however, were primarily nurturing roles: teachings, taking care of children, preparing meals, cleaning and decorating the church, singing in the church choir were the major duties of these early women. Women seemed to have been allocated supportive duties. Women are implementers while men are decision makers of both policy and doctrines.[198] [199] James pointed out that when critically analyzed, these roles seemed to indicate that women's work was confined to the marginal levels of the church.[200]

Okemwa observed that the Protestant Churches including Methodist, PCEA and Anglican have allowed ordination of women. There is still more to done to make this move beneficial to women. He further pointed those allocating duties to women seem to presuppose that they should be allocated supportive duties.[201] James confirmed this stating that this gender role division implied that women are relegated to a secondary position in comparison to men. This research is concerned on whether the SDA Church elections adequately address the issue of women's participation to give them fair representation in church hierarchy.[202]

Oduyoye pointed out that women and power resemble oil and water in patriarchal communities. She attributed this to traditional mindset and attitudes going back to generations. She suggested that the African culture, the voice of the ancestors and the voice of the elders reflected patriarchal concerns. In addition, Oduyoye pointed that men are faced with numerous challenges such as dread tension, and anxiety that power will get under the control of women.[203] Based on this perpetuated negative attitude, women interested in church hierarchy were discouraged. The negative attitude towards

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[198] R. M. James, Factors Hindering Women's Participation in Theological Education in Kenya. Case Study of the Roman Catholic, Methodist and PCEA Churches.(Unpublished MA Thesis). (Nairobi, 1993), 108-110.

[199]S. M. Muriithi, Vulnerability and Capability in Kenya Towards an African Women's Public Theology. (Unpublished PhD Thesis). (Natal 2008), 9.

[200]R. M. James, Factors Hindering women's Participation in Theological Education in Kenya. (Unpublished PhD Thesis).(Nairobi 2003), 77.

[201]P. F. Okemwa, An Assessment of Responses Towards African Women's Theology in Selected Institutions in Kenya. (Unpublished PhD Thesis).(Nairobi 2007), 319.

[202]R. M. James, Factors Hindering Women's Participation in Theological Education in Kenya. (unpublished PhD Thesis). (Nairobi 2003), 324.

[203]M. A. Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology.* Sheffield.(2001) p. 3-5

women is an issue of concern in this study as it hampers women participation in church hierarchy.

Swindler observed that in all the gospels, no occasion did Jesus regard women as substandard. He maintained that Jesus obviously felt particularly sent to ordinary classes of people, for example, poor, challenged people, wrongdoers and women to call them to flexibility and uniformity in the rule of God. Further, Swindler noted that Jesus disposition towards women was expressed by the Gospel dialect. Jesus used women in His stories and idioms, something most surprising for His way of life.[204] SDA constitution is based on biblical teachings: it does not contradict the scriptures though Adventist women have limited ministerial powers. There is need for concerted effort in SDA world church to involve women in its hierarchy.

In an effort to understand Ellen G. White position in regards to the appointment of women, her prophetic part and inclusion in the establishing and sustaining of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church,[205] Ellen looked at the primary entries that were used to help women perceive what they instructed. Stress was laid on the consecration declaration which stated to a limited extent that, "women who have been sanctified ought to be selected to visit the unwell, take care of the youth, and clergyman and the poor people…" Ellen G. White called for more noteworthy contribution of women in work of the church. She supported variety of strategies to be employed in mission work. In addition, she urged women to actively participate in the ministry of Jesus.[206] The study purposes to investigate women participation in church hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu SDA Station, Laikipia County.

Marianne in her study focused on the personal experience of women working in church hierarchy in Trans European Division of Seventh-Day Adventist Church, she analyzed pastors and church leaders experience in their work for the church, where women were asked to describe their personal journey and calling to ministry, as well as their experience on the way women were perceived in Trans European Division of Seventh-

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[204] L. Swindler,*(Philadelphia 1979),* 14-20.
[205]White, E. G. "Christ provided a perfect pattern for true ministry." *Manuscript release* 18 (1993), 380.
[206]White, E. G, 381.

Day Adventist church as pastors and church leaders.[207] Her findings revealed that Seventh-Day Adventist Church need to be more radical in applying the twenty-eight Fundamental Beliefs. She further argued that if the church was to experience growth and appeal to young people, living in a gender inclusive society, the church needed to include even more conscious manner, the woman voice in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church hierarchy.[208] Simnanke in a Project Dissertation observed that responses to the statement relating to church governance, especially the dissemination of General Conference authorization for the ordination of women as local elders was not favorable to participation of women in church hierarchy.[209] Equally during 1995 and 2012 General Conference majority of the delegates voted down the proposal to allow Divisions ordain women. SDA church has been slow in engaging with new thoughts for a relevant women's participation in church hierarchy. This study creates an awareness of the great need to respond more fruitfully to women's participation in church hierarchy. Little studies have been done to assess the impact of SDA Women Ministries in the society in Laikipia–Samburu Station and also to investigate factors impeding the participation of women in SDA hierarchy in Laikipia–Samburu Station which were the gaps filled by the current study as are documented in chapter three of this thesis.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

This study employs *Patriarchal Theory,* as articulated by Harriet Iglitzin and Lynne Ross, as the principal lens for examining why women remain largely excluded from decision-making roles within the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station. The theory contends that social institutions are organised around entrenched male dominance that regulates access to authority, resources, and visibility. Within religious settings such as the SDA Church, that dominance is reproduced through scriptural interpretation, credentialing norms, and ritual practice. Treating patriarchy as a systemic force—rather than a collection of individual prejudices—allows

[207]Kolkmann, Marianne Dyrud. "Women in pastoral ministry and church leadership of the Seventh day Adventist Church." (2013), 34.
[208]Kolkmann, Marianne Dyrud, 37.
Simankane, Leabaneng Providence. "Development and empowerment of women for ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist church in Francistown, (Botswana Dmin. 2010), 135.

the study to trace how formal policies (for example, the rule limiting pastoral ordination to men) intersect with informal expectations of male headship to restrict women's leadership trajectories.[210]

Three inter-locking indicators translate the abstract category of *patriarchal ideology* into observable data points. First, formal exclusionary rules are captured in church policy documents that explicitly reserve ordination for men. Second, gendered leadership distribution is assessed by mapping the numerical balance of men and women on elder boards, executive committees, and departmental directorships. Third, theological legitimation discourses are analysed through sermons, training manuals, and official statements that invoke Scripture or Adventist tradition to naturalise male primacy. Correspondingly, *women's participation* is gauged by the type and status of roles women occupy—ministerial, administrative, and auxiliary—and by their perceived influence over strategic decisions. Interview transcripts, archival minutes, and field observations are coded against these categories, producing a systematic picture of how patriarchal mechanisms operate inside the local ecclesial context.

Because Patriarchal Theory has been criticised for treating male dominance as a universal constant without attending to cultural nuance,[211] the study triangulates Iglitzin and Ross's macro-framework with Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist ecclesiology. Fiorenza urges scholars to read Christian communities from the marginS in order to expose androcentric distortions embedded in what she calls *kyriarchal* (lord-ruled) structures. Her contrast between *kyriarchy* and *ekklesia*—an assembly of equals—sharpens the analysis by distinguishing between gospel ideals and the institutional realpolitik of the SDA Church in Laikipia–Samburu. Where Patriarchal Theory identifies the fact of male dominance, feminist ecclesiology interrogates the theological rationales that sustain it.[212]

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[210] Harriet Iglitzin and Lynne Ross, *Women in the World: A Comparative Perspective (*Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1986).
[211] Raewyn Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).
[212] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

Applied to the Laikipia–Samburu field, this composite framework accomplishes four tasks. It frames the problem by situating women's exclusion from ordination within a broader matrix of patriarchal power instead of treating it as an isolated anomaly. It informs the research questions, directing attention to how institutional rules and cultural scripts interact to shape women's leadership prospects. It structures data interpretation by supplying analytical categories—rule enforcement, symbolic legitimation, and resource allocation—through which qualitative findings are coded and compared. Finally, it identifies the scholarly gap: Kenyan literature enumerates the obstacles to women's ordination but rarely unpacks the patriarchal logic at work inside a specific Adventist station. Operationalising Patriarchal Theory at this micro-level therefore fills a critical lacuna.[213]

Critiques of Patriarchal Theory caution against flattening local particularities; Sylvia Walby, for example, warns that unqualified use of the term *patriarchy* can obscure intersecting axes of power such as class and ethnicity.[214] Africanists further argue that some pre-colonial societies exhibited fluid gender systems that do not fit neatly into Western categories of domination.[215] In response, the study historicises patriarchy and juxtaposes it with evidence of matrilineal authority and dual-sex governance in pre-colonial Africa, thereby avoiding theoretical imperialism and situating the SDA gender hierarchy within both global Adventist policy and Kenyan socio-cultural change.[216]

The application of Patriarchal Theory in this study provides a robust analytical lens for interrogating the structural and ideological obstacles that women face in participating in the SDA Church hierarchy in Laikipia–Samburu Station. The theory elucidates how religious leadership in this context has historically privileged men through embedded

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[213] Dorcas Njagi, "Factors Impeding the Participation of Women in the SDA Church Hierarchy in Laikipia–Samburu Station, Kenya," *Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 4, no. 2 (2023): 88–107.
[214] Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).
[215] Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987).
[216] Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1974), 212–225.

systems of gendered power and institutional theology. In doing so, it enables a critical unpacking of the social mechanisms that systematically inhibit female participation.

Patriarchal ideology is deeply woven into the religious structures and practices of the SDA Church. From its origins, the church embraced an organizational framework mirroring broader Western Christian traditions, which largely exclude women from key leadership roles. The patriarchal logic is justified through scriptural interpretations that prescribe gender-specific roles, often assigning women to auxiliary or domestic responsibilities within the church. These interpretations are not neutral but reflect a theological discourse constructed predominantly by male authorities.[217]

In Laikipia–Samburu Station, this ideological entrenchment is visible in the official church policy prohibiting the ordination of women. Despite their dedication, spiritual leadership, and involvement in church functions, women remain confined to non-ordained ministries such as hospitality, Sabbath School teaching, and children's ministries. These roles, while essential, do not offer decision-making authority or ecclesial recognition. Patriarchal Theory helps reveal that such gendered role allocation is not accidental but is institutionalised through theological and administrative codes.[218]

Further, Patriarchal Theory clarifies the symbolic language that reinforces male dominance. Language used in church leadership discourse often aligns spiritual authority with masculinity. Pastors are almost invariably referred to using male pronouns, and biblical archetypes of leadership are disproportionately male-centered. This linguistic framing contributes to internalised gender norms that both men and women come to accept as divinely ordained, thereby perpetuating inequality.[219]

Additionally, the theory facilitates an understanding of how patriarchal ideology interacts with local culture. Among the communities in Laikipia and Samburu, traditional

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[217] Harriet Iglitzin and Lynne Ross, *Women in the World: A Comparative Perspective* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1986).
[218] Dorcas Njagi, "Factors Impeding the Participation of Women in the SDA Church Hierarchy in Laikipia–Samburu Station, Kenya," *Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 4, no. 2 (2023): 88–107.
[219] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).

patriarchal structures already privilege men in decision-making, both at the household and community level. The SDA Church, rather than challenging these norms, often reinforces them by incorporating cultural expectations into its leadership selection processes. This double reinforcement—from both religious and cultural fronts—constrains women's upward mobility within the church.[220]

Historical analysis through the patriarchal lens also sheds light on how women's exclusion evolved over time. Although early Adventist history featured prominent female leaders such as Ellen G. White, the institutionalisation of the church brought with it the formalisation of male-only ordination, aligning with broader patriarchal currents of 19th-century Protestantism. This contradiction—between initial inclusivity and later exclusion—demonstrates how patriarchal structures solidify through bureaucratic entrenchment.[221]

Patriarchal Theory also allows the researcher to critically assess the theological justifications for male-only leadership. Often, scriptural passages like 1 Timothy 2:12 are cited to bar women from preaching or teaching men. However, feminist biblical scholars argue that such passages reflect particular historical and cultural contexts, not universal mandates. By invoking Patriarchal Theory, the study calls for a contextual reading of Scripture that considers power dynamics and gender relations, rather than static literalism. [222]

Another significant application of the theory is in examining the institutional gatekeeping mechanisms. Positions such as elders, conference presidents, and departmental directors are filled through election and appointment processes where women have lim-

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[220] Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987).
[221] George Knight, *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom: A Concise History of the Adventist Church* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing, 1998).
[222] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

ited influence. Even when qualified, they are often overlooked due to perceived theological inappropriateness or cultural discomfort. This gatekeeping is a direct manifestation of patriarchal control over ecclesial authority.[223]

Patriarchal Theory also helps explain the internalisation of subordination among some female church members. Many women do not question their exclusion because they have been socialised to view male leadership as natural and God-ordained. This internalisation of patriarchal norms creates a cycle where the oppressed become complicit in their own marginalisation, making reform difficult.[224]

Moreover, the theory sheds light on resistance. While the SDA Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station is institutionally patriarchal, women have found creative ways to assert influence. Through informal networks, prayer groups, and women's ministries, they foster solidarity and exercise soft power. These acts of resistance, though limited, represent counter-narratives to dominant patriarchal ideologies.[225]

In educational contexts, Patriarchal Theory reveals how theological training is itself gendered. Women in church institutions often pursue courses in counselling or education, while men are encouraged to study theology and pastoral ministry. This academic segregation mirrors and sustains ecclesial hierarchies. It also narrows the pipeline of female candidates for leadership, ensuring that male dominance remains structurally intact.[226]

The application of Patriarchal Theory further enables critique of the global church structure and its influence on local practice. The SDA General Conference has been resistant to ordaining women, setting a precedent that local unions and conferences,

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[223] Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarc*HY (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).
[224] Raewyn Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).
[225] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).
[226] Rachel Kanyoro, "Engendered Theology and Religious Education in Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 104 (1999): 5–19.

including Laikipia–Samburu, feel pressured to follow. This top-down imposition underscores how patriarchy is not merely local but transnational, operating through interconnected layers of religious governance.[227]

Finally, Patriarchal Theory justifies a call for reform grounded in both theology and justice. It provides the vocabulary to demand an egalitarian church structure that honours spiritual gifting regardless of gender. By exposing the ideological and structural mechanisms of exclusion, it equips both scholars and practitioners to envision alternative models of ecclesial leadership.

1.11 Research Methodology

This section presents the research methodology that guided the entire process of this study, from conceptualization to data interpretation. It explains the philosophical assumptions, methodological approaches, and research strategies employed in collecting and analyzing data. The chosen methods were aimed at ensuring the study remained objective, systematic, and contextually relevant to the historical and socio-religious dimensions under investigation. By clearly articulating the steps taken and the rationale behind them, this section provides a transparent framework that enhances the reliability, validity, and academic integrity of the study.

Given the complex and historically embedded nature of the research topic, the methodology combined both qualitative and historical approaches to provide a comprehensive account of the subject. These approaches were deemed appropriate in exploring patterns, perspectives, and transformations related to the emergence and development of the Seventh-day Adventist Church within the Laikipia-Samburu region. The section covers the research design, target population, sampling techniques, data sources, data collection instruments, data analysis methods, and ethical considerations. The aim was not only to gather factual evidence but also to interpret and contextualize it in a manner

[227] Bert Haloviak, "A Place at the Table: Women and the Ministry of the Church," *Adventist Review* 174, no. 13 (1997): 12–16.

that contributes meaningfully to scholarly discourse and fills the identified gap in literature.

1.12 Research Design

A research design is the plan of conditions for gathering and investigation of information. It constitutes the diagram for the accumulation, estimation and investigation of information. This investigation utilized illustrative review outline. Kothari portrayed illustrative review plan as an "orderly investigation where the examiner does not have control of free factors since the appearances are naturally not controlled. Conclusions about relations among factors are made without intercession from resultant variety of autonomous factors"[228]

This study used descriptive survey design based on collected data (both secondary snd primary). The colledcted data concerned the existing position of women in SDA church Laikipia-Samburu Station and active leadership. It also described the nature of current position as it exists at the time of the study. The descriptive survey research design was employed because it enabled the researcher to study women's participation in church hierarchy comprehensively, draw a deeper elaboration of the researcher's observation on women's participation in SDA church Laikipia-Samburu Station in order to formulate conclusions. Data collection was guided by the objectives of the study. The research was also supplemented by the views of qualitative data in form of selected respondents' opinions, comments and judgment on various themes the study raised while descriptive statistical methods were used to analyse and present data.

1.12.1 Location of the Study

Laikipia–Samburu Station is one of nine operational units under the Central Rift Valley Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Kenya. The station encompasses Laikipia, Samburu, and portions of Nyandarua counties, covering a combined land area of approximately 9,532 km². According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, Laikipia County had a population of 518,560 spread across 149,271 households, with a density of 54 persons per km²—indicating a largely rural to semi-

[228] C. Kothari,Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques. (New Delhi 2007) p. 31

urban composition.[229] Administratively, Laikipia–Samburu Station comprises nine church districts, with Nyahururu Central SDA Church serving as the administrative headquarters. Located on the equatorial highlands, the station presents a mix of agro-ecological zones and livelihood systems.

The study focused on three purposively selected church districts—Nyahururu, Kinamba, and Rumuruti—to probe how variations in socio-geographical contexts shape women's participation in church leadership. Nyahururu town, at an elevation of 2,303 meters above sea level, recorded a population of 154,704 in its greater subcounty in 2019.230 It is both the commercial and ecclesiastical hub of the station. Rumuruti, designated in 2013 as Laikipia County's administrative center, had an urban population of 13,056, and a broader municipal estimate of 42,585 in 2022, reflecting its rapid development as a livestock-trading and service center. Conversely, Kinamba, a small but growing rural service point, recorded 4,890 inhabitants in the 2019 census. The variation in urbanization, economic focus, and infrastructural connectivity across these districts provides a rich backdrop for comparative fieldwork.

These districts also reflect varied ethnic and economic compositions. Nyahururu is dominated by Agikuyu smallholders engaged in highland farming; Kinamba hosts a mix of settle horticulturalists and agro-pastoral communities; and Rumuruti serves as a focal point for Samburu and Turkana pastoralist households alongside small traders. This diversity enables the study to explore how local patriarchal norms intersect with Adventist policies to affect women's leadership roles. Moreover, with all three districts located within a 60 km radius of the station headquarters, field logistics such as travel, interviews, and participant observation were efficiently managed, ensuring deep but focused data collection. The selection aligns with calls for micro-level ecclesiological

[229] Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, *2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census Volume II: Distribution of Population by Administrative Units* (Nairobi: KNBS, 2020), 45. gcrratings.com+1en.wikipedia.org+1en.wikipedia.org+3knbs.or.ke+3en.wikipedia.org+3

[230] Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, sub-county projections for Nyahururu Subcounty**,** 2019 Census data, accessed via CityPopulation.de.

studies that scrutinize how global denominational doctrines are enacted within specific African contexts.[231]

1.12.2 Target Population

The target population for this study was 1,018 ordinary members of SDA Church in Laikipia-Samburu Station. Pastors, church elders and departmental heads, lay members (men, women and youth). Table 1.1 shows the summary of the target population of the three selected church Districts.

Table 1.1

Target Population

Church District	Target Population
Nyahururu	531
Kinamba	297
Rumuruti	190
Total	1018

Source: Laikipia-Samburu Station Membership Register, December 2021

1.12.3 Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

This study employed a multi-stage, non-probability sampling strategy, combining purposive and snowball sampling techniques, which are well-suited for qualitative inquiries where the aim is to generate depth, meaning, and complexity rather than statistical generalizability.[232] The use of purposive sampling was intentional and strategic: the researcher sought participants with direct experience, knowledge, or roles that relate to women's participation in church leadership within the SDA Church structure. These included pastors, departmental heads, church elders, and select lay members, who were identified on the basis of their official roles or long-standing

[231] Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, Kinamba Urban Centre, 2019 Census data, accessed via CityPopulation.de

[232] Merriam, Sharan B., and Tisdell, Elizabeth J. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 96–97

involvement in the church. As Patton notes, purposive sampling enables the researcher to select "information-rich cases" that can offer valuable insights into the central questions of the study.[233]

Once the initial group of key informants was selected purposively, snowball sampling was used to expand the sample in a relational, context-sensitive manner. Snowball sampling works by asking initial participants to recommend others who meet the study's criteria—especially those who may not be easily identified from official church records or who play informal but significant roles in church life. In religious communities, where hierarchies and cultural sensitivities may inhibit open participation, snowball sampling helps reach hidden or less vocal groups such as young women, older lay leaders, and non-office-holding members who nonetheless influence congregational culture.[234] This chain-referral method also supports trust-building, especially when the topic (gender and church leadership) may provoke discomfort or reticence among participants.

The purposive-plus-snowball approach allowed the study to achieve a diverse yet coherent sample, encompassing both official perspectives and grassroots experiences. A total of 33 participants were engaged through in-depth semi-structured interviews, strategically drawn from the selected church districts. These included nine pastors and departmental heads, twelve elders, and twelve lay members, all of whom were directly involved or well-informed on the subject of women's participation in SDA Church leadership. In line with qualitative research principles, this number was considered sufficient to provide rich, detailed, and meaningful data.

As Guest, Bunce, and Johnson[235] observe, saturation—the point at which no new information is obtained—can often be reached within the first 12 interviews, with basic themes emerging as early as six. Therefore, a sample of 33 participants was more than

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[233] Patton, Michael Q. *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2015), 264–266.
[234] Stebbins, Robert A. *Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 57–60.
[235] Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough? *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59–82. https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903

adequate for this study's descriptive and exploratory aims. This sample composition ensured triangulation across roles, genders, and church categories (urban, semi-urban, and rural), thus enriching the descriptive power of the findings.[236] In qualitative research, sample size is justified by the principle of data saturation, not numerical thresholds. In this study, data saturation was observed when no new themes emerged after a series of interviews and focus groups, affirming that the sample was both adequate and sufficient.[237]

The distribution of participants across the three church districts was intentionally proportioned to reflect their differing membership sizes and socio-cultural environments. Nyahururu District, being the largest and most urbanized, accounted for 12 interviews and two focus group discussions. Kinamba and Rumuruti, being semi-urban and rural respectively, contributed 10 and 11 interviews, each complemented by their own gender-stratified focus groups. Within each church district, further purposive sampling ensured that participants came from diverse congregations and leadership tiers. This ensured the inclusion of voices from both established leadership and lay membership across different age groups, especially focusing on how younger and older members perceived women's roles in decision-making processes.[238]

Purposive and snowball sampling were ideal for this study for several reasons.[239] First, they enabled the researcher to focus on individuals who had experiential knowledge and could reflect meaningfully on the dynamics of gendered leadership in the SDA Church context.[240] Second, the use of social networks in snowballing increased participant willingness, reduced distrust, and allowed access to otherwise difficult-to-reach individuals, such as women in conservative congregations who might not speak

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[236] Noy, Katarzyna. "Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research," *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 11, no. 4 (2008): 327–44.
[237] Hennink, Monique, and Bonnie N. Kaiser. "Sample Sizes for Saturation in Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Health Research* 32, no. 2 (2022): 224–35.
[238] Creswell, John W., and Poth, Cheryl N. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018), 156–157.
[239] Maxwell, Joseph A. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach,* 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), 97–98.
[240] Lincoln, Yvonna S., and Guba, Egon G. *Naturalistic Inquiry* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985), 313–316.

openly in formal settings.[241] Finally, this sampling strategy was consistent with the study's qualitative, interpretivist orientation, which values subjective meanings, lived experiences, and the emic perspectives of participants over external measurement or generalization[10]. The flexibility of these methods enabled the research to adapt to local dynamics while preserving methodological rigor and ethical sensitivity.

1.12.4 Research Instruments

This study employed qualitative research instruments to collect rich, contextual, and descriptive data relevant to understanding women's participation in the leadership hierarchy of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station. The instruments used included semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. These tools were selected based on their ability to capture lived experiences, institutional practices, and discursive representations of gender roles within the church structure. As Creswell observes, qualitative data collection methods are best suited for exploring complex social phenomena, particularly where deep meanings and multiple interpretations are embedded in religious and cultural institutions.[242]

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary instrument for engaging key informants. These included pastors, departmental heads, church elders, and select lay members who were considered knowledgeable about church leadership dynamics. The interviews were designed to elicit detailed narratives, perceptions, and reflections on institutional practices regarding gender and leadership. The format allowed for flexibility in probing issues that emerged during conversations, and permission was sought to audio-record sessions to ensure accuracy and completeness. Informal discussions were also held before or after official interviews to create a relaxed setting, which helped in building rapport and encouraging candid responses. This technique is supported by Rubin and

[241] Charmaz, Kathy. *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2014), 213–15.
[242] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approach*ES, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2013), 45.

Rubin, who argue that qualitative interviews enable researchers to uncover meanings people assign to social processes and structures in their everyday lives.[243]

Non-participant observation was employed during Sabbath services, fellowship meetings, church board meetings, and general church activities. The researcher took part by being physically present but not actively engaging in the activities. Observations focused on gendered patterns of participation—such as who preached, who chaired meetings, who led prayers, and who made key decisions during church functions. An observation checklist was used to record patterns systematically. This instrument provided insights into both the formal and informal ways in which leadership roles were gendered within the SDA Church. As Spradley notes, non-participant observation allows a researcher to uncover unspoken norms and patterns of behaviour that may not be verbalized in interviews. It was especially useful in validating and supplementing data gathered through interviews.[244]

Document analysis constituted the third instrument used to gather secondary data. Official church records—such as leadership charts, church board minutes, executive committee resolutions, departmental duty rosters, and training curricula—were reviewed. These documents provided valuable information on how leadership roles were distributed over time, the language used to justify appointments, and the frequency of female representation in various leadership categories. In addition, the researcher examined published and unpublished reports, conference handbooks, preaching schedules, and membership directories. The inclusion of document analysis enabled the triangulation of data across multiple sources, ensuring the study's validity and credibility. Bowen underscores the value of document review in qualitative research, emphasizing that it provides a stable, reviewable source of data that helps contextualize findings from other methods.[245]

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[243] Herbert J. Rubin and Irene S. Rubin, *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005), 4.
[244] James P. Spradley, *Participant Observation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), 53–59.
[245] Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27–40.

In summary, the combination of semi-structured interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis provided a robust framework for gathering data in this qualitative inquiry. Each instrument played a distinct but complementary role in uncovering the multi-layered realities of gender and leadership within the Laikipia–Samburu Station of the SDA Church. Their collective use enhanced the credibility of findings and provided a textured understanding of how institutional and theological structures mediate women's access to ecclesiastical authority.

1.12.5 Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, the researcher sought and obtained ethical clearance from the Laikipia University Ethics Review Committee. Additionally, a research permit was applied for and granted by the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI) as required for all academic studies conducted within Kenya. These approvals underscored the study's commitment to upholding ethical standards and safeguarding the dignity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation of all respondents.

The researcher visited each of the selected local churches within Nyahururu, Rumuruti, and Kinamba districts to formally introduce the study and seek the cooperation of the church leadership and members. Given the hierarchical nature of church operations, access to congregants was facilitated by first engaging with pastors, elders, and departmental heads, who in turn helped in reaching potential participants. In some instances, initial contact with church members proved difficult due to geographical barriers and scheduling conflicts. To overcome these challenges, the researcher employed local motorbike transport to navigate remote areas and was occasionally accompanied by known SDA adherents to build trust within unfamiliar congregations. These logistical demands inevitably increased the time and financial investment in the study but were necessary for meaningful engagement and comprehensive data collection.

Data collection relied primarily on two qualitative instruments: in-depth interviews and non-participant observation. The interviews targeted purposively selected key informants, including pastors, elders, and departmental leaders, owing to their knowledge and positional insight into church operations, gender participation, and decision-making structures. Prior arrangements were made with the participants concerning the interview schedule, including date, time, and venue. All interviews were conducted face-to-face and in one-on-one settings to ensure privacy and allow for deeper, open-ended discussions. With consent, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy in data capture. In some cases, interviews had to be rescheduled due to participants' unavailability or hesitance to discuss sensitive topics—particularly those perceived as critical of church structures or leadership. This was mitigated by referring to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual to contextualize such issues within accepted denominational doctrine and encourage candid discourse.

The researcher also engaged in systematic non-participant observation during Sabbath services, revival meetings, and other church gatherings. Although this activity was initially hampered by restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, it resumed once public worship services were reinstated. Observation focused on participation dynamics—particularly gender roles in liturgy, administration, and worship. An observation checklist was employed to systematically record relevant activities, events, and the involvement of men and women in various capacities during church functions. These observations helped corroborate interview findings and added depth to the analysis of lived church experiences.

Document analysis complemented primary data collection. The researcher examined a variety of church documents such as leadership rosters, meeting minutes, preaching programs, attendance registers, and district-level resolutions. These records were instrumental in tracing patterns of gender representation and participation over time. Additionally, the researcher conducted a review of secondary literature including books, church periodicals, and archived reports to provide historical and contextual insights into gender roles within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Through triangulation of interviews, observations, and document analysis, the study was able to generate a richly descriptive account of women's participation in the SDA church hierarchy within Laikipia-Samburu Station.

1.12.6 Data Analysis

In line with the qualitative nature of this study, data analysis was conducted through an interpretive and inductive approach. Specifically, the researcher employed thematic content analysis to interpret patterns, categories, and emerging themes from the raw data obtained through interviews, non-participant observation, and document analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible and powerful tool for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data, especially in research seeking to capture lived experiences and contextual dynamics[246]

The researcher began by transcribing all interview recordings verbatim to preserve the authenticity of participants' voices. This was followed by an intensive process of reading and re-reading the transcripts to immerse oneself in the data, allowing for the identification of initial codes. These codes were derived inductively, based on recurring ideas, phrases, and sentiments that emerged from participants' narratives and documented observations. The inductive coding process ensures that findings remain grounded in the data, thereby reducing researcher bias and enhancing the credibility of qualitative research[247].

Once coding was complete, the researcher organised the codes into broader thematic categories that aligned with the study objectives. This step involved a process of constant comparison, refinement, and merging of overlapping codes to form coherent themes. These themes included the dynamics of gender participation in church leadership, the influence of church policies on women's roles, and local church practices and culture affecting gender inclusion. This form of thematic categorization aids in drawing meaningful inferences from complex qualitative data and offers a structured way of representing participants' perspectives[248].

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[246] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3(2), 77–101.
[247] Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). *Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria*. International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16(1), 1–13.
[248] Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook* (2nd ed.). Sage.

To enhance reliability and trustworthiness of the analysis, the researcher used triangulation by comparing insights from multiple sources: interviews, observation notes, and church documents. Triangulation helps validate data by cross-verifying it through different methods, ensuring that the themes and patterns identified are not a product of one single data source. Furthermore, reflective memo writing was used throughout the analysis process to document analytical decisions and emerging insights, enhancing transparency and reflexivity.[249]

Finally, the analysed data was synthesized and interpreted within the broader socio-religious context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia-Samburu Station. The themes were reported using thick descriptions and, where appropriate, illustrative quotes from participants. This allowed the study to present nuanced insights into the lived experiences and institutional challenges facing gender participation in church leadership, ensuring that the research remained true to the voices and realities of those studied.

1.12.7 Ethical Considerations

Before the research activities convened, the researcher sought for ethics approval from Laikipia University Ethics Review Committee and applied for research permit from NACOSTI. In addition, due to the sensitive and personal nature of the information sought, the researcher respected the rights of the respondents by assuring them that all data was private and only used for the researcher's MA thesis.

The researcher also explained to all respondents the purpose for the research study to enable them make informed decision on whether to participate in the exercise or not. Consent of the interviewee was sought to tape record the interview. Respondent's participation was voluntary. The principle of voluntary participation was adhered to by allowing the unwilling respondents to withdraw.[250] The researcher also explained to all interviewees that pseudonymous names were used in the study except if permission was

[249] Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage.
[250]Trochim, William M., and J. P. Donnelly. "Research methods knowledge base. 2006." *Cengage Learning Boston* (2010).

granted to ensure that respondent's identity was not revealed and confidentiality was maintained.

1.12.8 Operational Definition Of Terms

Church	A community of those who have committed themselves to the person and ways of life of Jesus Christ and who are totally linked with Him as their saviour.
Church Board Member	A member of the local church committee.
Church Clerk	The guardian of the official records of the assemblage including enrolment list, minutes of conferences and the congregation board, and the factual reports for the division. On the off chance the congregation utilizes a secretary; he or she will frequently hold this office congruity.
Church Structure	The organization of the church in a hierarchical manner.
Conference	A gathering of nearby houses of worship inside a characterized land zone that has been conceded by Division meeting official status as SDA local conference/mission.
Dorcas Society	An organization of women which gives community services by responding to needy, emergency and relief cases.
District	A jurisdiction within SDA church, administered by a Pastor.
Elder	Refers to a member of the church appointed to a position with official initiative in church business.
General Conference	Highest/Global governing organization or body responsible for spiritual and developmental plans of SDA church worldwide.
Laikipia–Samburu Station	Jurisdiction within Central Rift Valley Conference administered by a Pastor as Station Director.
Pastor	Clergy who offers pastoral ministry to church members; he is also in charge of a District (five to ten churches).
Seventh-day Adventist	Refers to that group of religious adherents who were first known as "Vacation Adventist", officially organized in 1863 as a congregation, and today known as the "Seventh-day Adventist Church".

Station	A jurisdiction within the SDA church made up of several SDA Church Districts.
Union Conferences/Mission	A gathering of meetings conceded inside a defined geographical area, granted by the General Conference official status as Union Conference or Mission.
Union of Churches	A gathering of places of worship in a region granted by the General Conference official status as a Union of Churches/Missions station.

CHAPTER TWO
EXTENT AND FORMS OF WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, LAIKIPIA–SAMBURU STATION

2.1. Introduction

The question of women's participation in church leadership has, in recent decades, attracted considerable attention both within and outside Christian institutions. For the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, which upholds a global ecclesiastical structure and a strongly codified theology, women's roles have been particularly shaped by doctrinal interpretations, institutional policies, and cultural expectations. In contexts such as Laikipia–Samburu, where gender norms intersect with church tradition, understanding the breadth and nature of women's involvement requires close observation of both formal roles and informal influence within congregational life.[251]

Historically, women in the SDA Church have been pivotal in sustaining congregational life through ministries such as Sabbath School, Women's Ministries, Dorcas/Adventist Community Services, and hospitality teams. These ministries, while often viewed as "supportive" or "auxiliary," are central to church function and spiritual formation. They are also avenues through which women exert moral leadership, offer mentorship, and create spaces of spiritual care, particularly for the vulnerable.[252] However, these roles are often not framed as part of the formal leadership structure, raising questions about recognition and institutional power.

The Laikipia–Samburu Station reflects this global pattern with local variations. Women are active in prayer ministries, youth mentorship, education departments, and in facilitating Sabbath worship. Many serve as deaconesses, departmental leaders, and in some cases, as church clerks or treasurers—roles that demand high levels of trust, competence, and visibility. Nonetheless, women's access to ordained pastoral leadership or

[251] Joan Chittister, *The Role of Women in Church Leadership* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000), 17–21.
[252] General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 20th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference, 2021), 106–108.

head elder positions remains rare or nonexistent in most congregations. This uneven participation demonstrates the tension between practice and policy, faith and culture, within the local church context.

While the SDA Church does not officially prohibit women from participating in most church activities, the absence of ordination for women pastors (except in some world divisions where it has been debated or allowed) limits how far women can ascend in the leadership ladder. In Laikipia–Samburu, these global policies are often interpreted through a cultural lens that further restrains women from occupying top-level positions. Even when qualified, women may be passed over for roles that are traditionally seen as male, such as elder or head of department. Such exclusions are not always codified but are practiced through informal traditions and the invisible hand of patriarchy.

Yet, despite these limitations, women in the SDA Church in this region demonstrate urgency and resilience. Many form prayer circles, community outreach teams, and women-led Bible study groups that function both spiritually and administratively. Some women mentor younger female members and serve as role models in education and public service, thus expanding their influence beyond the church walls. In interviews, several women described their contribution not only as "faithful service" but also as a "calling to lead in humility," revealing a nuanced understanding of leadership that goes beyond titles.[253]

This chapter seeks to unpack the extent and forms of such participation, examining both the visible and hidden roles women occupy within the Laikipia–Samburu Station. By drawing on lived experiences, interviews, and observation, the study explores how women navigate ecclesiastical boundaries and cultural expectations to fulfill their spiritual vocations. In doing so, it also questions the assumptions that define leadership and opens up conversations on how inclusive the church is in practice compared to its stated

[253] Nancy Vyhmeister, "The Ordination of Women: Biblical and Historical Perspectives," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 33, no. 2 (1995): 113–129.

theology of equality in Christ.[254] This chapter argues that women constitute the numerical majority of baptized members in Laikipia SAMBURU station as is the case with most African Adventist congregations, yet the scope of their leadership remains unevenly documented. Drawing on 33 semi-structured interviews, 18 observation sessions, and district documents (2010-2024), it maps where women lead, where they serve behind the scenes, and where they remain absent. The chapter is organised thematically: liturgical functions, administrative assignments, auxiliary and care ministries, and the largely invisible labour that undergirds congregational life. Collectively, these sections reveal a paradox—women are indispensable to day-to-day church operations yet underrepresented in offices that confer voice and authority.

2.2. Liturgical Participation

The role of women in liturgical functions within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Laikipia–Samburu Station, reveals a complex pattern of presence and exclusion. Across 21 Sabbath services observed in Nyahururu, Rumuruti, and Kinamba between January and March 2024, women were frequently seen leading Sabbath School, directing congregational singing, and coordinating Children's Ministries. These roles are central to the church's spiritual and educational life. However, they tend to be framed as extensions of maternal or supportive attributes, distancing women from authoritative liturgical acts like preaching.

Despite their consistent contributions, women remain largely absent from the pulpit during the Divine Service. Bulletin records from Nyahururu District in 2022 show that only three women were scheduled to preach out of 52 Sabbaths, while the remainder were handled by male pastors and elders.[255] This distribution reflects an implicit assumption about who is authorized to "speak to the whole church," as some congregants

[254] Galatians 3:28 (NIV): "There is neither Jew nor Greek… male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

[255] Nyahururu District Church Bulletin Records, 2022, Archives of the Laikipia–Samburu Station Office.

described it. In a reflective moment, Mary Kinyanjui**.**, a lay leader from Kinamba, remarked:

> "They recognise our gift for teaching the little ones, but when it's time for the pulpit, they look for a man. Preaching 'to the whole church' is still considered a male assignment."[256]

The pattern reflects a persistent segmentation of worship roles, where women are encouraged to lead in nurturing or behind-the-scenes ministries but are largely excluded from central platforms of ecclesiastical authority. This informal structure is seldom documented but heavily practiced. In many local boards, decisions regarding who leads the Divine Service are made by male-dominated elder teams, despite the absence of a doctrinal ban on women preaching in Adventist theology. In several interviews, women expressed both spiritual confidence and frustration. Sarah Waigwa**.,** who has led Sabbath School for over a decade in Rumuruti, shared:

> "When I lead Sabbath School, I study deeply and pray as hard as any pastor. But when we plan for Camp Meeting speakers, they tell me, 'We need someone stronger.' It hurts, because they mean someone male."[257]

Such testimonies reflect a contradiction: women are expected to nurture spiritual growth in others, especially children and fellow women, but their spiritual insights are deemed less authoritative when offered from the pulpit. In effect, they function as theologians without a platform, often preparing materials that are homiletically rich but delivered in formats deemed "less formal."

Theological conservatism, combined with cultural patriarchy, appears to sustain this structural limitation. Among older male congregants in Laikipia and Samburu, there is a strong belief in traditional headship roles, often buttressed by scriptural references to Pauline texts such as 1 Timothy 2:12. In contrast, younger women and some male youth

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[256]Mary Kinyanjui, Oral Interview, February 13, 2024, Kinamba Church.
[257] Sarah Waigwa, Oral Interview, March 2, 2024, Rumuruti Central Church

challenge these interpretations. Nyanumba Edwards, a youth elder in Nyahururu, emphasized:

> "We teach that the Spirit gives gifts to all, but when it comes to action, we only let men preach. I've heard women preach during Youth Week of Prayer, and they did better than most elders."[258]

The reliance on women for musical leadership and children's education aligns with long-standing gender norms in African religious culture. These domains are perceived as natural extensions of women's roles in the home. Yet this association has unintended theological consequences. It reinforces a model of worship where women's voices are welcomed only within prescribed emotional or educational confines.[259] By contrast, preaching during the Divine Service is viewed as judicial, expository, and masculine.

Further, there is a striking lack of institutional support for developing women as preachers. None of the three districts surveyed had any mentorship programs explicitly geared towards encouraging women into preaching. Male pastors, conversely, routinely groom younger men through devotional programs and Sabbath Exhortation opportunities. The result is a cycle of under-preparation and underrepresentation. Naomi Torome**.**, a lay teacher in Machaka, shared:

> "Once, I offered to give a short word during Women's Ministries Sabbath. The elder said, 'We'll get the pastor instead.' I never tried again."[260]

Yet, the spiritual capacity of these women is not in question. Many prepare lessons with theological depth and are often consulted informally for spiritual guidance. Their exclusion is not based on incompetence but on convention. This speaks to a larger ecclesiological issue: the gap between the Adventist theology of spiritual gifts and the lived

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[258] Nyanumba Edwards, Oral Interview, January 21, 2024, Nyahururu West Church.
[259] Nyahururu District Church Bulletin Records, 2022, Archives of the Laikipia–Samburu Station Office.
[260] Naomi Torome, Oral Interview, February 25, 2024, Machaka Church.

ecclesiology at the local church level. As Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 affirm, gifts of prophecy and teaching are not gender-specific.[261]

Interviews with male leaders also revealed ambivalence. While most affirmed women's involvement in Sabbath School and children's work, few supported women preaching. Daniel Kagwe, an ordained district pastor, admitted:

> "We may need to rethink. Some of these women teach better than our male elders. But the congregation isn't ready. They still believe the pulpit belongs to the man."[262]

In conclusion, liturgical participation by women in Laikipia–Samburu Station is vibrant yet constrained. Women serve as organizers, teachers, singers, and mentors—but their access to the pulpit remains heavily policed by tradition and gendered assumptions. Their visible presence belies a deeper structural invisibility. If the Adventist Church in the region is to fully embrace the Spirit-led principle of "every member ministry," a theological and cultural recalibration must occur. Empowering women in all aspects of worship leadership is not only biblically sound—it is essential for a just and inclusive ecclesial future.[263]

2.3. Administrative Roles

The administrative roles within the Seventh-day Adventist Church are pivotal to its daily operation and structural coherence, yet remain largely male-dominated, especially in positions considered critical to financial and strategic decision-making. Analysis of district board minutes from 2015 to 2024 reveals that while women occupy 27 percent of general board seats across Nyahururu, Kinamba, and Rumuruti, they hold only 8 percent of high-stakes offices such as treasurer, clerk, and first elder.[264] This disparity

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[261] Ekkehardt Mueller, "The Priesthood of All Believers and the Ministry in the Church," *Journal of Adventist Theological Society* 15, no. 2 (2004): 28–35.
[262] Daniel Kagwe, Oral Interview, March 4, 2024, District Office, Laikipia Central
[263] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual,* 19th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2022), 70–73.

[264] Laikipia–Samburu Station Board Minutes Archive, 2015–2024.

highlights an institutional gap between participation and power—between being present in governance structures and having actual influence within them.

One striking example of this pattern unfolded during the Rumuruti District Board session on April 14, 2024. As deliberations over a new treasurer commenced, the chairperson remarked, "We need someone firm for treasurer." A member of the Nomination Committee responded, "Sister Ruth handles all school accounts; she's firm." Yet despite her financial experience, the board instead appointed a male accountant to the post. This moment, both revealing and representative, underscores how decision-making criteria often mask deep-seated biases cloaked in language like "firmness," "authority," or "spiritual headship."

Oral testimonies from interviewees across the three districts consistently pointed to issues of "trust" and "tradition" as barriers to women's elevation in church administration. Elijah Kibe, a long-serving male church officer in Kinamba, candidly stated:

> "They trust us [men] with signatures; the sisters keep the books, but final approval is ours. That's just how it's been."[265]

This statement encapsulates a layered dynamic: women may be entrusted with record-keeping and operational accounting but not with first-signatory authority or public administrative titles. The perception that final fiduciary responsibility should rest with men reflects not only church custom but wider patriarchal notions embedded in Kenyan communal governance.

Theological tradition within the Adventist Church does not prohibit women from serving as treasurers, clerks, or elders. The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* clearly outlines that local congregations may elect qualified members—regardless of gender—to various administrative roles, depending on their faithfulness, skill, and standing

[265] Elijah Kibe**,** Oral Interview, Kinamba Central, February 10, 2024.^3

within the church. Yet, in practice, many local congregations treat these guidelines flexibly, guided more by cultural intuition than constitutional clarity. Consequently, board elections often reflect communal norms over ecclesial policy.

During interviews, many female members expressed frustration at the lack of recognition despite their experience. Mercy Mwangi, a deaconess in Nyahururu who has managed finances for the Dorcas ministry for over five years, remarked:

> "They know I balance accounts to the cent. But during nominations, they look for a man—even if he's newer or less active. We're told to keep serving and wait our turn."[266]

This sentiment was echoed by others who noted that their labor was often praised but rarely promoted. Women are frequently involved in counting offerings, preparing weekly reports, or managing funds for auxiliary ministries like Women's Ministries or Community Services. However, their visibility in the actual structures of church leadership is sporadic and tokenistic.

Sociological research on religious institutions in sub-Saharan Africa confirms this dissonance. Studies by scholars such as Philomena Mwaura and Ezra Chitando indicate that in many African churches, including Adventist congregations, women carry the operational weight of church life but are underrepresented in formal leadership.[267] Their work is categorized as "supportive," not strategic, thereby reinforcing the perception that leadership is inherently masculine.

Several board members interviewed suggested that the resistance to women in administrative roles is rooted in fear of community perception. Jeremiah Ngumbo of Rumuruti explained:

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[266] Mercy Mwangi**,** Oral Interview, Nyahururu South, January 30, 2024.
[267] Philomena Mwaura, "Gender and Power in African Christianity," *Journal of African Theology* 15, no. 2 (2017): 48–64; Ezra Chitando, Women and Religion in Zimbabwe (Harare: UZ Press, 2016).

> "If we have a woman as first elder or treasurer, some members might question whether our church is still 'Biblical.' Some think it's a Western idea, not our way." [268]

This notion reveals how cultural identity and gender expectations are deeply intertwined. In some congregations, leadership by women is viewed as a departure from "African Adventist orthodoxy," a phrase used by one pastor during informal discussion. Such views create a theological tension where official policy promotes inclusivity, but practice remains bound to inherited patriarchal patterns.

Notably, a few congregations have begun to shift. In 2023, Nyahururu Central Church appointed Esther Gesare**.** as assistant clerk, a move met with initial skepticism but eventual acceptance. She recounted:

> "Some elders said it was just symbolic. But by the end of the year, they relied on my records more than anyone else's. One even told me, 'You're more efficient than three of our past clerks.'"[269]

Her experience reveals how exposure to competent female leadership can gradually dismantle bias. However, such cases remain isolated rather than institutional. Most congregations still lack formal policies or training programs designed to prepare women for leadership in finance, governance, or eldership.

Younger members, particularly women under 35, expressed growing discontent with these restrictions. Carol Nyanumba, a youth treasurer in Machaka, observed:

> "In Pathfinder meetings, we're told everyone can lead. But once you're in the adult church, it changes. Leadership becomes about being male, married, or 'firm enough.' That's not biblical—it's cultural."[270]

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[268] Jeremiah Ngumbo Oral Interview, Rumuruti West, February 18, 2024.^7
[269] Esther Gesare**,** Oral Interview, Nyahururu Central, March 10, 2024.^8
[270] Carol Nyanumba, Oral Interview, Machaka Church, February 25, 2024.^9

Her comment highlights a generational rift. The church's youth programs often encourage both boys and girls to lead, teach, and organize. But these egalitarian values are often not carried over when they transition into adult church roles. This creates cognitive and spiritual dissonance, especially for educated young women.

Academic critiques of church governance models have also pointed out how "bureaucratic masculinity" operates even in faith-based systems. Nancy T. Ammerman and Linda Woodhead suggest that religious institutions often spiritualize managerial hierarchies in ways that align leadership with perceived masculine virtues—strength, decisiveness, objectivity—while associating care, diligence, and humility with female subordination.[271] Such theological framing is subtle yet potent in shaping nomination outcomes.

Several male leaders acknowledged this bias but expressed uncertainty on how to address it**.** Lucas Ondimu., from Laikipia East, reflected:

> "Sometimes we say we want to involve women, but when the vote comes, people go silent. They say, 'Let's wait another year.' Maybe we need training, not just policy."[272]

This admission points to an urgent need for capacity-building and theological re-education. Training modules for church boards on inclusive leadership, biblical models of female leadership, and policy application could help bridge the gap between institutional ideals and congregational practice.

The lived reality of women's administrative service challenges assumptions about capacity and commitment. Lillian Kemunto, a long serving diconn**ess** who coordinates Community Services in Rumuruti, has managed budgets larger than those of some entire local churches, yet has never been nominated for treasurer. She shared:

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[271] Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregation and Community* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 127–131; Linda Woodhead, *Gendering Religion and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2008), 102–109.
[272] Lucas Ondimu, Oral Interview, District Office, Laikipia East, March 3, 2024.^11

> "The excuse is always, 'You're already doing a lot.' But that's just another way of saying, 'Stay in your corner.' I'm not asking for power—just fairness."[273]

Her words reflect the emotional toll of persistent exclusion. For many women, the denial of administrative roles is not merely a matter of church structure—it is experienced as spiritual disqualification.

Ultimately, the case of Laikipia–Samburu Station shows that women's administrative participation is both significant and marginalized. Women are deeply involved in budgeting, reporting, and managing church operations, yet remain underrepresented in decision-making and under-acknowledged in formal titles. This duality is unsustainable in a church that proclaims equality in Christ and promotes servant leadership for all.

If the Adventist Church in Kenya seeks to remain relevant to the rising generation, a recalibration of administrative norms is imperative. Such transformation must go beyond rhetoric to intentional structural change—supported by clear policy, gender-sensitive leadership training, and a re-reading of Scripture that honors the spiritual authority of both men and women. Only then will the Church fully reflect the inclusivity of the Gospel it proclaims.

2.4. Auxiliary and Care Ministries

Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Laikipia–Samburu Station, hold significant responsibility within auxiliary and care ministries—specifically Dorcas/Women's Ministries, Community Services, and Health Ministries. These sectors form the humanitarian and logistical backbone of the church's outreach activities, often representing the church's face to the wider community. Yet, despite their operational weight, these ministries are structurally positioned on the periphery of formal decision-making bodies. This creates a paradox of indispensability and invisibility, where women carry out vital services but remain excluded from ecclesiastical power structures.

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[273] **Lillian Kemunto**, Oral Interview, Rumuruti Town Church, February 12, 2024.^12

An exemplary case occurred during Kinamba's 2023 Camp Meeting, where women led a sophisticated logistical effort involving meal preparation for over 480 attendees, the installation of mobile medical tents, and the organization of a community blood donation drive. These achievements, while widely acknowledged during closing ceremonies, were not reflected in leadership representation. None of the female coordinators were listed on the station's executive committee that oversaw the camp's finances and programming.[274] This reflects a long-standing structural trend: women's ministries are appreciated symbolically but rarely integrated into formal administrative spheres.

Such exclusion is not based on doctrinal prohibitions. The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* provides for Women's Ministries as an official department of the church, affirming its contribution to mission, nurture, and community engagement.[275] Yet, the manual offers little on governance integration. This lacuna enables local boards to treat these ministries as functional but non-strategic—essential for service, but not critical for direction. In effect, women's ministries become "working arms" without voting arms in policy formulation.

Interviews with Dorcas leaders across the districts consistently revealed frustration with this model. **Eunice Wangari.**, who coordinated food distribution during the 2023 Camp Meeting, lamented:

> "We do the planning, we buy the food, we feed everyone. But when they sit to plan next year's meeting, they don't invite us. They say, 'The elders will decide.'"[276]

Her words underscore a recurrent theme: women are highly involved in execution but excluded from deliberation. This exclusion generates a spiritual and administrative dissonance. If service is a biblical hallmark of leadership, then those who serve most

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[274] Kinamba 2023 Camp Meeting Planning Records, Women's Ministries Archive, Laikipia–Samburu Station.
[275] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2022), 123–127.
[276] Eunice Wangari, Oral Interview, Kinamba West, February 16, 2024.

should, logically, influence the church's direction. Yet in Laikipia–Samburu, the opposite appears true.

Sociologically, this bifurcation maps onto what scholars term the "sacred-secular divide" within ecclesial labor. Women's ministries are often categorized as extensions of domestic roles—feeding, caregiving, nurturing—and are therefore treated as auxiliary rather than central to church governance.[277] This categorization, though subtle, informs nomination procedures and board selections. It enables the elders' councils to affirm women's diligence while denying them a seat at strategic tables.

In Nyahururu, the Community Services ministry has spearheaded food security programs, including a maize donation drive that assisted 75 vulnerable families in 2023. The planning required coordination with government offices, budgeting, and volunteer management. Yet, despite this high-level interaction, none of the Community Services leaders had any representation at the district's Strategic Planning Committee.[278] This mirrors a pattern observed across all three districts: external visibility does not translate to internal authority.

The invisibility of auxiliary leaders is often spiritualized. Jonathan Mbu**ru**, an elder in Rumuruti, explained:

> "The Bible says, 'Let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing.' Women in Dorcas serve with humility. That's their blessing, not leadership."[279]

This interpretation, while cloaked in biblical language, reinforces a theology of silence and invisibility. It suggests that visibility in decision-making is antithetical to spiritual virtue for women, thereby creating a spiritual disincentive for aspiring female leaders.

Despite such constraints, women in auxiliary ministries are demonstrating remarkable creativity and resilience. In March 2023, Health Ministries leaders in Machaka initiated a maternal nutrition program in partnership with the county hospital. They mobilized

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[277] Musa Dube, "Theology of Liberation and Gender," *Missionalia* 30, no. 3 (2002): 27–42.
[278] Nyahururu Community Services Report, October 2023.
[279] Jonathan Mburu, Oral Interview, Rumuruti East, January 26, 2024

over 60 women, conducted seminars, and provided free folic acid tablets to pregnant mothers. This program had broader social reach than most sermons, yet the women behind it remained outside of quarterly district leadership retreats.[280] Their exclusion reveals a hierarchy that values pulpit and committee leadership over community transformation.

The theological contradiction here is stark. The Adventist health message, deeply rooted in Ellen White's writings, has historically emphasized holistic ministry—physical, spiritual, and social. Yet, in practice, women who embody this vision are rarely seen as full leaders. The prophetic voice of health and wellness is acknowledged only in the context of service, not authority. This contradiction undermines the church's own health theology.

Younger women in Women's Ministries are increasingly aware of these structural limits. Joan Kemunto, a youth Dorcas officer in Laikipia Central, stated:

> "I joined Dorcas to serve, but also to lead. I thought planning health programs would earn us respect. Instead, we're thanked, then forgotten."[281]

Her words capture a generational discontent that may eventually challenge the current structural arrangements. For many young Adventist women, participation without influence feels like a contradiction of the Gospel's promise of equality and spiritual gifting.

The resilience of these women, however, cannot be overstated. Even without formal recognition, they continue to innovate. In 2022, Rumuruti's Women's Ministries partnered with a local radio station to broadcast weekly Bible devotionals, domestic violence awareness messages, and family health tips. The program reached over 10,000 listeners across the region. Yet when the church submitted its annual media report to

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[280] Health Ministries Report, Machaka Church, March 2023.
[281] Joan Kemunto, Oral Interview, Laikipia Central, March 5, 2024.

the Conference office, only the pastor and communication director were credited.[282] This invisibility is institutionalized even at the reporting level.

The paradox of auxiliary ministry is that it reveals both the strength and the suppression of women's leadership. Their work keeps the church operational and relevant, especially in marginalized communities. But because this work is coded as "care," it is sidelined from core ecclesiastical power. The Adventist theology of the body of Christ—where every part is vital—remains unevenly applied in Laikipia–Samburu.

Interviews with pastors revealed a subtle awareness of this injustice**.** Pastor Ruth Moraa**.,** one of the few ordained women in the region, commented:

> "We preach about the Proverbs 31 woman, but we don't give her a budget. We call her 'virtuous' but exclude her from leadership retreats. That's not biblical—it's bias."[283]

Her critique signals an internal reformation brewing within the clergy itself. For change to occur, church leaders must shift from symbolic affirmation to structural inclusion.

A key recommendation emerging from the field is the institutional integration of auxiliary ministry heads into executive committees, not merely as observers but as voting members. This would acknowledge their labor, harness their field knowledge, and build a more inclusive decision-making culture. Strategic planning should be informed by those doing the actual work.

Secondary literature from across African Christianity supports this direction. Scholars such as Musa Dube and Isabel Phiri argue that transformative ecclesiology must move beyond tokenism to genuine power-sharing.[284] This includes not only allowing women to lead but redesigning systems that presume male control. The administrative silence

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[282] Rumuruti Women's Ministries Annual Report, 2022; Laikipia–Samburu Conference Media Submission, 2023.
[283] Pastor Ruth Moraa, Oral Interview, Nyahururu North, March 8, 2024.
[284] Musa Dube and Isabel Phiri, African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2006).

around auxiliary ministries must be addressed if the church is to embody the inclusive Gospel it preaches.

In sum, women's dominance in auxiliary and care ministries in the Laikipia–Samburu Station is both a testament to their commitment and a reflection of systemic inequity. These ministries are crucial to church mission yet structurally marginalized. The women who plan, cook, care, heal, and mobilize remain largely unrecognized in church governance. A faithful response to this reality requires not only gratitude but transformation—restructuring systems to reflect the full dignity of their contribution.

2.5. Women Participation during Formative Years in Laikipia-Samburu Station

According to the church's report when the station was formed women membership was over 1700 by 2015. When these women belonged to the larger Nakuru they were already members of Women Ministries. After the station was formed, in all the 49 local churches Women Ministries became operational, had their representatives in local church boards, district church boards and station board of management. Mrs Naomi Waweru from Nyahururu Central local church, Nyahururu District became the Station Women Ministries chair from 2015 – 2017. [285]

Equally, female participation was inevitable in the formative years of Laikipia-Samburu station. As part of the preparation for the proposed new conference and station, between July and August 2012 Women Ministries bought mattress for station camporees. Also in October 2012 the held fund drive and bought church satellite disc for the new proposed headquarters. They also aided in church renovation.[286] In 2013 women in the five church districts visited their church members with personal needs.[287]

Female participation was also notable at station level where various women actively held departmental positions in the formative years of the station. In 2013 the following women participated in the station board of management: Madam Ngachoki from Rumuruti District was the head matron of Children department, Path-finder/

[285] Ibid, pp231
[286] Laikipia-Samburu Women Ministries 2031 Report.
[287] Laikipia-Samburu Station Women Ministries 2012-2013 Year Report

adventurers club was headed by Madam Ngachuru from Nyahururu District while Leonidah Bosibori was the head matron for youth department.[288]

In 2014 women from Laikipia-Samburu Station participated at a conference congress that was held at Kabokyet SDA school in Kericho from 7th – 14th December. As a station Nyahururu district was represented by 19 delegates, Subukia by 21, Ol-jororok18, Kinamba 4 and Rumuruti 1; total 63 delegates.[289]

Women Ministries from this station joined other women globally and observed International Women's Day of Prayer on 14th March 2015. .They congregated at Nyahururu Central SDA local church. Also Women Ministries sponsored and participated in a weekend Rally from 26th – 28th June the same year. In addition, Women Ministries representatives were involved in a congress from 13th- 20th December at Blester Boarding School, Subukia Central Local Church, while other SDA women took part in Women Ministries seminar that was held at Wei Secondary school from 13th – 19th December 2015.[290]

At station level women joined others globally to observe International Women's Emphasis Day at Nyahururu Central local church on 11th June 2016. Further for spiritual nourishment women from this station were sponsored by "The Greater Rift Valley Conference" held a retreat from 1st- 3rd July 2016 at Eldoret. During the retreat they visited "Great Hope Children's Orphanage." Women also were involved in a crusade which was organised by the station at Ngumo Boys Muhotetu Local church, Rumuruti district on November 27, 2016. Further women fully participated during a seminar organised by the station at Ngumo Boys from 4th- 10th December.[291]

2.6. Woman Leadership in Laikipia-Samburu Station

Woman leadership is significant in Laikipia-Samburu Station. Various women are active in department management. Milly Gichuhi from Ol-jororok district was the Women's Ministries chair from 2017 – 2018. She was succeeded by Mrs Ruth Mouko Subukia district from 2018- 2022. Head of children's department from 2013- 2015 was

[288] Laikipia-Samburu Station Secretary Report 2015- 2021
[289] Laikipia-Samburu Station Women Ministries 2014 Year Report
[290] Laikipia-Samburu Station Women Ministries 2015 Year Report
[291] Laikipia-Samburu Station Women Ministries 2016 Year Report

Mrs Gachoki Rumuruti district succeeded by Rahab Muthoni Sipili local church, Kinamba district from 2015- 2022. Mary Muchemi was the station treasurer 2022 while Winnie Jucu Kinithia was the station Youth department leader. Mrs Ateka served in a capacity of headteacher Nyahururu SDA Primary from 2019- 2022.[292]

Church leaders also serve in SDA Church.They are equivalent to church elders both men and women; and are commissioned by lying of hands. They are not ordained.According to church manual church leaders are limited to preside some ordinances like performing marriage ceremony, baptism rite, conducting business meeting when discipline issues are not being discussed, and conducting Lord's Supper. In case no one has qualities of a church elder, a church leader is elected.[293] In Laikipia-Samburu Station two churches by 2021 had women church leaders namely Kinamba local church Nancy Maritim and Jane Njenga serving Naigera Local church.[294]

According to all respondents in Laikipia-Samburu Station no woman has ever trained in theological college; meaning no woman was ever ordained. This explains why women participation is invisible in top church hierarchy and high in lower church hierarchy. Again majority of the respondents responded that the majority in local church committee were men. Interviewee[295] indicated that in decision making women were excluded even in matters that affect them directly. The above findings may be interpreted to suggest that women were not well represented thus denied their rightful place in the church hierarchy. Responses on how women were involved in departmental leadership shows that women were incorporated as members of departments and some were leaders. Interviewee[296] noted that the church favours good leadership not gender leadership. This indicates that the church has no discriminative rule, but there exists an underlying male belief system that allows for gender disparity. Head Deacon pointed out that making decision was a male prerogative thus women had to agree with the decision made even if it was against their will. Interviewee[297] observed that since men

[292] Laikipia-Samburu Station Secretay Report 2015- 2021
[293]SDA Church Manual. Secretariat. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Review and Herald Publishing Association. U.S A (2010) p 77
[294] Laikipia-Samburu Station Secretary Report 2015- 2021
[295] Interviewee 5/02/2021
[296] Interviewee 14/2/2021
[297] Interviewee 1/03/2021

were the decision maker while women were implementers, women's concerns are not addressed. The above results indicate the need to emphasize on more women participation in church hierarchy.

2.7. Power Structure in Laikipia-Samburu Station

A station has administrator who chairs the station's board of management. Local church members are represented by their delegates in district and station boards respectively (See figure 3.1).

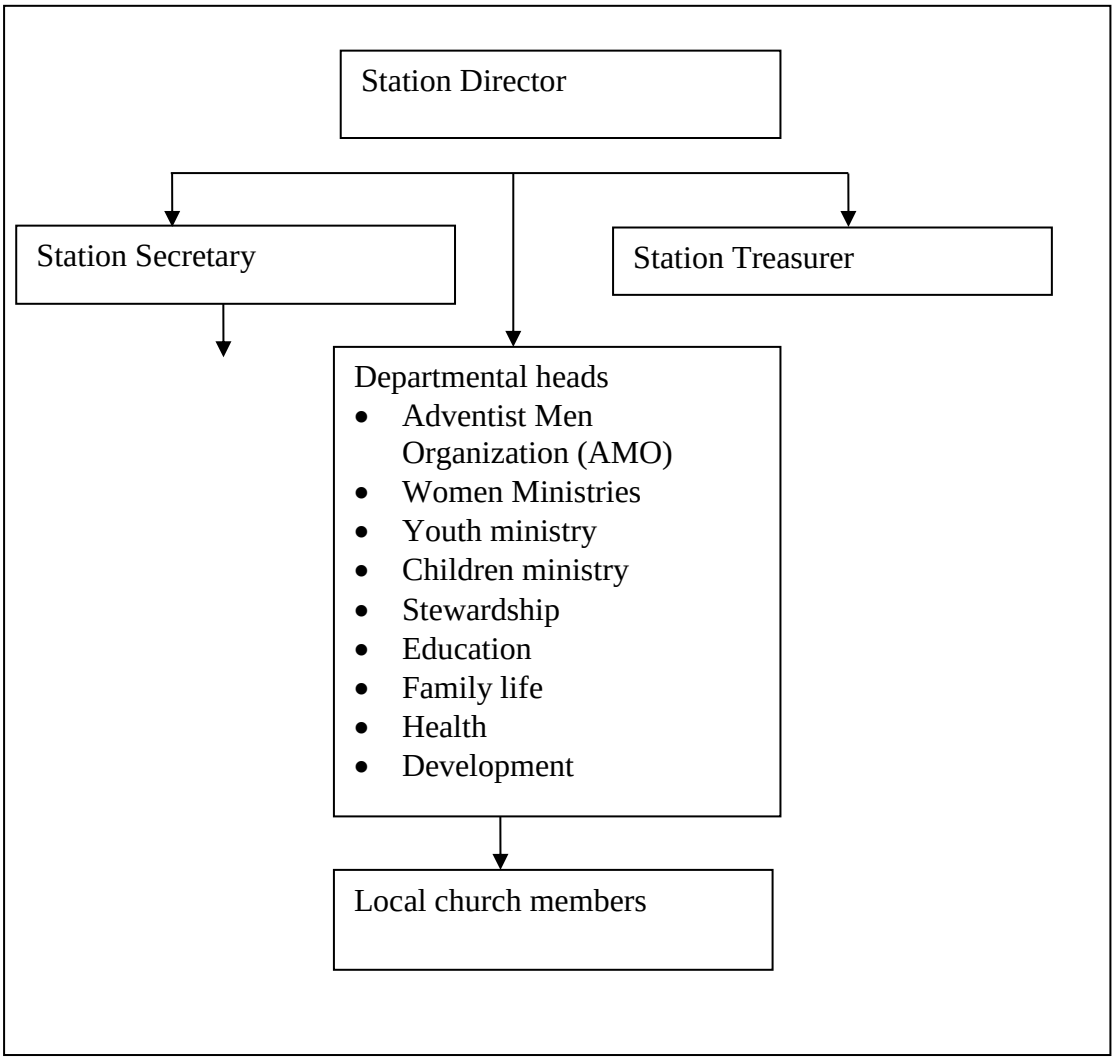

Figure 3.1:

Laikipia - Samburu Station Organizational Structure

Source: Laikipia - Samburu Station Annual Report (2019)

Station Director is ordained Pastor employed by the Conference whose key responsibility is to represent station Pastors at Conference level. Since inception

Laikipia-Samburu Station has had two station directors; Pastor Leleguya 2013-2014 Pastor Nginga 2015 – to date. Station Director serves five year term and is elected during Coference Session. He is also the Station administrative overseer.[298]

Lay representative can be either a church elder or church leader.The representative is elected by delegates from local churches at conference session and serve five year term. Lay representative represents the laity in executive committee during conference sessions. The station has had two lay representatives since its inception; Gideon Chege 2013 – 2015 and Samuel Ruo 2016 – 2021 from Kabazi local church Subukia District. The station has not had a female lay representative so far. Station secretary is elected at station level by the station Pastors. He is the Asssitant Station Director. He keeps station records. By 2021 the station secretary was Pastor Kiarie from Nyahururu District.

In every local church there are elders as stipulated by the church manual. These are spiritual director of the church in absence of a Pastor. They conduct church service, preach the word, teach doctrines and chair business meeting when there is no disciplinary case being discussed. They are ordained to the office of elders. Before ordination the elected elders function as church leaders hence do not administer ordinances.[299] The authority of elders is confined to the church which elected them. They cannot excommunicate a member. An elder can also deliver sermon, offer prayers and give blessing during a marriage ceremony. In absence of a Pastor, Conference President approves plans for elders to officiate baptism in a local church. Elders are also in-charge of Sabbath school services. Local church elders elect their representive for district and station level. Every local church in Laikipia-Samburu Station has elders.

Apart from elders there is a board of Deacons chaired by "Head Deacon" and assisted by Secretary Deacon. Deacons are appointed through election. They are ordained by Pastor. Elders can also be elected as deacons but they are not ordained again. Deacons assist during church services and in meetings by welcoming and ushering in members and visitors. In addition, they visit members in their district as well as preparing for baptismal services. During communion service they provide what is necessary for the service and store the utensil and linen after the ceremony. Through the assistance of

[298] ibid
[299]Church Manual 2021 p 71

church board deacons take care of the ailing and the vulnerable members. Equally, they take care of church property in a church without development department.

Deacons work hand in hand with board of deaconesses. If many are headed by head deaconess assisted by secretary deaconess.They are elected by the church members they serve and their main responsibility is to welcome and usher members and vistors in the church and during home visitation.They are ordained by the Pastor. In addition, they assist during and after baptism service by taking care of female candidates. Also during communion service they arrange both communion and ordinance table. They equally participate in foot washing of visiting women and new female members. They are also involved in maintaining church property.[300] In all local churches in Laikipia-Samburu Station deaconesses have elected their representative for district and station level.

Church departments are the pivots in every local church. They are as old as the local church itself. The main departments are AMO, Women Ministries, Children ministry, Finance, Youth ministry, Education, family life/health, Stewardship and development. Local churches elect their departmental heads. All departments elect their district representatives at district and station level. Responses on how women were incorporates in Church District and Local Church Committees showed that in both institutions women were elected but their representation was below 50%. Interviewee[301] Woman Church Elder observed that Christianity from the onset was male dominated. And further noted that men were born leaders; this being the case the patriarchy system has defined women in the church as inferior to men. Interviewee[302] observed that even in business committees women are co-opted as an afterthought in the name of gender balance. Fiorenza noted that the church must be liberated from the institutionalized nature which has lead to women subordination.[303] This results in women's concerns not being addressed. These findings can be interpreted to mean that women's voice is inaudible as patriarchal influence dictates the role of women as implementers of decisions made by men. At station level every department has a patron

[300] Interviewee 15/01/2021
[301] Interviewee 5/02/2021
[302] Interviewee 15/01/2021
[303] Fiorenza, E., & Collins, M., (eds.). *Women Invisible in Church and Theology.* SCM. London: Press (1985) p 140

pastor. Station Board is made up of Director, Secretatary lay representative, treasurer and departmental heads representative. By 2021 the following were the patron pastors in Laikipia-Samburu Station: Pastor Kiarie from (Nyahururu District) for Women Ministries and Education, Pastor Kariuki (Ndaragwa District) for children ministry, Pastor Ombasa (Boiman) for Path-finder and Adventurer clubs, Pastor Nyakundi (Rumuruti) for AMO, Pastor Mugo (Ol-jororok) for Youth, Pastor Kipugok (Kapkures) for stewardship and Pastor Ngotho (Kinamba) for Personal and Evangelism Ministry.[304]

The responses on whether men are confident with women as church leaders, where confidence is considered as trust especially when charged with responsibility 70% indicated that men trusted women as their church leaders. This response does not match with real women participation in church hierarchy. Oduyoye summarizes that in the church there seems to have spoken norm that women should not hold authority over men. The church professes that women can hold any position that fit their potential but this is only in principle not practice.[305] Oduyoye's observation seems to fit well in SDA. Two out of three Pastors interviewed agreed that men had confident in women leaders they argued that women had succeeded as group leaders and Deaconesses. This finding indicated that the church was convinced of women's capability as leaders. Responses on whether women were active in church politics showed that 90% of women participated in electing their leaders at all levels. Ask how church election shape leadership in the church, interviewee[306] observed that when women hold leadership positions in committees there seems a tendency of men not appreciating their competence. A Church Elder[307] further pointed that in some issues women supported fellow women. Women leaders were suppressed by both men and women because they are seen as threat to status quo. Researcher's arguement is that women have the potential to mobilise fellow women to participate in church hierarchy to deliberate on their issues.

[304] Laikipia-Samburu Station Secretary 2015- 2021 Report
[305] Oduyuye, M., Decades of Solidality with Women Not an Ilde Talea in Church Women's Consultation on Economic Justice by A. A. C. C. (1990). p 19

[307] Interviewee 7/02/2021

Responses on the challenges facing women in leadership 70% showed that women congregants do not take women in leadership seriously thus assume that they are weak compared to men. Interviewee[308] observed that family pressure, education and difficult marriages as limits to women participation as a leader. In addition, women ministries meetings and marriage teachings insist on biblical notion that women should be submissive. The three Pastors interviewed agreed that lying of hands of women is a new window to women leadership as church leaders in SDA. This concurs with the research that SDA church structure influence women participation in church hierarchy. This study reveals that there are many factors within the church which influence women participation in church hierarchy. The large proportion of men in church hierarchy against very few women is an indication of a serious structural issue. It can be argued that the church out rightly accepts to live with more men than women and this normalized with time. In SDA lack of research on this subject and courage to point out these challenges to generate discussion for change may have delayed transformation. The results indicate that SDA Pastors hold leadership in the church hierarchy.

Responses on the possible solutions to challenge facing women in church hierarchy show 80% need for a mandatory quota system in all electoral positions in the church hierarchy. Interviewee[309] noted that since pastors are the teaching elders they ought to enforce gender parity in all decision-making forums in church hierarchy. Further, constitution and by-laws influencing women participation ought to be amended by the General Conference.

In view of the above discussion and observations, this study concludes and proposes that SDA church need to come up with mechanisms to ensure more women are elected in the church committees to be involved in key decision making like ordination of women. The observation that majority of men in Laikipia-Samburu Station were also satisfied with women leadership means that they were ready to give their female counterparts the necessary support once they are in the position of leadership.

[308] Interviewee 5/02/2021
[309] Interviewee13/01/2021

2.8. Seventh Day Adventist Women Ministries

Sareptra Myranda Irish Henry (S.M.I Henry) was born from a Methodist family and the father was a church minister. In 1896, Mrs. Henry converted to Seventh-day Adventist. She felt convicted to start Women's Ministries and shared her thoughts with Ellen G. White who was living in Australia by then. Ellen encouraged Mrs. Henry to start Women's Ministries, which would help parents in their parenting issues. Mrs. Henry travelled widely advocating for women and their needs while writing many articles in Advent Review and Sabbath Herald. Unfortunately, in January 16, 1900 she died of pneumonia before accomplishing much of her dream. General Conference session of 1990 re-established Women's Ministries and gave it full status of a department.[310]

The foundation of SDA Women Ministries dates back to the time of Ellen White as women participated in church leadership, pastoral ministry and in evangelism. Ellen noted that God choose both men and women to participate in His work. For great and decisive work of God to be accomplished, both talents should be combined.[311] Equally, men and women of all ranks are needed to work in God's vineyard.[312] Ellen also observed that God calls prudent, tender, warm-hearted, principled and preserving women to participate in His work.[313] Ellen continued to point out that God calls women to be render of holy service of preaching the truth and to be instruments of righteousness.[314] Ellen added that for men and women to participate in God's work all must be filled with the Holy Spirit.[315] Lastly Ellen observed that formally women called by God did commendable work in their residential church districts; they preached to others. She therefore concluded that Seventh Day Adventist women with varying

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[311] White G. Ellen. *Evangelism: A Handbook for Personal and Public Evangelism.*Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association. Hagerstone, Maryland. (1946.) p 469
[312]*Review and Herald Magazine.* Review and Herald Publishing Association. Hagerstone, Maryland. (April, 1880)

[314] White G. Ellen. *Evangelism: A Handbook for Personal and Public Evangelism*. Washington. D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.Hagerstone, Maryland. (1946) p 471, 472
[315] Whit G. Ellen. *Testimony Treasures*. Pacific Press Publishing association. (1949), vol. 2 p 404

abilities helped by Holy Spirit to participate in all ranks and areas hence Women Ministries is a vital church department.[316]

According to 2003-2004 General Conference FW05 Working Policy the philosophy of Seventh Day Adventist Women's Ministries as a church department is to encourage, nurture and challenge the women as they evangelize globally.[317] As a church department it is intended to complement other departments and help women to participate in church life. In addition, Women's Ministries nurture, supports and inspire women by helping them address the needs of women from a spiritual and feminine perspective. Although SDA is male dominated church in terms of sermon and worship services, Women's Ministries tries to reclaim their extra-ordinary heritage of public and private ministry as rooted in Jesus ministry and teachings.[318] Women possess unique gifts and time is now ripe for the church to remind women that their participation is significantly needed to minister to the entire church at large.[319]

According to 2003-2004 General Conference Working Policy FW10, the purpose of SDA Women's Ministries is to nurture, facilitate and support women in their faith as church members and disciples of Jesus. The focus of this department is to address and mitigate barriers like illiteracy, poverty, length of workday and poor working conditions, the need for training and mentoring, and to address the abuse. Moreover, risk to health, prevents women from reaching their full potentials. The department therefore develops a global evangelistic strategy and trains women.[320]

The objective of Women Ministries is to foster spiritual and physical growth, and renewal of women. This department equips women to give better and credible services to the church and community, as they minister to women's needs. The department therefore, supports women to write spiritual materials, offers women scholarships to further their studies, organizes, and sponsors world educational programs. The

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[316]White G. Ellen. *Evangelism: A Handbook for Personal and Public Evangelism*.Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.Hagerstone, Maryland. (1946) p 465
[317] White G. Ellen. *Welfare Ministry*.Washingtone, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association. (1952) p 145
[318]www.chumadventist.org>LV. (PDF)
[319] Ibid
[320] White G. Ellen,*Testimonies for the Church*. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association (1876). Vol. 4, p 642

department is also involved in evangelization among the Muslim world.[321] Specifically the department objectives are to articulated and address the following eight items, namely: to elevate women as persons of significant value by the virtue of their creation and redemption; to enable women to deepen their faith and experience spiritual growth and renewal; to underscore the needs and concerns of women in multicultural and multi-ethnic perspectives; to liaise and cooperate with other church departments to meet women's needs; to network with women in the world church creating friendship, support, exchange of ideas and information; to mentor and encourage young Adventist women, by involving them in church to reach their potential in Christ; to bring women's unique perspectives on issues facing the church to the bodies making decisions and to seek expanding avenues of dynamic Christian service for women, challenge Adventist women to use their gifts to complement the talents of others and work together to further the global mission of SDA church.[322]

SDA Women's Ministries run several programs for women. One of such program is scholarship. Since 1993 Women's Ministries have been publishing daily devotional books. The profit they make out of these sales they fund women who attend SDA colleges.

Every year in the month of March women from all Christian faith observe International Women's Day of Prayer and so do SDA women. The General Conference Women's Ministries department prepares the materials used by SDA women during this day in advance. Women in Laikipia-Samburu have been organizing prayer day according to women's annual event calendar in individual local church.

Again, Adventist women congregate on the second Sabbath of June annually to emphasize on Women's Ministries. They spend the whole day of seminars meetings and engage in spiritual activities to promote their local projects. The General Conference Department of Women's Ministries supports women by preparing all the materials needed for the success of this day. Equally, women in Laikipia-Samburu Station in the recent years have been observing this Sabbath. According to one

[321]Women's Ministries Resources. P. 177
[322]2000 Church Manual (FW15)

respondent[323] they promote their home-made detergent, sell their locally "dyed vitenges" among others.

In the Seventh Day Adventist church the fourth Sabbath of August annually is a day set aside for the Adventists to advocate for abuse prevention. This day was first observed in 2001. Again, the General Conference Women's Ministries department prepares the materials for use. Seventh Day Adventist women have a program referred to as Prayer and Love Saves (PALS). Women meet to pray for the parents and their children especially children that have drifted from Adventist faith.[324]

The Adventists women have handbook that contains vital information of Women's Ministries department. Adventist women who are interested in leadership are trained in a three year program at their local churches. The General Conference Women's Ministries department organizes such programs. The General Conference women's department also publishes pamphlets and books covering various topics. This department also publishes MOSAIC newsletter, from General Conference. It is a monthly publication covering world news, editorials and other programs.[325]

Responses on whether local churches have established Women Ministries and their activities, 100% showed that SDA Women Ministries was as old as church itself. Interviewee results;[326]

> "This department is distinguished for its financial contribution towards the running of development projects. Equally, women ministries contribute Sabbath offering and monthly pledges. Women Ministries lead during intercessory gathering, bible study and in prayers among other activities."

This study revealed that in Laikipia-Samburu Station Women Ministries department has developed many projects, this is an indication of women competence in resource mobilization. This study revealed that Women Ministries as a department is under the chaplaincy of a Pastor at all levels. This practice seems to suggest that women cannot successfully work independently in church hierarchy. According to the respondents the

[323] 3/03/2021 interviewee
[324] Interviewee 15/02/2021
[325]https://www.chumsda.org>file(PDF)
[326] Interviewee 14/02/2021

society within Laikipia-Samburu Station has benefited from the social and spiritual contribution from Women Ministries. This includes capacity building for fellow women, student sponsorship to various learning institutions and evangelization; these are vital services which SDA church is expected to render. Women therefore, complement to the effort of the church. All the respondents 100% pointed out financial problem as the main challenge facing Women Ministries in Laikipia-Samburu Station. Interviewee[327] observed that this department had merger finances to undertake its activities in a vast station and numerous vulnerable cases. Further the interviewee noted that with grants from global Women Ministries the department can do much better.

2.9. The Dorcas Society

Women's Ministries department helps Dorcas Society to be better church workers and leaders. The Dorcas Society's mission is to help people physically and spiritually in the name and spirit of Jesus. It is concerned with all cases of need, regardless of creed, class, nationality, or ethnic origin. The society makes an effort to meet emergency needs that are not met by other agencies.The department empowers women to participate in conference, Union and Division committees. The department upholds women; encouraging them to emulate Christ in His mission. It also challenges women in their daily lives to use their God given gifts to expand the kingdom of God geographically and numerically.[328]

Women Ministries empowers Dorcas Benevolent Association that was started by Adventist women in 1874 in Creek, Michigan USA. The society was under Sabbath school and personal ministries.[329] It became Adventist church outreach in 1874, which emulated Jesus by physically and spiritually assisting the needy. The Society's area of specialization is making and distributing clothes and shipping the surplus to developing countries through Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).[330]

Dorcas Society was initially known as benevolent service. Today it is a community service group for women, which is directed and supported by personal ministries as

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[327] Interviewee 1/03/2021
[328] *www.adventistwomenministries.org.*
[329] www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org
[330] *Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopaedia,* (Revised 2nd ed).A-L 1996 p. 473, 474

assigned by the General Conference Committee. Dorcas leader is appointed by the local church board committee while its secretary-treasurer is appointed through voting by Dorcas members.[331] Seventh Day Adventist church has designated the first Sabbath in May as the Dorcas Day.[332] Non-Adventists and friends are also encouraged to participate in the activities on Dorcas Day.

Since 1970, Dorcas society was renamed as the Adventist Community Service (ACS). As a humanitarian group women usually meet, provide clothes and food-staff or money to the vulnerable in the church and society. On behalf of the local church ACS motivates, trains, equips and mobilizes members from grass-root. On a broad spectrum ACS, work hand-in-hand with Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).[333]

ADRA is a non-governmental organization that is owned and sponsored by the SDA. It provides international relief and development and operates at global level. It is mandated to train ACS workers and to plan for ACS projects. ACS and ADRA both work directly with the community. They co-operate with other church agencies to fulfil their objectives.[334]

As an outreach program in Africa Dorcas Society is giving women opportunities to participate in church hierarchy after training in leadership courses. Dorcas leaders are elected during church elections and they work closely with church deacons and deaconesses.[335] Other roles undertaken by Dorcas Society is being involved in clothing distribution, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, disaster response, crisis counselling, career training, job placement, health screening and education, refugee resettlement, family life and health education, elder care, ministering to the homeless disabled and people living with AIDs. Dorcas Society helps Adventist women to participate in, outside the church, and to serve people in need.[336]

ACS has three levels of operation. The first level is where the church volunteers provide relief or immediate supplies to the needy for instance food; namely giving fish. The

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[331]pmlaeflet.cs.pdf
[332]Community Service Manual
[333]*Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopaedia,* (Revised 2nded) A-L 1996 p. 473, 474
[334]www.sdahistorians.org>niko...(PDF)
[335]Adventist Community Service leaders. P. 177
[336]SDA church Manual 2000 p. 94

next level is where the church volunteers economically empower the community by providing them with tools, agricultural inputs and information, that is teaching the community how to fish. This community is individually transformed. The last level is systemic or structural change. At this level the church volunteers seek to change the institutional policies and laws that encourage unhealthy conditions through impacting the people to access the available resources and opportunities to better their lives. This is making the community to access the fishing pond.[337]

According to responses 100% indicated that Dorcas Society as an outreach of Women Ministries had visible impact in Laikipia-Samburu society. This included distribution of food and clothing, sponsoring students in learning institutions and organizing medical camps. Other contributions included visitation, counselling the sick and comforting the bereaved. Interviewee[338] noted that Dorcas Society ought to be funded by the World Wide Church to do much more in Laikipia-Samburu Station. In addition the interviewee observed that many women, Deaconesses, elders and church leaders in the church grow into leadership through Women Ministries and Dorcas Society. There is need to bring women into the mainstream of church hierarchy. One of the key informants observed that;

> "Currently, women are instrumental in the SDA church in our station since they are involved in training members in vocational skills like cookery, dress making, kitchen garden farming, house keeping and small business. These vocational training have ended up in empowering our members to an extent that the money obtained we use in providing balanced diet to our families and the surplus we pay school fees. We also take a tenth as tithe to the church as we expect more blessings from God the Almighty." KIR_008

The Dorcas Society therefore has had a positive impact not only to the women in the station but also the women living around the station. One of the women had this to say as far as the impact of the society is concerned.

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[337]Sider,J. Ronald, Olson, N. Philip and Unruh, Heidi Ronald. *Churches that Make a Difference.* Grand Rapids. Michigan: Bakers Books. (2000). P 20-21
[338] Oral inteeriew, Monica Wambui, July 10th, 2021

> "The Dorcas Society has been felt in the station where the poverty level has remained very high despite inadequate supplies required for these donations. The society has distributed clothing and food stuff to the various villages in the station and beyond. During period of severe drought, the society has remained handy in feeding the pastoralists and those stricken by the drought. The women of the society are also involved in psycho-social support to fellow women who face starvation by giving them hope of living tomorrow and also God's providence. We are also champions in hospital visitation to pray with the sick and also prisons visitation to restore moral values among the inmates by preaching and also teaching them the word of God. These activities have had great impact and have made the station known."[339]

The wide hierarchical leadership of the SDA church has a responsibility to give support to these women. This can only be achieved through more involvement of the women in the church leadership hierarchy so that women can have adequate platform for championing their activities. The current study recommends that Women Ministries and Dorcas Society be allocated enough financial resources to finance their programmes effectively. The ministries should be facilitated with professionals to spearhead different programs. SDA church should consider opening more women ministries especially in arid and semi-arid areas like in Laikipia-Samburu Station to reach the less fortunate in these areas. One of the Key informant had the following observation as far as the church responsibility in helping the Women Ministry and Dorcas Society in achieving their humanitarian objectives;

> "I feel it is high time the church set up an institute where the training activities of women are offered and can be up scaled. Apart from the vocational training, the institute should also offer leadership training as a tool of empowerment. In its budgetary support, the church should also allocate more funds to support Women Ministry and Dorcas Society activities. The church should also open up more centres and send women to the new centres to nurture their leadership

[339] Oral Interview, Elizabeth Wamui, kinamba, 15th July, 2024

abilities in such centres. Since we are involved in emergency ministries, we should also be trained in handling emergencies and also peace building."[340]

Women are literally found in almost all spheres of church obligation though without adequately being involved in leadership hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu Station. The findings on the impact of SDA Women Ministries in the society in Laikipia–Samburu Station has demonstrated that the Women Ministry and the Dorcas Society of the SDA church in the station had an impact not only in the lives of the church membership but also across the station in key issues like providing food and clothing during emergency. In order for the church to achieve more, these women need to be empowered by involving them in church leadership where they can voice their concerns through adequate representations.

2.10. Invisible Labour

The lived experience of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Laikipia–Samburu Station, is one of uncelebrated devotion. While their contributions to auxiliary, liturgical, and administrative roles are increasingly visible in formal reports, an even more substantial volume of their work remains obscured in silence: invisible labour. This labour includes a vast network of unpaid, behind-the-scenes activities that sustain the daily rhythms of congregational life but are rarely acknowledged as "leadership" or even service. From preparing communion emblems to decorating church sanctuaries, from organizing food for Pathfinders to counseling struggling youth, women's invisible labour is both ubiquitous and institutionally invisible.

On 22 June 2024, during an observational visit to Nyahururu Central Church, a team of 11 women were seen arriving at the premises two hours before the worship service began. Their task: to prepare breakfast for the local Pathfinder club, which was scheduled to lead the Sabbath's song service. The women set up makeshift cooking areas behind the vestry, lit jikos, chopped vegetables, stirred porridge, and carefully plated meals. They operated efficiently, quietly, and without ceremony. Yet during the Sabbath program, only a perfunctory "vote of thanks" was issued from the pulpit—one that acknowledged the day's "smooth organization" but failed to name or recognize the

[340] Oral Interview, Faustine Marube, Nyahururu 16th April, 2023

women who had made it possible.[341] This episode typifies the structural marginalization of women's time, energy, and presence.

The notion of invisible labour has gained traction in feminist theology and sociology as a lens to analyze how gendered work, especially within religious spaces, is essential but undervalued. Scholars such as Dorceta Taylor and Mercy Amba Oduyoye have pointed out that African religious institutions frequently depend on women's free labour, but fail to factor that work into budgeting, leadership structures, or theological recognition.[342]In the Adventist context, this phenomenon is particularly acute, as the theology of order and modesty sometimes becomes a pretext for under-acknowledging women's logistical, emotional, and spiritual support roles.

Women who perform these tasks do not perceive themselves as merely helpers. Many, in fact, see their service as a sacred calling. Esther Wambui, a respected lay leader in Nyahururu who has coordinated behind-the-scenes preparations for over 15 years, articulated this tension in a poignant oral testimony:

> "I have led communion preparation for 40 quarters. I wake at dawn, wash the emblems, fold the white cloths, make sure everything is spotless. During Camp Meeting, I coordinate meals for up to 600 people. I do it because I love God's house. But sometimes I wonder—when the Conference writes its reports, who do they mention? The preacher, the elder, the host pastor. But the person who cooked the preacher's food, who cleaned the floor at 5 a.m.? We disappear. Leadership, they say, is pulpit work. But without the kitchen, the pulpit has no strength."[343]

Esther's narrative reveals not only the scale of her contribution but the emotional weariness that invisibility induces. Her language is steeped in devotion, yet laced with lament. Her critique—that leadership is "measured by microphone time, not kitchen

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[341] Field Notes, Nyahururu Central Church, June 22, 2024.
[342] Dorceta E. Taylor, *The Environment and the People in American Cities*, 1600S–1900S (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 145–47; Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 89
[343] Esther Wambui**,** Oral Interview, Nyahururu Central Church, June 25, 2024.

time"—strikes at the heart of ecclesial value systems that prioritize the visible, audible, and authoritative, while ignoring the essential, backstage, and sacrificial.

One of the most enduring forms of invisible labour is caregiving. In Laikipia–Samburu congregations, women regularly act as informal counselors to young girls, widows, struggling families, and even errant youth. This caregiving includes home visits, prayer meetings, late-night phone calls, and pastoral accompaniment—roles traditionally seen as the work of ordained pastors. Yet these women do so without office, title, or stipend**.** Pauline Mwangi, a Dorcas worker in Kinamba, recounted a powerful series of episodes:

> "Last year, a girl in our church got pregnant out of wedlock. Her parents stopped attending. The elders said the case should be handled 'quietly.' I visited the family weekly, prayed with them, talked to the girl. I helped her get back to church. Nobody announced it from the pulpit. But I know the Spirit led me. Then another widow lost her husband, and I helped raise funds. I'm not in any committee. But God uses me. Still, when people speak of church leaders, my name is never on the list."[344]

Pauline's testimony illustrates that informal ministry often fills the pastoral gaps left by formal structures. Her narrative also emphasizes the emotional burden and sacrificial commitment that invisible labour entails, yet which is rarely acknowledged in reports, budgets, or theological discourses.

This erasure is not accidental; it is systemic. Church boards rarely record the names of women who coordinate food, clean sanctuaries, or organize behind-the-scenes logistics unless they are attached to a formal title. Even where roles exist—like "Hospitality Leader" or "Sanctuary Beautification"—they are often excluded from annual strategic plans or funding proposals. Field review of board minutes from Nyahururu and Rumuruti between 2020 and 2023 revealed only three instances where the work of food and hygiene teams was mentioned, and even then, without individual names.[345]

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[344] Pauline Mwangi, Oral Interview, Kinamba Church, February 21, 2024.
[345] Oral Interview, Isaac Mwangi, Sipili, July 3rd, 2024

Despite this, many women continue to find deep spiritual meaning in their work. Their invisible labour is often framed in terms of "Mary and Martha," with many aligning themselves with Martha's hands-on service. Yet biblical interpretations often work against them. Passages like Luke 10:41–42, where Jesus praises Mary's contemplative posture, are cited to justify the primacy of pulpit work over service. This exegesis, however, overlooks that both roles were integral to Jesus' ministry. Contemporary theologians such as Musimbi Kanyoro have argued that such binary readings devalue embodied service and reinforce male control over theological legitimacy.

Generational change is creating tension around this paradigm. Younger women, especially those with higher education, are questioning the logic of service without voice. Carol Ndegwa**.**, a university graduate and Youth Department secretary in Rumuruti, voiced her dissatisfaction:

> "We are raised to serve without complaining. But we notice who gets mentioned. At the end-of-year appreciation, the elder gets a certificate. The women who cooked and organized all the meals? Nothing. It's not even about awards—it's about being seen. Jesus saw the widow who gave two coins. Why can't our church see us?"[346]

Carol's frustration represents a growing call for ecclesiastical systems to reconcile service with recognition. The failure to do so risks alienating the very women who anchor the church's physical and emotional infrastructure.

Invisible labour is also economic. Women are central to church fundraising efforts, particularly for building projects and annual conferences. They organize harambees, bake sales, kitenge raffles, and silent auctions—all while balancing domestic and professional responsibilities. In Nyahururu, a women-led fundraiser in 2023 raised Ksh 200,000 for church roofing. Yet during the dedication, only male elders were invited to the front for ribbon-cutting and prayers. Such symbolic exclusion reinforces gender hierarchies and undercuts the moral legitimacy of church leadership.

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[346] Carol Ndegwa, Oral Interview, Rumuruti West, March 3, 2024.^7

The language of gratitude within Adventist worship also reflects this imbalance. Phrases like "we thank the men for leading us spiritually" and "we appreciate the sisters for their support" are commonly used. The dichotomy inherent in such statements—leadership as male, support as female—cements the theological framing of male visibility and female invisibility. These liturgical phrases, though often said innocently, carry deep structural implications. Interviews with male pastors revealed a mixture of awareness and inertia. Pastor Isaac Kabugi, based in Laikipia South, reflected on his congregation's reliance on women's labour:

> "We know women are the heartbeat of the church. They make things work—from food to logistics. But honestly, we don't always mention them. Maybe it's habit, maybe it's oversight. Sometimes we assume their reward is in heaven. But I'm beginning to think they need appreciation now too."[347]

Pastor Isaac's comments highlight the theological danger of postponing justice. While spiritual rewards are an important belief, the consistent erasure of women's contributions risks distorting both ecclesial ethics and community morale.

The ecclesiological implications of invisible labour are far-reaching. If leadership is defined narrowly—as visibility, microphone access, or title—then the Adventist Church risks marginalizing the very people who hold it together. A broader theology of leadership, rooted in service, sacrifice, and faithfulness, would better reflect the lived reality of the church's unsung heroines.

Integrating invisible labour into church planning requires structural reform. This could include tracking volunteer hours, naming service leaders in bulletins, budgeting for support roles, and including behind-the-scenes ministries in pastoral reports. A theological reimagining is also needed—one that elevates hospitality, cleaning, caregiving, and fundraising as acts of divine ministry, not merely feminine chores.

In sum, the invisible labour of women in Laikipia–Samburu's Seventh-day Adventist churches forms an indispensable, though under-recognized, pillar of church life. Their

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[347] Review of Board Minutes, Nyahururu and Rumuruti Districts, 2020–2023.

work nourishes, heals, builds, and restores. But without visibility, their labour becomes theologically and administratively devalued. To be faithful to the Gospel of Christ, the Church must make the invisible visible—not by altering women's roles, but by altering how it values them.

2.11. Chapter Conclusion

The findings presented in this chapter underscore what may be aptly termed the *participation paradox*—an intricate and enduring contradiction within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station. On one hand, women demonstrate consistent, multifaceted participation in almost every aspect of church life: liturgy, finance, health ministries, youth mentorship, welfare programs, and church beautification. On the other hand, this presence is structurally marginalized in decision-making bodies, authoritative roles, and theological leadership. The observations, interviews, and board documents analyzed throughout this chapter reveal that the more visible women are in operational labor, the more invisible they become within the formal channels of ecclesiastical power. This tension sets the foundation for deeper inquiry into the institutional frameworks that entrench gendered asymmetry within Adventist leadership.

The empirical data collected—ranging from church bulletins and board minutes to personal testimonies and field observations—collectively paints a portrait of a religious ecosystem that relies heavily on women's energy but limits their elevation. Whether preparing communion, coordinating health initiatives, managing church funds informally, or leading auxiliary ministries, women are the logistical and spiritual anchors of congregational life. However, such contributions are often reclassified as "support," reinforcing the notion that real leadership lies elsewhere—in offices held by men, behind microphones and at head tables. Thus, the Adventist ecclesial space in this region reflects a dual reality: vibrant female participation existing alongside a largely patriarchal leadership culture.

It is particularly noteworthy that women interviewed for this study did not merely express a desire for recognition in the abstract; they articulated a theological, emotional, and moral plea for inclusive ecclesiology. Their calls for visibility, voice, and validation were framed not as rebellions but as appeals to Gospel values—fairness, service, and the priesthood of all believers. Their frustrations were not rooted in entitlement but in

the dissonance between their sacred labour and the ecclesiastical silence that surrounds it. What emerges, therefore, is not only a sociological imbalance but a theological dislocation—a gap between the Adventist commitment to equality in Christ and the operational culture on the ground in Laikipia–Samburu.

Furthermore, the data revealed an institutional pattern of what might be termed *gendered role compression*. Women's work is compressed into the nurturing, auxiliary, and supportive corners of church life, even as they possess the qualifications and spiritual gifts to serve in more expansive leadership roles. The gendered boundaries around the pulpit, the treasury, and the eldership function as both cultural and theological constructions—propped up by tradition, protected by unspoken policy, and justified through selective scriptural interpretation. This chapter, then, provides not only documentation of women's active roles but a mirror to the church's spiritual conscience: Can a church that thrives on women's labour afford to exclude their leadership?

By establishing this empirical baseline, the chapter accomplishes two key objectives. First, it counters any residual notion that women are disengaged or disinterested in church leadership. On the contrary, women are present, informed, active, and deeply invested in the spiritual and administrative life of the church. Second, it exposes the segmentation of authority—a silent architecture where participation does not equate to power. This segmentation is not formally legislated but operates with near-unquestioned regularity, suggesting that cultural norms have been naturalized as sacred order. Understanding this silent scaffolding is crucial for any attempt to reimagine gender dynamics within the Church.

As we transition to the next chapter, the focus will shift from descriptive participation to structural interrogation. Chapter Two will explore the internal organization of the Seventh-day Adventist leadership hierarchy in Laikipia–Samburu Station. Specifically, it will examine how the constitution, nomination processes, and leadership cultures reproduce gender disparities. In doing so, the study moves from observing the surface of participation to probing the skeleton beneath—the frameworks that define who is authorized to lead, who is supported to ascend, and who remains confined to the margins. If Chapter One maps the *what* and *where* of women's church involvement, Chapter Two will probe the *how* and *why* of their continued marginalization in Adventist leadership.

CHAPTER THREE
STRUCTURE AND OPERATION OF THE LEADERSHIP HIERARCHY IN THE SDA CHURCH IN LAIKIPIA–SAMBURU STATION

3.1. Introduction

Leadership structures in religious institutions play a vital role in shaping governance, doctrinal consistency, and the participation of believers. In churches such as the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, leadership is not only a mechanism for administration but also an embodiment of theological interpretation, ecclesiastical authority, and cultural expectations. The organization of leadership, from the local church to the conference and union levels, influences the flow of communication, delegation of responsibilities, and the transmission of core values. Understanding the structure and functioning of leadership is thus key to grasping how decisions are made, who makes them, and how such decisions affect the daily life and spiritual experience of members

The SDA Church is globally renowned for its structured and hierarchical leadership model, characterized by a well-defined chain of command that begins at the local church and extends upward to the General Conference. In Kenya, the church mirrors this global structure with minor contextual modifications that reflect the local sociocultural and administrative realities. The Laikipia–Samburu Station, located within the Central Kenya Conference, follows this standardized model, with clearly delineated levels of leadership including pastors, church elders, departmental heads, and various committees. Each level serves a unique function, ensuring both spiritual oversight and administrative efficiency.[348]

This leadership structure is designed to uphold the Adventist philosophy of order, accountability, and global unity in faith and practice. The local church operates under a Church Board and a body of elders, while pastors oversee multiple congregations. These roles are framed by the Church Manual and supported by various policy docu-

[348] General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 20th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference, 2021), 66–75.

ments and ecclesiastical practices that reinforce a strong institutional culture. The structure, while functional, also reflects theological assumptions about spiritual authority, gender roles, and spiritual gifts, which in turn shape who gets to lead and in what capacity.[349]

The operation of leadership in the Laikipia–Samburu Station reflects a blend of formal policy and informal culture. While the SDA Church Manual provides a uniform guide to leadership roles and processes, the implementation of this structure on the ground is influenced by contextual dynamics such as cultural traditions, leadership personalities, and local congregational needs. The hierarchical framework is not static; rather, it operates as a lived experience that involves negotiation, interpretation, and adaptation within local realities.

This chapter sets out to examine this structure and its operation not as a rigid bureaucracy but as a lived ecclesiastical system that affects church life on multiple levels. By focusing on the Laikipia–Samburu Station, the study uncovers how leadership operates within real congregations, where theory meets practice. It is within this operational terrain that key questions about inclusion, authority, and participation—particularly of women—begin to take shape. The aim here is not simply to map the hierarchy, but to understand how it functions and how its operation reflects both Adventist doctrine and socio-cultural influences in this particular context.

This chapter addresses the second objective of the study: to analyse the structure and operation of the leadership hierarchy in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station. Drawing on the church constitution, interviews with elders and administrators, and observations of administrative meetings, this chapter maps the ecclesiastical structure and highlights how it shapes decision-making. The SDA governance system is ostensibly democratic and representative; however, qualitative findings reveal a layered hierarchy where gender, clerical status, and informal traditions

[349] Barry Oliver, *Leadership in the Church: Adventist Ecclesiology in Historical and Theological Perspective* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2001), 143–149.

influence authority distribution. The analysis proceeds by outlining the official hierarchy assessing actual operations in church boards, exploring how elections are conducted (Section 2.2.3), and evaluating informal power dynamics.

3.2. Official Leadership Structure

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is globally renowned for its well-structured and orderly ecclesiastical hierarchy.[350] The Church's governance model is structured into five administrative levels: the General Conference, Divisions, Unions, Conferences or Fields, and local churches. Each level maintains accountability to the one above it, but decision-making is decentralized to ensure local relevance. Within this framework, the Laikipia–Samburu Station operates as part of the East-Central Africa Division, under the Kenya Union Conference and the Central Rift Valley Conference. At the base are the local churches, which are grouped into administrative districts overseen by district pastors, and coordinated through the Station Executive Committee. These structures, though designed to function uniformly, are often mediated by local cultural dynamics.

Each local church within the Laikipia–Samburu Station elects a team of officers through a nominating committee process convened annually or biennially. These officers include elders, deacons, deaconesses, and leaders of various departments such as Women's Ministries, Youth, Sabbath School, Health, and Family Life. According to the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, the primary qualifications for leadership include faithfulness, spiritual maturity, and a willingness to serve. Gender is not listed as a determining factor.[351] Yet in practice, cultural biases often influence the outcomes of nominating committees, as positions of spiritual authority continue to be dominated by men.

At the local level, the First Elder holds significant influence. Though a layperson, the First Elder functions almost pastorally. He coordinates Sabbath programs, chairs the

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[350] Max Weber, *The Theory Of Social And Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1947), 324–326.
[351] Nkonge, Davidson. *Church Governance and Leadership in African Contexts*. Nairobi: Uzima Publishing House, 2018, 87–90.

church board, and represents the local church in interactions with the district pastor and the wider conference. In many congregations, the First Elder is the face of the church during both spiritual and administrative events. Below him are other elders and departmental leaders. Women, though present as departmental heads, are generally concentrated in ministries aligned with caregiving and support—such as Dorcas, Women's Ministries, or Health Ministries. The few women who ascend to higher roles often face resistance, not based on doctrinal objections, but on deeply rooted patriarchal norms. This gap between policy and practice is particularly evident during nominating processes**.** Evans Mwangi**,** a long-serving male elder in Nyahururu, reflected on the cultural perceptions that shape leadership appointments:

> "Though the Manual talks of spiritual gifts, many churches prefer men as leaders because they see leadership as masculine. They say it needs firmness, authority, and visibility—qualities they don't associate with women, even when the women are better qualified."[352]

His statement exemplifies the silent filter through which many female candidates are screened out—not because they lack skill or calling, but because of gendered assumptions. This disjuncture is a clear instance of how theology and culture interact, sometimes in contradiction to stated Church policy.

The nominating committee, despite its democratic ideal, often replicates existing hierarchies. As it is usually composed of elders and department heads (mostly male), it reproduces the same gendered dynamics it ought to reform. Female members of the nominating committee—where present—often find their voices sidelined. Naomi Mwangi**,** a Women's Ministries leader in Kinamba, recalled:

> "When the nominating committee met, we gave our suggestions. But when it came to choosing elders or the First Elder, the room changed. It was as if women couldn't even be imagined in those roles. You could see the discomfort."[353]

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[352] Wambui Chege, Oral Interview, Nyahururu Central, March 4, 2024.
[353] Oral Interview, Naomi Mwangi, Kinamba, 18th May 2024

This exclusionary pattern has historical antecedents. In colonial and early post-colonial Adventist missions in Kenya, leadership training was primarily directed at men. Women, though engaged as Bible workers and teachers, were rarely groomed for elder roles. The legacy of this model persists, even as global Adventism increasingly affirms women's leadership. In Laikipia–Samburu, the inertia of patriarchal ecclesiology remains strong.

Leadership training at the Station level also reflects this imbalance. While workshops and retreats are held periodically for departmental leaders, few of these initiatives address gender inclusivity or target the advancement of women into top roles. Training is often logistical—covering budgeting, calendar planning, and report writing—but avoids deeper discussions on shared authority or spiritual equality. As a result, the structural status quo is preserved through the very mechanisms that should challenge it.

Interestingly, even when women exhibit exceptional administrative competence, their elevation is framed as an exception rather than a precedent**.** Ruth Mugweru, who served as a church clerk for seven consecutive years in Rumuruti, recounted the skepticism she encountered:

> "They said, 'You are doing well, but it's not usual for a woman to handle such sensitive records.' One elder asked if I had a husband to help me. I laughed. My husband doesn't even attend regularly."[354]

Her experience highlights how marital status and domestic stereotypes still factor into leadership credibility. In this way, personal circumstances become filters for ecclesial opportunity, with women subject to a scrutiny that their male counterparts rarely face.

A closer reading of the *Church Manual* reveals theological space for more inclusive leadership. The Manual affirms the equality of believers in spiritual gifts and stresses

[354] Ruth Mugweru, Oral Interview, Rumuruti Central, January 28, 2024.

that local congregations have authority to elect leaders best suited to their needs.3 However, this potential remains unrealized when local interpretations default to tradition rather than text. As Pastor Isaac Orina, a district pastor in Laikipia, remarked:

> "The Manual is clear, but interpretation is local. If the congregation is conservative, even the Manual can't change their minds. It needs teaching, not just printing."[355]

His comment points to a vital insight: policy change without cultural transformation is ineffective. Real change requires theological education, gender-sensitive leadership development, and a willingness to confront ecclesial bias.[356]

Eldership, the gateway to most higher leadership roles, remains largely male-dominated. In the 2023 appointment cycle across ten churches in Laikipia–Samburu, only three women were elected as elders, and none as First Elders. This is despite the presence of numerous women serving as Sabbath School superintendents and financial secretaries—roles requiring equal or greater administrative skill. This underrepresentation is not a matter of interest or competency, but of access and invitation.[357]

Furthermore, language used during church elections subtly reinforces these exclusions. Phrases like "we need a strong hand," "we need a commanding presence," or "this position needs authority" are often invoked to justify male selection. These descriptors reflect a masculinized view of leadership that excludes the gentler yet effective approaches many women bring to ministry. The rhetorical framing around leadership must be challenged if the Church is to embody its theological commitment to the priesthood of all believers.[358]

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[355] Isaac Mwangi, Oral Interview, Laikipia East District, March 6, 2024.
[356] Nderitu, Alice. *Leadership Language and Gender Norms in African Churches.* Eldoret: Moi University Press, 2020, 47–50.
[357] Gaitskell, Deborah. *Devout Domesticity? Women and Mission in South Africa.* Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004, 132–135.
[358] Kimani, D. "Training without Transformation: A Critique of Lay Leadership Workshops." *East African Journal of Practical Theology* 5, no. 2 (2021): 59–72.

Departmental heads, while essential to church function, often operate with limited autonomy. Budgets are typically controlled by the board, where women are underrepresented. This results in a cycle where women lead programs but depend on male-dominated boards for approval and resources. Lillian Kimani, a Family Life leader in Nyahururu, shared:

> "You propose a program, then wait. They discuss it without you. Sometimes it's approved, sometimes not. But you're never part of that decision. So you lead, but not really."[359]

Her experience illustrates a form of delegated leadership that lacks authority—an illusion of empowerment within a tightly controlled system. The Station Executive Committee, which oversees district-wide planning, has only one woman among its eleven members as of 2024, reinforcing the top-heavy gender imbalance.

Ultimately, the leadership structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station reflects a tension between constitutional possibility and cultural practice. The official framework offers space for inclusive leadership, but implementation remains filtered through local norms that prioritize male authority. The path forward lies not in dismantling the structure but in reforming its interpretation and application through intentional theological education, transparent nomination processes, and affirming policies that recognize and elevate female leadership.

3.3. Election and Nomination Processes

The processes of leadership selection within the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church are codified in a structured and well-documented nominating system, designed to reflect spiritual discernment, democratic participation, and congregational consensus. According to the Church Manual, the nominating committee is tasked with prayerfully identifying suitable candidates for various church offices, including elders, deacons, departmental heads, and clerks. This process is meant to ensure fairness, promote broad

[359] Lilian Kimani, Oral Interview, Nyahururu South, February 2, 2024.

participation, and reflect the collective spiritual convictions of the church body. In principle, it allows for rotation in leadership and the inclusion of previously underrepresented groups, including women and youth.[360]

However, evidence from Laikipia–Samburu Station indicates that the practical implementation of this process often falls short of its egalitarian ideals. Qualitative data drawn from interviews, meeting records, and observational notes reveal that the nomination process tends to reinforce existing hierarchies rather than disrupt them. Church leadership appointments, particularly at higher levels such as First Elder, overwhelmingly favor incumbents and candidates drawn from established male networks. These individuals are often perceived as tried-and-tested leaders, and their reappointment is commonly justified in terms of experience, authority, and continuity. While such attributes may indeed be valuable, the overemphasis on incumbency can stifle innovation, block inclusivity, and discourage new leadership trajectories—particularly for women.[361]

The selection of members to serve on the nominating committee itself often mirrors the prevailing power structure of the local congregation. Most committee members are elders or departmental leaders—positions already dominated by men. Consequently, the nominating process becomes a closed loop in which those with influence reproduce themselves. This not only limits women's access to leadership positions but also reduces the likelihood of alternative leadership models gaining legitimacy. While women may occasionally serve on nominating committees, they are often in the minority and may lack the social capital to shift the direction of discussions. Their contributions, though valued in rhetoric, are sometimes sidelined in practice. This challenge is poignantly illustrated in an oral interview with a female elder in the district:

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[360] *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 19th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2022), 71–74.
[361] Wanjiru, M. "Gender and Church Leadership: A Study of the Adventist Context in Kenya." *Journal of African Ecclesial Studies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 53–57.

> "They include us in the nominating committee, but we are two among ten. When we suggest a woman for First Elder, they say, 'It has never happened'.[362]

Her experience underscores a significant barrier: the invocation of precedent as justification for exclusion. The phrase "It has never happened" reflects a logic that equates tradition with appropriateness. In such a context, historical absence becomes a rationale for continued omission, creating a self-reinforcing cycle that renders change nearly impossible without external intervention.

A systematic review of local church board records from 2015 to 2024 across eight churches within the Laikipia–Samburu Station further supports this pattern. In this ten-year period, not a single woman has been appointed to the position of First Elder. Although women have served in other leadership capacities—including Sabbath School superintendents, treasurers, and Women's Ministries directors—the top tier of lay leadership remains exclusively male. This continuity of male occupancy at the apex of lay leadership illustrates how election procedures, while democratic in appearance, can perpetuate entrenched hierarchies.[363]

Moreover, the lack of female representation at the top impacts perceptions of spiritual authority and legitimacy. Congregants, especially in more conservative areas, often associate religious leadership with male figures, reinforcing the notion that women are better suited for supportive or nurturing roles rather than decision-making positions. The result is a culture in which capable women are reluctant to put themselves forward, and congregations are hesitant to endorse them even when they do.

This dynamic also reflects broader societal norms within the region, where leadership—both in religious and secular spaces—is often construed as a male domain.[5] Consequently, church culture and local tradition reinforce each other, creating a double-bind for aspiring female leaders. Even when church policy supports gender inclusivity, cultural hesitation undermines its implementation. The nomination process becomes a site

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[362] Oral Interview with Female Elder, Laikipia–Samburu Station, March 3, 2024.
[363] Central Rift Valley Conference (CRVC) Church Board Reports, 2015–2024. Unpublished Archives, Nyahururu.

where ecclesiology and sociology intersect—often to the detriment of equity and inclusion.[364]

Ultimately, the election and nomination procedures in the SDA churches of Laikipia–Samburu Station remain a paradox. Though procedurally sound and spiritually grounded, they are often used in ways that sustain the status quo. For substantive progress to be achieved, the Church must not only review its policies but also critically examine how these policies are operationalized in local contexts. Greater transparency, intentional diversity in nominating committees, and consistent education on the theology of shared leadership are necessary steps toward a more inclusive future.

3.4. Informal Power Dynamics

While the formal leadership structure of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church is highly codified and procedurally governed, a parallel set of informal power dynamics often determines the actual flow of influence within local congregations. These dynamics are not written into policy documents or manuals but are deeply embedded in the everyday social and relational fabric of church life. Informal power—often exercised through pastoral authority, kinship ties, and tribal affiliations—plays a pivotal role in shaping decisions around appointments, conflict resolution, program priorities, and even church discipline.[365]

One of the most significant sources of informal authority in the SDA Church is the role of the pastor. Although pastors in Laikipia–Samburu Station are not permanently stationed at individual churches—due to the district model of oversight—their ordained status and symbolic connection to the Conference office grant them considerable power.[366] In practice, a pastor's opinion can override local decisions, even when he

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[364] Mwaura, Philomena. "Gender and Ecclesial Power: Challenges of Women Leadership in African Christianity." *Theology in Africa Today* 6, no. 2 (2017): 36–39

[365] Davidson Nkonge, *Church Governance and Leadership In African Contexts* (Nairobi: Uzima Publishing House, 2018), 94–97.

[366] Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 19th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2022), 73–76.

visits infrequently. This is particularly evident in moments of dispute or leadership contention, where his theological training and institutional backing make him the de facto arbitrator. His words, often delivered during quarterly visits or special convocations, are viewed not merely as administrative guidance but as spiritually authoritative verdicts.

This dynamic is exemplified by a conflict that occurred at Kinamba Church, where two local elders clashed over proposed changes to the Sabbath worship format. Despite weeks of unresolved tension among local leaders, the issue was swiftly settled during the pastor's quarterly visit. His intervention, brief but decisive, aligned with the more senior elder's position, effectively closing the matter without further discussion. Ruth Kemunto, a departmental leader in Kinamba, commented on the incident:

> "The pastor may visit once in three months, but his voice carries more weight than ours who are here every week."[367]

This quote highlights the hierarchical nature of informal influence in the church. Although local leaders are responsible for week-to-week operations, their authority is often provisional, subject to the pastor's overarching judgment. The pastor thus functions not only as a spiritual leader but as an informal power broker whose opinions—explicit or implied—guide decisions even in his absence.

In addition to clerical authority, kinship and tribal affiliations play a significant, though less openly acknowledged, role in shaping leadership dynamics. Laikipia–Samburu Station encompasses a diverse population that includes Kikuyu, Samburu, Turkana, Kalenjin, and other ethnic groups. While the Church advocates for unity in diversity

[367] Oral Interview, Ruth Kemunto, Oral Interview, Kinamba Church, February 25, 2024.[5]

and the spiritual equality of all members, cultural loyalties and ethnic alliances frequently surface in leadership deliberations.[368] These ties may influence who is nominated for leadership positions, how resources such as tithes and development funds are allocated, and how conflicts are adjudicated.

For example, in some congregations, it is not uncommon for certain family names to dominate leadership rosters for extended periods, creating dynastic leadership patterns. These informal dynasties often enjoy the implicit support of congregants who share similar ethnic or kinship identities.[369] While this may contribute to internal cohesion among certain groups, it can also marginalize members from minority communities or those without strong family networks in the church. This undercurrent of tribalism undermines the Church's stated commitment to fairness, meritocracy, and spiritual giftedness as the sole criteria for leadership.

Moreover, in disciplinary matters, decisions are sometimes perceived as biased, depending on the ethnic identity or family status of the accused. Cases involving prominent families may be handled with more leniency or discretion than those involving less influential members. These disparities, while often subtle, erode trust in church governance and challenge the notion of impartial pastoral care. The lack of transparency in such processes contributes to a perception that church leadership operates on two levels: the formal, public one articulated in Church manuals, and the informal, relational one governed by personal ties and social capital.[370]

The SDA Church Manual calls for the highest standards of integrity, equity, and impartiality in leadership. However, when informal dynamics supersede formal procedures, the credibility of leadership is called into question. Congregants who perceive the system as unjust may become disengaged, especially when they feel that merit, spirituality, and service do not guarantee access to leadership opportunities. This disengagement, in

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[368] John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Heinemann, 1990), 179–182.
[369] Wambui, Rachel. "Ethnicity and Lay Church Leadership in Rural Kenya: A Case Study of Power and Kinship." *Journal of African Christian Studies* 12, no. 2 (2021): 41–53.
[370] Mwaura, Philomena. "The Politics of Discipline: Clergy, Gender, and Ethnicity in African Churches." *Theology in Africa Today 7*, no. 1 (2020): 58–67.

turn, weakens community cohesion and spiritual growth, creating an environment where cynicism and resignation replace active participation.[371]

In sum, informal power dynamics in the SDA churches of Laikipia–Samburu Station present a complex challenge to leadership equity and institutional integrity. While these dynamics are not inherently negative—pastoral authority can provide needed stability, and kinship networks often foster mutual support—they must be critically examined and moderated to prevent exclusion, favoritism, and the erosion of fairness. Church leaders and members alike must commit to greater transparency, cross-cultural sensitivity, and intentional inclusivity to ensure that the principles enshrined in official policy are reflected in everyday practice.

3.5. Chapter Conclusion

The leadership structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station exemplifies a dual reality: a formally codified ecclesiastical hierarchy alongside deeply entrenched informal practices. At the heart of this system is a tiered administrative model—rooted in the global structure of the denomination—that outlines clear channels of governance from the General Conference down to the local church. On paper, this arrangement appears rational, participatory, and spiritually grounded. It offers mechanisms for democratic election, encourages lay participation, and is ostensibly gender-inclusive. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, the lived experience of church governance in the Laikipia–Samburu context reveals a more nuanced and, at times, exclusionary framework.

In practice, leadership roles—particularly those associated with visibility and decision-making authority—are disproportionately held by men. This is despite the Church Manual's theological insistence on the spiritual equality of all believers and the emphasis on spiritual gifts as the basis for service. The persistence of male dominance in positions such as First Elder, the overwhelming male composition of nominating committees, and the marginalization of women's voices during elections and board meetings all

[371] Mwaura, Philomena. "The Politics of Discipline: Clergy, Gender, and Ethnicity in African Churches." *Theology in Africa Today* 7, no. 1 (2020): 58–67.

point to an undercurrent of gendered exclusion. These outcomes are not necessarily dictated by policy, but by local interpretations of leadership, shaped by patriarchal traditions, societal norms, and implicit cultural assumptions about authority and gender roles.

Furthermore, the influence of informal power structures—particularly the elevated authority of itinerant pastors, kinship-based alliances, and ethnic affiliations—further complicates the participatory ideals of Adventist governance. Pastors, though not stationed full-time at local congregations, often wield decisive influence that can override the contributions of local leaders. Their authority, reinforced by their ordination and institutional backing, often determines the direction of church debates, the settlement of disputes, and the interpretation of policies. Similarly, informal networks built around tribal identity or family lineage affect decisions about leadership appointments and resource distribution. These influences are seldom acknowledged in official church documents, but they remain powerful forces in shaping outcomes.

These dual layers of authority—formal and informal—intersect to create a leadership environment that is both structured and selectively permeable. For some, particularly male incumbents or those within dominant ethnic or familial circles, this environment offers stability, continuity, and influence. For others—especially women, young members, and those outside these networks—it presents barriers that are subtle but persistent. The gap between policy and practice not only undermines the church's professed commitment to justice and equality but also limits its ability to harness the full spiritual and administrative gifts of its members. In doing so, it risks stalling the growth and vitality of the local church.

As this chapter has shown, understanding leadership in the SDA Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station requires attention not just to the formal structure outlined in church manuals, but also to the unspoken rules and cultural logics that govern ecclesiastical life. Leadership is shaped not only by what is written but by what is practiced—by who gets heard, who gets chosen, and who is believed to embody authority. The next chapter will explore how these structural and cultural dynamics affect women's participation in church leadership. It will critically examine the tensions between theological ideals and local realities, shedding light on the ways in which gendered exclusion persists—and

how it might be challenged—in pursuit of a more equitable and inclusive church community.

CHAPTER FOUR
INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP HIERARCHY ON WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SDA CHURCH IN LAIKIPIA–SAMBURU STATION

4.1. Introduction

The organization of leadership within any religious institution significantly shapes the scope and nature of participation by its members. In the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church, leadership operates through a well-structured hierarchical system—from the General Conference at the top, down through divisions, unions, conferences, stations, districts, and finally to local churches.[372] This pyramidical structure is designed to maintain order, doctrinal consistency, and global coordination. However, it also embeds decision-making power at the top levels, which are often dominated by men, thus influencing the nature and extent of women's participation at every tier.[373] The Laikipia–Samburu Station, as a local administrative unit within this global church structure, reflects this framework with its own localized expressions of gendered leadership dynamics.

The placement of women within this leadership hierarchy is not solely a matter of policy but also of culture and interpretation. While the SDA Church globally affirms the spiritual equality of all believers,[3] the practical distribution of leadership opportunities reflects historical and theological conservatism. In Laikipia–Samburu Station, women are rarely found in top-ranking positions such as pastors, station directors, or district leaders. Most occupy departmental roles like Sabbath School teachers, Women's Ministries coordinators, and deaconesses. These positions, though critical to church life, are

[372] General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church Manual*, 20th ed. (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference, 2021), 25–29.
[373] Kidane Gebremeskel, "Leadership and Gender in the Adventist Church: A Missiological Perspective," *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies* 6, no. 2 (2010): 45–59.

typically classified as auxiliary or supportive rather than executive or doctrinally authoritative. The leadership hierarchy, therefore, becomes both a gatekeeper and a filter, determining who rises to influence and who remains at the periphery.

The hierarchical structure also affects how leadership roles are filled and who is deemed fit to occupy them. Ordination—typically required for pastoral and elder leadership—is largely reserved for men within this station, as in most parts of the SDA Church.[374] Because the process of nomination and appointment flows from higher to lower levels, often with limited local input, the preferences and biases of senior male leaders significantly shape leadership outcomes. In interviews, some women noted that even when they demonstrated competence and spiritual commitment, they were overlooked for key roles due to "lack of ordination" or being "unfit by gender."[375] This exclusion is not always overt but is often rationalized through tradition, interpretations of scripture, or fear of disrupting the perceived order of church leadership.

At the same time, the influence of leadership hierarchy on women's participation is not only about positions but also about visibility, voice, and validation. In congregational meetings, women's suggestions may be deferred to men for confirmation. In decision-making, women may serve as committee members but rarely as chairpersons or final decision-makers. This creates a layered effect, where women contribute actively but remain institutionally invisible. One lay elder confessed during an interview: "We rely heavily on women to run the programs, but when it comes to elections, we remember that leadership is 'the man's domain.'" This attitude reinforces a gendered leadership pipeline, where authority is vertical and male, while participation is horizontal and female.

Moreover, the leadership hierarchy plays a role in shaping theological discourse around gender and ministry. Because most preaching and teaching roles are led by men in

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[374] Galatians 3:28 (NIV): "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
[375] North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, *Position Paper on Women in Ministry*, 2015.

higher offices, theological interpretations that support gendered leadership are reinforced from the pulpit to policy. In several observed sermons and training meetings, reference was made to "headship" models drawn from Pauline epistles to justify the exclusion of women from authoritative positions. Such teachings, when repeated frequently by those in leadership, acquire the force of doctrine even if they are not explicitly stated in policy. The result is a self-perpetuating structure where women's subordination becomes normalized through religious rationalization.

Nevertheless, there are subtle shifts and silent resistances. Some local churches have begun assigning women to lead departments traditionally reserved for men, such as stewardship or family life ministries. Women have also led prayer revivals and youth conferences with considerable success. Though these actions are not officially positioned as structural changes, they demonstrate a creeping redefinition of leadership roles from the bottom up. This phenomenon—what one respondent termed "leading from behind the curtain"—suggests that while the hierarchy continues to shape participation, it is also being quietly challenged and renegotiated by women within the faith community.

This chapter interrogates the third objective of the study, namely, the extent to which the leadership hierarchy in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church influences women's participation in Laikipia–Samburu Station. While the previous chapters have explored the forms of participation and the structural operations of the SDA hierarchy, this chapter focuses on the intersection of these elements and how the formal organization either facilitates or inhibits female involvement in church leadership. It examines both the ideological and structural mechanisms of the hierarchy, including ecclesiastical policy, cultural norms, and doctrinal interpretation. The analysis is grounded on primary data collected through interviews and observations, with supportive references from secondary sources.

4.2. Structural Constraints and Gendered Ecclesiastical Spaces

The leadership structure of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station is officially designed to reflect a spiritual meritocracy, where leadership is based on faithfulness, service, and spiritual gifting. However, empirical evidence and qualitative interviews suggest that this meritocratic ideal is heavily mediated by gendered

norms that constrain women's participation, especially in decision-making and hierarchical leadership roles. Despite policy documents such as the Church Manual affirming equal participation of all believers in the mission and ministry of the church, the practical implementation of these ideals at the local level falls short, particularly in rural settings where cultural conservatism remains strong. The hierarchical ecclesiastical ladder, from local church to conference and union levels, is predominantly male-occupied, thus limiting the visibility and influence of women in strategic church leadership.

Throughout the Laikipia–Samburu Station, a consistent narrative emerged from female church workers, indicating that while women are active and visible in various ministry departments, they remain largely excluded from key decision-making bodies such as church boards, nomination committees, and executive councils. In these contexts, women are perceived as "supportive leaders," rather than as visionary or directive leaders. One departmental leader from Kinamba Church articulated this disparity during an interview, expressing a common sentiment across the station:

> "You find that we women are trusted with duties like Dorcas or children's ministries, but when it comes to positions like church elder or pastor, the system is not friendly to us. We serve faithfully, but when decisions are being made, our voices disappear." [376]

Her statement captures the paradox of women's roles within the SDA Church structure—they are indispensable to church life but often marginalized from ecclesiastical authority. The visibility of women in nurturing roles creates an illusion of inclusivity, yet their absence from high-level leadership reinforces their marginalization.

Central to the structural barriers is the issue of ordination. According to the *Church Manual*, roles such as pastor or elder require ordination, a practice that remains highly contested in the SDA Church globally and is strongly resisted in the Kenyan context.[1] While the global Church has allowed local congregations to ordain women elders since

[376] Oral Interview, Mary Wangari, Kinamba Church, February 25, 2024.

1975,[2] this provision is rarely implemented in conservative regions like Laikipia–Samburu. The justification for this resistance often blends scriptural literalism with cultural traditionalism, making it difficult to discern where theology ends and local patriarchy begins. Many male respondents invoked passages such as 1 Timothy 2:12 or 1 Corinthians 14:34 to argue that church leadership is divinely mandated to be male.

Yet, deeper analysis reveals that resistance is more cultural than theological. A church elder from Rumuruti offered an insightful, if inadvertent, confession of this cultural inertia:

> "It is not that the Bible forbids women from leadership, it is just that our people are not ready. If a woman stands to preach or lead, many will leave the church. It is about what the community can accept." —Oral Interview, Elias Kamau, Rumuruti Central, January 28, 2024.

This admission suggests that doctrinal arguments often serve as proxies for cultural discomfort, and that community acceptance becomes the ultimate criterion for leadership eligibility—regardless of a person's spiritual qualifications. The conflation of cultural norms with scriptural mandates not only hinders women's progression but also shields the status quo from critical theological reflection.

Scholars such as Musa W. Dube and Phyllis Trible have long argued that gendered interpretations of Scripture reflect patriarchal cultures more than biblical imperatives. Dube notes that many African churches use the Bible "selectively to affirm male headship, ignoring texts that promote equality or mutuality."[3] Similarly, Trible insists on a "hermeneutics of equality," where texts must be read through the lens of justice, particularly for historically excluded groups.[4] In Laikipia–Samburu, however, these liberative readings have yet to inform local church discourse in any substantive way.

Compounding these theological constraints are the practical barriers within the church's internal governance processes. The nominating committee system, designed to be democratic, often reproduces existing power imbalances. Committees tend to be composed largely of elders and departmental heads—roles predominantly held by men. Even when women are included in the nominating process, they are often outnumbered and

their suggestions sidelined. As Naomi Njeri, a long-serving Women's Ministries leader in Nyahururu, recalled:

> "I was part of the nominating committee last year. We were two women in a room of ten. When I proposed a woman for First Elder, some laughed. One said, 'We are not in America.' That ended the discussion."[377]

Her experience underscores how informal norms shape formal processes. Rather than evaluating candidates based on character or service, leadership selection becomes a performance of gendered expectation, where tradition trumps talent and precedent stifles progress.

The structural barriers are further reinforced by the lack of institutional pathways for women to ascend the ranks of leadership. In the SDA Church, theological education is a key pipeline to senior leadership. Yet in Laikipia–Samburu, few women have access to formal training at institutions such as Baraton University or the Adventist University of Africa. Financial limitations, family responsibilities, and lack of encouragement from local churches contribute to this disparity.[5] Consequently, the absence of qualified female theologians becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy—used to justify continued male dominance. Even among women who are highly educated or have years of experience in church work, structural exclusions persist. Ruth Chebet, a church clerk in Rumuruti, explained how leadership is gendered not only in function but in perception:

> "They say I'm good with records, but that leadership needs a man. One elder told me that I'm too soft for serious decisions. But when they needed someone to coordinate the conference budget report, they called me."[378]

Her account reveals the contradictory nature of expectations placed on women—they are entrusted with tasks requiring high competence but denied the authority that should accompany such responsibility. Additionally, informal mechanisms such as pulpit rhet-

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[377] Oral Interview, Nyahururu South, February 2, 2024.
[378] Oral Interview, Rumuruti Central, January 28, 2024.

oric, community gossip, and even song selection contribute to the reinforcement of gendered roles. In several churches, preachers have warned against "confusion" in leadership if women are allowed to preach or lead. Such statements, though not official policy, become powerful cultural texts that shape attitudes and stifle ambition.

The absence of female role models in senior church positions further limits young women's aspirations. Without examples of women serving as pastors, elders, or conference leaders, girls in SDA churches internalize the belief that leadership is a male domain. This symbolic exclusion is arguably as damaging as structural ones because it silently conditions women to remain in the background.[379]

Structural constraints also manifest in financial and programmatic restrictions. Even in departments where women lead, such as Women's Ministries, Health, and Dorcas, their autonomy is limited by male-dominated church boards. Budgets must be approved by boards that often reprioritize women's programs in favor of traditionally "masculine" initiatives such as infrastructure or evangelistic crusades.

As Lillian Wambui, a Family Life leader in Nyahururu, noted:

> "We spend weeks planning a program, but in the board meeting, it's discussed for five minutes and pushed to next quarter. When we insist, they say we are emotional. They approve what they want, not what the church needs."[380]

Her comment illustrates how power is maintained not only by who speaks but also by who listens, who decides, and who controls resources. Leadership is thus not simply a title—it is access to influence.

In the broader institutional context, the lack of policy enforcement mechanisms allows gender inequity to thrive unchecked. While the SDA Church affirms gender inclusivity at the General Conference level, local stations such as Laikipia–Samburu operate with

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[379] Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bibl*E (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 89–91.
[380] Oral Interview, Nyahururu South, February 2, 2024.

considerable autonomy, often shaping leadership practices around local customs rather than global policy.[381]

In sum, the structural constraints that define ecclesiastical life in Laikipia–Samburu Station are not accidental. They are the product of intersecting theological interpretations, cultural norms, institutional inertia, and patriarchal traditions. Unless intentional efforts are made to challenge and reform these structures, women in the SDA Church will remain symbolically visible but systemically excluded.

4.3. Decision-Making Forums and Women's Exclusion

One of the most persistent structural impediments to gender equity within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station is the exclusion of women from key decision-making bodies. These include church boards, nominating committees, and higher-level conference sessions. While the SDA Church emphasizes participatory governance through its manual and training documents, in practice, decision-making remains a deeply gendered enterprise. Observational data from board meetings in Rumuruti and Nyahururu revealed a consistent pattern: men dominated the deliberations, introduced motions, debated policies, and controlled the conclusion of agenda items, while women were largely confined to passive roles such as prayer, secretarial duties, or silent attendance.

This pattern of exclusion is not incidental but systemic, shaped by an ecclesiastical culture that equates spiritual authority and administrative competence with masculinity. Women's presence, though visible in terms of attendance, was rarely accompanied by speaking power or vote influence. In one board meeting observed in Rumuruti in 2024, only one out of twelve members who contributed to agenda deliberations was a woman. She spoke only once, and her suggestion on family life programming was deferred without discussion.(1) This micro-interaction typifies the broader exclusionary trend in church leadership dynamics.

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[381] Central Rift Valley Conference, "Laikipia–Samburu Station Executive Committee Minutes," Annual Report, 2023.

The marginalization of women in these forums is often justified by a logic of spiritual hierarchy, where male headship is assumed to be divinely sanctioned. However, this assumption contradicts the participatory ecclesiology promoted in the *Church Manual*, which stresses that "spiritual gifts are given to all believers regardless of gender."(2) Despite this theological foundation, churches in Laikipia–Samburu rarely operationalize these values in practice. A former church clerk from Nyahururu expressed this dissonance poignantly:

> "During nominating committee meetings, it is rare for a woman to be selected unless there is a deliberate effort to balance gender. And even then, the women included often don't say much—they're just there to show inclusivity."[382]

Her statement underscores how tokenistic gestures of inclusion can obscure deeper patterns of exclusion. When women are present without power or voice, their presence functions more to legitimize the process than to transform it.

Further analysis of leadership committee structures across three administrative districts—Laikipia East, Rumuruti, and Nyahururu—reinforced this observation. Out of ten committee charts reviewed between 2018 and 2023, only two featured women in positions outside the traditional bounds of Women's, Children's, or Dorcas Ministries.(3) Even in these exceptions, women's roles were subordinate, such as assistant secretaries or treasurers, and they often lacked voting rights on strategic financial or pastoral decisions.

These patterns reflect not merely numerical imbalances but an embedded patriarchal culture within the SDA Church's governance ethos. As feminist ecclesiologist Philomena Mwaura argues, "women's absence from key decision-making forums is not due to a lack of capacity, but a denial of legitimacy by the institutional structure."(4) This structural illegitimacy is reinforced through procedural design, where committees are formed by a prior set of male-dominated nominations, thereby reproducing exclusion in each cycle.

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[382] Elizabeth Munyiri, Oral Interview, Nyahururu Central, March 4, 2024.

In addition to official positions, control over the meeting environment itself contributes to exclusion. Men often sit closest to the presiding pastor or chair, speak first, and dominate agenda framing. Women, when they attend, are often physically marginal—sitting at the periphery of the room or arriving after the meeting has begun due to domestic obligations. These spatial cues reinforce their symbolic exclusion from the heart of church power.

Interestingly, even when women possess significant experience and theological knowledge, their contributions are minimized. Sister Joan, a trained theologian and Sabbath School director in Kinamba, recounted how her theological insights were dismissed during a church board meeting:

> "I quoted from the Spirit of Prophecy and the Bible, but someone said, 'That's not your place.' They told me I should focus on Sunday school. It was humiliating."[383]

Her experience reveals the deep gendered assumptions that continue to govern who is perceived as competent or authoritative in SDA forums. Women's knowledge is often tolerated in support roles but actively resisted when applied to governance. The cycle of exclusion is further maintained by the gendered distribution of mentorship and succession. Male leaders often mentor younger men, invite them into committee structures, and advocate for their inclusion. Women, on the other hand, lack sponsors within these circles, resulting in a leadership pipeline that disproportionately favors men. This structural disparity has long-term consequences, as it inhibits the development of experienced female leaders within the system.

Additionally, some male respondents justified exclusion by referring to traditional expectations of femininity and domesticity. One elder from Laikipia East remarked:

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[383] Shiffrkan, Oral Interview, Kinamba Church, February 25, 2024.

> "Women already have many duties at home. Adding leadership pressure to them would be unfair. It is better if they support men who are free to lead."[384]

This paternalistic logic masks exclusion under the guise of care, denying women the autonomy to define their own capacities or aspirations. It also ignores the many women who balance domestic responsibilities with professional or ministerial excellence.

Another critical factor is the language used in meetings. Phrases such as "we need a firm hand," "we need someone commanding," or "this is a spiritual warfare role" often signal an underlying preference for masculine traits. These rhetorical codes are not neutral—they frame leadership in a way that aligns with traditional male characteristics, thereby sidelining women's strengths such as empathy, collaboration, and emotional intelligence.

Moreover, theological framing in committee deliberations often supports male dominance. Some pastors use the language of "spiritual headship" to justify male-only representation in critical leadership forums. Yet, as Cheryl Bridges Johns has argued, such theology is culturally constructed and reflects historical patriarchy more than biblical mandate.[385] Without critical theological education, local churches in Laikipia–Samburu risk perpetuating ideologies that have little scriptural support.

Even in instances where conference leaders advocate for gender inclusion, their efforts often meet local resistance. One Central Rift Valley Conference official admitted that "some churches are so patriarchal, even mentioning women elders causes conflict."(6) This resistance highlights the disjuncture between policy aspiration and grassroots implementation. Until local churches embrace the theological and organizational legitimacy of women's leadership, top-down initiatives will remain symbolic.

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[384] Ken Wanjema, Oral Interview, Laikipia East, March 6, 2024.

[385] Philomena N. Mwaura, "Gender and Ecclesial Power: Challenges of Women Leadership in African Christianity," *Theology in Africa Today* 6, no. 2 (2017): 33–36.

The exclusion from decision-making also impacts the kinds of programs that receive funding or platform attention. Women's initiatives are often underfunded, postponed, or limited to internal church activities rather than public evangelism. This marginalization not only restricts women's influence but also narrows the Church's missional imagination. Crucially, this gendered governance culture affects younger generations. In several focus group discussions with youth, both male and female respondents perceived leadership as "a man's calling." Girls rarely saw female leaders to emulate, and boys expected to lead as a matter of ecclesiastical right. This socialization has generational consequences, reinforcing exclusion even before leadership aspirations can form.

In summary, the exclusion of women from decision-making forums within the SDA Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station is not simply about numbers—it reflects a systemic undervaluing of women's voice, agency, and leadership. From meeting room dynamics to mentorship structures, rhetorical language to theological framing, women face multiple layers of marginalization. Overcoming these barriers will require not just policy change but cultural reformation, theological retraining, and intentional mentorship of female leaders.

4.4. Theological Narratives and Policy Justifications

The role of theology in shaping, reinforcing, and justifying gendered leadership structures within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station is both profound and pervasive. Theological narratives are not merely expressions of spiritual belief; they are strategic tools of institutional continuity, often employed to uphold existing hierarchies. Throughout this study, it became evident that church leaders regularly invoke doctrinal language to justify gender exclusions, masking cultural norms behind the authority of Scripture. One respondent in Nyahururu stated emphatically:

> "Our doctrine does not support women ordination; we follow the General Conference guidelines."[386]

[386] Oral Interview, Elijah Kariuki, Nyahururu, March 4, 2024

This position, frequently echoed across various districts, reveals how institutional language is used to shut down further discussion on gender equality. Yet a closer reading of Adventist policy documents reveals that the General Conference, while cautious, does not categorically prohibit female ordination. Instead, it emphasizes unity and leaves certain decisions to the discretion of regional bodies.[1] This disconnect between global policy nuance and local doctrinal absolutism underscores the political nature of theological interpretation in Laikipia–Samburu.

What emerges in this context is a selective engagement with theology—one that amplifies restrictive readings while ignoring liberatory or egalitarian biblical interpretations. For example, Pauline texts such as 1 Timothy 2:12 ("I permit no woman to teach or to assume authority over a man") are frequently cited as definitive proof against women's leadership. However, scholars like Phyllis Trible have argued that such verses require nuanced hermeneutical engagement, including a contextual reading of first-century Greco-Roman gender norms. These alternative perspectives are seldom entertained in local SDA discourses, where biblical literalism tends to dominate. Rather than promote critical theological reflection, church leaders in Laikipia–Samburu often discourage questioning under the guise of doctrinal fidelity, reinforcing an unquestionable theological orthodoxy that disproportionately affects women.[387]

Beyond Scripture, policy justifications also play a crucial role in sustaining patriarchal leadership structures. Arguments such as maintaining church unity, preventing division, and preserving tradition are frequently mobilized to silence reformist voices. These arguments are often accepted uncritically, not because they are theologically superior, but because they provide institutional stability. In one group interview, a youth leader captured this sentiment:

> "Even if we want change, we are taught to obey the system first, then ask questions later."[388]

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[387] Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2000), 92–95.
[388] Oral Interview, David Nderitu, Nyahururu Youth Meeting, March 2024.

This culture of compliance is institutionalized through decades of leadership training, where hierarchical respect is emphasized over reflective theological engagement.[3] Women who challenge this system are frequently branded as feminists or rebels—labels that carry a negative connotation in conservative religious spaces and effectively discredit their spiritual legitimacy.[389]

This discrediting is compounded by a theological culture that often conflates obedience with holiness. In many SDA congregations in Laikipia–Samburu, questioning leadership decisions is framed not as intellectual engagement but as spiritual defiance. As a result, even when women are theologically trained and biblically literate, they are socialized to defer to male authority. Joan Wanjiru, a former Sabbath School superintendent in Kinamba and a diploma holder in theology, shared her experience:

> "I once quoted Ellen White on leadership, and the elder told me, 'You are reading too much. That's not for women to teach.'"[390]

Her voice, rooted in the same spiritual texts revered by the church, was dismissed not because of content, but because of gender. This indicates a deeper issue—where the problem is not what is said, but who is saying it.

Moreover, the appeal to global SDA policy as a deterrent to local innovation is deeply problematic. In reality, the Adventist Church worldwide is far from monolithic on gender matters. Divisions in North America, Europe, and parts of South America have either endorsed or actively debated the ordination of women.[4] The Columbia Union and the Pacific Union Conferences, for example, have moved forward with female ordination despite General Conference hesitations. This diversity reflects the contextual nature of theological application—a principle enshrined in Adventist ecclesiology, which allows divisions and unions significant latitude in policy adaptation.[391] That

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[389] Linda Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 111–119.
[390] Oral Interview, Kinamba, February 2024
[391] George R. Knight, *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom: Adventist Theology in Transition* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1995), 77. Cheryl Bridges Johns, "The Spirit and the Woman," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5, no. 2 (1997): 41–56.

Laikipia–Samburu leaders invoke the General Conference as a prohibitive body rather than a guiding one suggests a deliberate misreading, possibly motivated by local power preservation.

The tendency to invoke "unity" as a theological necessity to prevent female leadership raises further concern. In most church documents analyzed between 2015 and 2023, discussions around women's ordination or leadership inclusion were often marked by language such as "not advisable at this time," "risks causing division," or "awaiting global consensus." These deferrals serve a dual function—they prevent immediate conflict while delaying necessary theological confrontation. However, as theologian Musa Dube observes, "Postponing justice in the name of unity is itself an act of injustice."[7] In the Laikipia–Samburu context, this postponement becomes a permanent mechanism of exclusion.

Church leaders also invoke the principle of spiritual headship, rooted in the creation narratives of Genesis and Paul's epistles, to argue that men are divinely appointed to lead. These narratives are treated as prescriptive rather than descriptive, with little engagement in the socio-historical settings that shaped them. Yet feminist theologians like Linda Belleville argue that early Christian communities included women like Phoebe (Romans 16:1), Priscilla (Acts 18:26), and Junia (Romans 16:7), who held ministerial and apostolic authority.[392] These examples challenge the notion that spiritual leadership was exclusively male and invite a reimagining of gender roles in ministry.

Theological education—or more precisely, the lack of gender-inclusive theological training—plays a pivotal role in reinforcing male dominance. Many elders and pastors in Laikipia–Samburu received their training in local Adventist institutions that seldom incorporate gender hermeneutics. Consequently, their interpretations are often uncritical and deeply rooted in conservative readings of Scripture. Naomi Waceke, a church clerk in Rumuruti, stated:

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[392] Linda Belleville, *Women Leaders and the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 111–119.

> “Even when women attend leadership seminars, the sessions are about secretarial work or hospitality. You will never find a woman being trained on how to lead a church board.”[393]

Such differentiated training not only limits women’s exposure to leadership principles but also tacitly communicates that leadership is not their domain.

4.5. Resistance, Negotiation, and the Role of Informal Influence

Despite codified structures that limit women's access to formal ecclesiastical leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station, women have consistently carved out spaces of informal influence. These spaces—though unrecognized by the official church hierarchy—have allowed women to shape religious life, social cohesion, and even strategic decision-making in their congregations. Through prayer ministries, welfare departments, mentorship networks, and family-based influence, women assert forms of leadership that, while unofficial, are deeply embedded in community trust and respect. They are frequently the ones providing pastoral care, conflict mediation, spiritual mentorship, and logistical support in times of church crisis. As such, women operate as indispensable actors whose moral, relational, and spiritual authority sustains the lifeblood of congregational life.

Numerous interviewees recounted the ways women wield what may be termed "soft power"—a relational authority grounded in wisdom, emotional intelligence, and spiritual counsel rather than official ecclesiastical office. This influence is not symbolic; it is functional and often decisive. In Maralal, Salome Lekatoo Lempiris described the respect and reliance her mother commanded within their local church:

> "My mother has never been an elder, but she is the one people go to when they want advice, especially during conflicts. Even the elders consult her before making announcements about sensitive issues. When two families disagreed over burial rites last year, it was my mother who brought them together, even

[393] Naomi Waceke,Oral Interview, Rumuruti, February 2024.

> though the pastor was present. They said her words carried peace. That is the kind of influence we carry, but nobody sees it as leadership."[394]

Such informal authority illustrates how spiritual legitimacy can exist outside hierarchical positions. These women become de facto counselors, pastors, and decision-makers, operating within networks that are as effective as formal structures, particularly in moments of crisis. As Musimbi Kanyoro notes, "African women in religious institutions often become the moral compass of their communities, not through titles, but through tested spiritual resilience."[395]

These dynamics are particularly visible during church nomination periods. Although women are largely excluded from formal decision-making bodies such as nominating committees, many find ways to influence outcomes indirectly. In Rumuruti, Nancy Njeri Mwangi, a Dorcas leader, described how relationships cultivated over years with male elders and youth leaders allowed her to lobby informally for certain candidates:

> "We know we are not on the board, but we talk to those who are. If you build trust, support their events, and avoid conflicts, they will listen when you suggest someone. Last year, we proposed a young woman for assistant youth leader. I personally talked to two elders and one youth elder. They agreed. The girl was appointed. It doesn't always work, but that time it did."[396]

Her experience exemplifies how women practice behind-the-scenes diplomacy to shape church outcomes. This form of negotiation is, however, contingent and fragile. It relies on goodwill, networks, and relational capital rather than guaranteed structural access. As Mercy Amba Oduyoye cautions, "Women's ecclesiastical agency in African churches often exists at the mercy of male accommodation, not structural equity."[397]

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[394] Salome Lekatoo Lempiris, Oral Interview, Maralal Central, February 6, 2024.
[395] Musimbi Kanyoro and Nyambura J. Njoroge, *Ecumenical Review of Gender in Africa* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2006), 55
[396] Nancy Njeri Mwangi, Oral Interview, Rumuruti Township, February 10, 2024.
[397] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004), 39.

Yet, paradoxically, these informal spaces can both empower and constrain. By enabling women to act without challenging formal structures, the church effectively preserves male-dominated hierarchies. Women are valorized as spiritual mothers, prayer warriors, and peacemakers, but this symbolic reverence does not translate into positions of formal governance. Instead, it becomes a subtle mechanism of containment that legitimizes continued exclusion.

Still, many women are increasingly transforming these informal platforms into vehicles of theological and social resistance. In Nanyuki, a women's fellowship initiated a monthly Bible study series led exclusively by women. Over time, their sessions expanded to include discussions on gender-based violence, marriage rights, and reinterpretations of traditionally patriarchal scriptures. The meetings began drawing in younger women and even some men, despite lacking any formal endorsement. As Isabel Apawo Phiri notes, "Women's fellowships act as theological laboratories where suppressed voices reclaim interpretive authority."[398] This development reflects how informal spaces, once relegated to devotional support, are becoming sites of doctrinal contestation and grassroots empowerment.

In some instances, resistance manifests through collective non-participation. During a church crusade in Kinamba in 2024, women refused to organize catering after learning that no female members had been included in the planning committee. Margaret Wachira Ndiritu, one of the women involved, explained:

> "We are tired of doing all the work and being treated like we do not exist. We cook, we clean, we organize transport, but when it comes to being on stage or leading, they forget us. So we told them, this time, let the elders prepare their own food. It caused a stir, but they finally asked us what we wanted."[399]

This subtle protest challenged the assumption that women's labor is automatic and unconditional, and forced the leadership to reckon with the implications of symbolic

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[398] Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Theological Education and Gender Equality in Africa," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 110 (2001): 15–27.
[399] Margaret Wachira Ndiritu, Oral Interview, Kinamba East, February 18, 2024.

exclusion. Such actions align with James Scott's theory of "everyday resistance," where subaltern groups use non-confrontational means to disrupt dominant power structures.[400]

Women also use technology to foster theological critique and solidarity. WhatsApp groups, home fellowships, and informal Sabbath discussions have become spaces where gendered experiences of church life are dissected. In Nyahururu, women have debated the use of Pauline texts to exclude them from leadership, proposing alternative interpretations. One woman, Elizabeth Momanyi noted:

> "They always quote Paul to silence us, but we also read Deborah and Priscilla. God used women too. We are not asking to take over the church. We are saying, let us serve fully, not partially."[401]

Such reinterpretations, though informal, signal a hermeneutical shift. They represent a growing willingness among women to question theological justifications for inequality and assert their right to read and interpret Scripture. This resistance is doctrinal, not just social.

Importantly, women's informal influence extends into conflict mediation. In Wiyumiririe, older women are regularly invited to reconcile feuding church members. They are seen as neutral, empathetic, and spiritually grounded. During an interview, a male elder, Mwangi Charles, admitted:

> "We rely on older women when things are difficult. People listen to them, and they can calm down angry situations. If two families are not talking, we go to Mama Margaret or Mama Grace. They do what we can't."[402]

This testimonial underscores how deeply embedded and indispensable women's leadership is, even when it operates in the shadows. Despite their marginal status in

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[400] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), xvii.
[401] Elizabeth Momanyi, Oral Interview, Nyahururu North, February 4, 2024.
[402] Charles Mwangi, Oral Interview, Wiyumiririe West, February 6, 2024.

governance, they remain central to the moral and relational stability of the church. Still, many women acknowledge the limitations of their influence. As Hannah Wanjiru Kirimi of Timau reflected:

> "We are everywhere, but in the real places of power, we are not seen. Informal power is good, but we also want to sit at the table. We want to vote, to decide, to preach."[403]

This candid expression captures the paradox women navigate: having authority without acknowledgment, being central yet peripheral. Informal spaces have empowered them, but they have also highlighted the urgency of institutional transformation.

In conclusion, the women of Laikipia–Samburu Station use informal leadership as a form of resistance, negotiation, and theological innovation. Their influence is palpable in everyday church life, even as structural barriers persist. Their resilience evokes what Scott calls the "weapons of the weak"—small but consistent acts of disruption that gradually unsettle entrenched power.[404] For the SDA Church to live out its theological commitments to justice, stewardship, and equality, it must recognize and incorporate these women not as helpers, but as equal leaders.

4.6. The Gendered Division and Politics of Gender Exclusionism in Leadership

Within the congregations of the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station, a clear structural and symbolic distinction continues to shape gendered experiences of ministry. This distinction manifests in the visible concentration of women in what are informally known as “soft ministries,” such as Women’s Ministries, Dorcas (community service), Health, Children’s Ministries, and Family Life. These departments, while indispensable to the everyday life of the church, are functionally and ideologically separated from the “strategic ministries” controlled predominantly by

[403] Hannah Wanjiru Kirimi, Oral Interview, Timau Central, February 22, 2024.
[404] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 4–5.

men—church boards, pastoral leadership, doctrinal councils, and financial committees. In practice, women in these caregiving departments shoulder some of the most labor-intensive, community-facing responsibilities in the entire church ecosystem. They organize seminars, coordinate welfare programs, run feeding initiatives, and respond to the immediate needs of congregants in times of crisis. Yet, their work is rarely translated into institutional power or doctrinal authority. Their leadership, while essential, is neither formalized in structures of decision-making nor rewarded with upward ecclesiastical mobility. What emerges, therefore, is a gendered paradox: women lead with visibility and consistency in nurturing ministries but remain systematically excluded from the spaces where theological direction, institutional policy, and governance decisions are made.

This gendered division is underpinned by theological constructs and cultural ideologies that continue to define caregiving as a divinely assigned function of women, and decision-making as the domain of men. In interviews conducted in 2024 across various SDA congregations in Laikipia and Samburu, many male leaders interpreted biblical texts such as 1 Timothy 2:12 and Titus 2:3–5 as offering divine endorsement for the exclusion of women from positions of doctrinal authority.

> "From the beginning, even the Bible is clear—God gave man the responsibility of leadership, and the woman is a helper. When a woman heads Dorcas or Health Ministries, she is doing God's work. But leadership in the church—serious leadership—requires a man. God never intended women to be elders or decision-makers." — Elder Samuel Mwangi, Nanyuki Central SDA Church, July 2024.[405]

Such interpretations—grounded in selective exegesis—reinforce a dichotomous theology where men are seen as natural leaders and women as their assistants. These views fail to account for the complexity and depth of spiritual leadership that women perform daily within caregiving ministries, and instead essentialize gender roles in a manner

[405] Oral interview with Elder Samuel Mwangi, Nanyuki Central SDA Church, July 2024.

that both limits women's theological agency and naturalizes male dominance in decision-making spheres.

In contrast to these reductive theological interpretations, many women actively contest the notion that their work is subordinate or apolitical.

> "They say we are just helping, but who is really helping the church every Sabbath? Who visits the sick? Who feeds the hungry? Who trains the young girls and boys? And then they say we are not fit to lead. That is not God's will—it is men's interpretation." — Esther Wanjiru, Women's Ministries Leader, Rumuruti, July 2024.[406]

Wanjiru's testimony reveals the disconnect between women's lived experiences of service and the institutional frameworks that seek to marginalize them. Despite having developed administrative skills, spiritual insight, and community leadership over decades, many women remain excluded from the formal ecclesiastical ladder. Their labor is acknowledged only in sentimental terms, often framed as an extension of motherhood or Christian womanhood, but never institutionalized in the structures that direct the church's theological and policy orientation.

The discrepancy between relational authority and formal authority is particularly apparent in the domain of Dorcas Ministries. Women in this department are typically the first responders to crises—handling bereavements, poverty alleviation, medical emergencies, and food insecurity—yet they are conspicuously absent from planning meetings and budgeting sessions.

> "We know the pain of the people; we sit with them when they lose children, when they are sick, or have no food. But when the elders sit in that boardroom, we are not there. They don't ask us what the church needs. They assume we are

[406] Oral interview with Sister Esther Wanjiru, Rumuruti Women's Ministries, July 2024.

only good for cooking and praying." — Mary Lekolool, Dorcas Leader, Dol Dol SDA Church, July 2024.[407]

Her voice, resonant with frustration and fatigue, reflects a structural pattern that views pastoral care as less important than doctrinal deliberation or financial oversight. It also reveals how the institutional church reduces the value of emotional and social labour, even when it is clearly essential to the cohesion and survival of the congregation.

The institutional silencing of women is especially glaring in times of crisis. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, saw women stepping into leadership in unprecedented ways—organizing local health campaigns, coordinating sanitation drives, and mobilizing food for vulnerable families.

> "We organized soap-making, brought water tanks, made masks, and fed the vulnerable. But during the board report, the pastor stood up and said, 'Our elders have done well.' Not a word about us. That is how we are erased—even in emergencies." — Grace Njoki, Health Ministries Coordinator, Kinamba, August 2024.[408]

This kind of invisibilization is not incidental but deeply entrenched within a male-centric ecclesiology. By failing to recognize women's leadership during crises, the church not only undermines their contributions but also perpetuates a structural theology that equates authority with masculinity.

This problem is compounded by symbolic hierarchies that assign different spiritual value to different types of ministries. Mercy Amba Oduyoye has rightly critiqued African churches for reinforcing patriarchy by sacralizing women's subordination under the guise of service.[409] In the SDA Church, this plays out vividly in how ministries are gender-coded. Dorcas is viewed as the domain of "mothers in Israel," a term that is both

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[407] Oral interview with Dorcas leader Mary Lekolool, Dol Dol SDA Church, July 2024.
[408] Oral interview with Health Ministries Coordinator Grace Njoki, Kinamba SDA, August 2024.
[409] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004), 59

reverential and limiting. Meanwhile, church boards, nominating committees, and theological councils are considered the purview of "elders"—a title that in practice is almost exclusively male.

> "When women are given a microphone, it is to sing or pray. When men are given one, it is to preach or decide. And then they say the Spirit calls whom He wants. But we never see the Spirit calling a woman in that boardroom." — Jane Wacera, Pastor's Spouse, Nyahururu, July 2024.[410]

The exclusion of women from preaching and policy-making reaffirms a theological structure that conflates male leadership with divine order, and female service with supportive labor. Even the few leadership trainings offered to women seem to lead nowhere in terms of institutional recognition.

> "Every year we train women—on budgeting, program planning, even preaching. But what happens after training? Nothing. They go back to Dorcas or Health. There is no next level. No opportunity to move from departmental work to doctrinal or administrative leadership." — Regional Women's Ministries Coordinator, Maralal Town, July 2024.[411]

This stagnation is not only personally discouraging; it represents a form of institutional injustice that stifles innovation and denies the church access to a wealth of spiritual and organizational talent. Without reforming the ecclesiastical pipeline, even the most capable women are forced to operate within a leadership ceiling that is determined by gender, not calling. Girls growing up in the church are socialized into narrow expectations about their role in ecclesiastical life.

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[410] Oral interview with Jane Wacera, Nyahururu District Pastor's Spouse, July 2024.
[411] Oral interview with Regional Women's Ministries Coordinator, Maralal Town SDA Church, July 2024.

> "Every Sabbath, men preach and lead, but women serve tea and sing. That's how we grow up thinking church should be." — Teenage Sabbath School Attendee, Maralal, August 2024.[412]

The internalization of such messages ensures the continuation of ecclesiastical patriarchy, as new generations of women absorb the idea that their spiritual gifts are only useful in auxiliary roles. The SDA Church, by neglecting to offer young women visible role models in decision-making and theological spaces, undermines its own capacity to embody gospel values of equality and justice.

Yet within these soft ministries, women are engaging in acts of subtle resistance and theological agency.

> "We no longer just talk about cooking and child care. We talk about how women can stand up against violence, how to manage depression, how to say no to abuse. These are spiritual matters too." — Family Life Facilitator, Sipili SDA Church, August 2024.[413]

Such interventions, while not always framed as feminist, represent a significant theological reimagining from within. They signal a desire to redefine spirituality in ways that affirm women's full humanity, not just their utility.

> "We appreciate the women—they do a lot. But let's be honest: leadership is for those called to it. And mostly, that means men." — Elder Daniel Kiprop, Wiyumiririe SDA Church, August 2024.[414]

This statement, while blunt, articulates the widespread belief that institutional power is synonymous with male identity. The result is a system in which women can manage the most successful department in a congregation and still be deemed ineligible for

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[412] Oral interview with Sabbath School teen participant, Maralal, August 2024.
[413] Oral interview with Family Life Facilitator, Sipili SDA Church, August 2024.
[414] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 4–5.

inclusion in key decision-making bodies. Until the SDA Church undertakes a theological and organizational reckoning with its gendered assumptions, its professions of inclusivity will remain hollow.

A more just ecclesiology would require dismantling the artificial dichotomy between soft and strategic ministries. It would involve recognizing caregiving work not as subordinate but as foundational to church life, and integrating it into the church's strategic vision. As Nyambura J. Njoroge argues, "Churches must move beyond complementarian rhetoric to structural justice that reflects the full body of Christ."[415] Unless the SDA Church reconfigures its understanding of leadership to reflect the gifts and contributions of all its members—regardless of gender—it risks perpetuating inequality under the guise of tradition

4.7. Structural Limitations in Nomination and Training

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station is governed by a leadership model that relies heavily on nominating committees—deliberative bodies that appoint elders, departmental leaders, and other church officers. While the process appears democratic, in practice, it functions as a gatekeeping mechanism that systematically limits women's access to influential positions. These committees, while formally constituted, are overwhelmingly populated by male elders and veteran male departmental heads, particularly from departments linked to strategic governance such as finance, evangelism, and church board administration. As a result, the nomination process tends to reproduce existing patriarchal power structures. Caroline Nkatha, a Dorcas leader from Rumuruti, described her isolating experience when serving as the lone woman in a nominating committee:

> "It felt like walking into a club where I wasn't welcome. I raised my hand and recommended one of our Women's Ministries sisters for the position of elder—she's faithful, she's led retreats, even helped settle disputes in the church. They

[415] Nyambura J. Njoroge, *Kiama Kia Ngo: Theological Ethics and Gender in the Church* (Limuru: Zapf Chancery, 2007), 112.

> all looked at each other, and then one elder said, 'Let's be realistic, Sister Caroline. That's not how we do things here.' I felt embarrassed, like I had broken an unspoken rule."[416]

This experience is symptomatic of a larger problem: the silencing of women's voices even in spaces where they are technically represented. Their presence becomes ceremonial, while their influence remains negligible. These committees are not just numerically dominated by men; they are ideologically governed by theological worldviews that cast men as default leaders and women as supporters. Scriptures such as 1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 are frequently cited to justify this stance, reinforcing a theology of male headship that discourages the elevation of women to authoritative roles.[417]

This exclusion is not just theological—it is structural. Nomination processes function hermeneutically as well as administratively: they interpret Scripture and tradition through a patriarchal lens, thereby disqualifying women from ecclesial authority even before deliberations begin. As Mercy Amba Oduyoye has insightfully argued, "Patriarchy in African churches is not only practiced but theologically sanctified."418 Such sanctification allows the church to obscure its gender bias behind biblical fidelity.

Compounding this exclusion is the orientation of leadership training programs at both the Station and Conference levels. While the church invests considerable resources in seminars, these are focused almost exclusively on administrative functions—budgeting, record-keeping, calendar coordination, and constitutional compliance. These sessions rarely address questions of equity, inclusion, or justice. Elder Daniel Kibet, a long-serving board member from Nanyuki, recalled one such session:

> "We were taught how to prepare camp meeting budgets, how to organize Sabbath programs, even how to conduct elections. But when I asked if we could

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[416] Oral interview with Caroline Nkatha, Rumuruti, March 22, 2024.
[417] 1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, New International Version.
[418] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patria*rchy (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995), 45.

> have a session on how to handle gender balance or inclusion, the trainer just smiled and said, 'That is too political. Let's stick to mission.'"[419]

This avoidance of gender discourse is not neutral—it maintains the status quo by presenting current gender roles as apolitical and divinely ordained. Training participants are not encouraged to interrogate how power is distributed or who has access to leadership. Instead, the pedagogical emphasis is on preserving institutional order, which often comes at the expense of justice and transformation. As **Isabel Phiri** warns, "Church training programs that ignore gender issues become complicit in oppression. They teach women silence and men entitlement."[420]

The consequence is a leadership culture that equates experience with male-defined roles and delegitimizes the work of women in departments such as Dorcas, Children's Ministries, and Health. These departments, while vital to the life of the church, are considered peripheral when it comes to strategic decision-making. **Grace Chepkemoi**, a leader in Kinamba, described how her contributions were repeatedly dismissed:

> "I've chaired fundraising drives, written financial reports, and led regional seminars for women. But when elder nominations come up, they say I don't have the right experience. It's like everything we do in the Dorcas department is invisible."[421]

This invisibility reinforces a vicious cycle: women are excluded from top roles because they lack the "right" experience, but they are never given the opportunity to gain that experience in the first place. The leadership ladder is rigged, and the criteria are selectively applied.

Another gap lies in the lack of theological training provided to female leaders. While men attending higher-level training are sometimes exposed to doctrine and ecclesiol-

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[419] Oral interview with Daniel Kibet, Nanyuki, April 6, 2024.
[420] Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Doing Theology in Community: The Case of African Women Theologians in the 1990s," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997): 70.
[421] Oral interview with Grace Chepkemoi, Kinamba, March 25, 2024.

ogy, women are often restricted to practical seminars that emphasize obedience, service, and support. There is little effort to cultivate theological literacy among women that might equip them to critique exclusionary structures or propose alternatives. Rhoda Lempiris, a departmental coordinator in Maralal, reflected on this imbalance:

> "We're trained to organize tea, to book tents, and to arrange speakers. But nobody teaches us about justice or leadership from the Bible. We are told to be humble and serve—but not to think or speak too much. And when we ask hard questions, we are told we're being worldly."[422]

This "training for containment" prevents women from emerging as critical theological voices within their congregations. It reinforces a culture of service over speech, presence over power. As Nyambura Njoroge powerfully writes, "Churches train women to serve but not to think. They are given tools for maintenance, not transformation."[423]

Even when women raise valid concerns or propose gender-inclusive reforms, they are often shut down by theological and cultural conservatism. Appeals to church unity, fear of "feminism," and accusations of "worldly ideologies" are regularly deployed to silence them. Jane Wanjiru, a youth leader from Dol Dol, recounted being dismissed for suggesting a session on gender inclusion:

> "I said, 'Let's talk about how we include women in decision-making.' The elder laughed and said, 'That's a worldly agenda. This is the church, not Parliament.' And everyone nodded. I sat down and stayed silent the rest of the day."[9]

Such incidents reveal the ideological anxiety that accompanies discussions on gender justice in ecclesial spaces. Women's concerns are spiritualized away, labeled as threats to harmony, and disqualified before they're even considered. The church thereby reinscribes inequality not only through policies but also through pedagogy, preaching, and procedure.

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[422] Oral interview with Rhoda Lempiris, Maralal, April 10, 2024.
[423] Nyambura J. Njoroge, *Kiama Kia Ngo: Theological Ethics and Gender in the Church* (Limuru: Zapf Chancery, 2007), 88.

Ultimately, the net effect is a gendered and generational leadership structure in which older men dominate top positions, younger men are mentored into leadership, and women—regardless of age—are steered into roles of care and compliance. Women who attempt to break these boundaries are met with institutional resistance, theological ambivalence, and cultural dismissal. While some women find ways to subvert these limitations informally, the formal system remains largely closed. Without access to nomination power, theological training, and strategic forums, women are left on the margins of influence, their contributions acknowledged but their leadership capacities unrecognized.

Any meaningful reform must begin by re-evaluating who gets to nominate, how training is conducted, and what kind of leadership the church envisions. A transformed nomination process—one that includes equal gender representation and values diverse forms of leadership experience—would be a significant first step. Similarly, training curricula must evolve to include theological reflection on justice, power, and inclusion, thereby preparing leaders not just for administration but for transformation. As Oduyoye rightly warns, "To deny women leadership is to deny the fullness of the body of Christ. The church becomes a fractured witness to a whole gospel." Without such changes, the church will remain trapped in a loop of symbolic participation and structural exclusion—inviting women to serve, but not to lead. [424]

4.8. The Burden of Representation and Resistance

In the context of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station, women who attain formal leadership positions often find themselves in a deeply paradoxical space. On one hand, they are celebrated as evidence of gender inclusivity within the church; on the other, they are burdened with heightened scrutiny, unrealistic expectations, and institutional ambivalence. Their ascension to leadership is rarely perceived as a natural progression of capability or calling. Rather, it is interpreted as a symbolic gesture meant to satisfy modern demands for gender balance. These women

[424] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2004), 74.

are not merely leaders—they are prototypes. They are expected to succeed on behalf of their gender and often judged more harshly than their male counterparts. One such woman, Grace Muthoni, a departmental head in a church within the Kinamba district, voiced her frustrations during an oral interview in 2024:

> "Every time I am asked to lead, it comes with conditions. I cannot afford to make a single error. If I arrive late, forget a detail, or speak too firmly, I am immediately judged—not just as Grace, but as a 'woman leader.' And then they start saying, 'You see why women shouldn't lead?' But when Brother Maina forgets a report or skips a meeting, it's just laughed off as a normal oversight."[425]

Grace's account is emblematic of the burden of perfection often placed on women in church leadership. The pressure to embody excellence in every action arises not only from institutional expectations but also from cultural narratives that question women's leadership legitimacy. Moreover, this burden is not compensated for by institutional support. Most women leaders report that their official authority is not matched by actual access to power or resources. Many experience subtle, persistent resistance that manifests in passive non-cooperation, exclusion from critical informal gatherings, and an almost routine withholding of validation.

Naomi Lekale, a youth ministries coordinator from Rumuruti, shared her experience of this quiet exclusion:

> "Yes, they add me to the leadership WhatsApp group, and I'm listed in the minutes. But real decisions are made in someone's living room, over chai, in meetings I'm never told about. Then I'm expected to implement what was decided. So what kind of leadership is that?"[426]

This form of marginalization demonstrates how informal networks of power often operate parallel to formal leadership structures, leaving even officially recognized women leaders without genuine influence. Leadership within the SDA Church, like in

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[425] Oral interview with Grace Muthoni, Kinamba, April 12, 2024.
[426] Oral interview with Naomi Lekale, Rumuruti, March 18, 2024.

many religious institutions, often depends more on one's embeddedness in trusted male-dominated networks than on one's official title.

Even where women are promoted, their appointments are frequently framed as tokenistic. Rather than being acknowledged as competent or spiritually qualified, they are described as "strategic" placements—necessary to maintain appearances. Rebecca Njeri, a female elder in Dol Dol, shared the sting of being constantly reminded that her leadership role was conditional:

> "Whenever I speak during board meetings, I feel like I'm being tolerated. Someone once told me, 'You know why you were chosen—it's good to have at least one woman to show we are inclusive.' That hurt. Not once have I heard anyone say I was chosen because I had something important to contribute."[427]

This conditional framing not only undermines women's confidence but also reinforces the perception that their leadership is superficial and dependent on the goodwill of male gatekeepers. This dynamic breeds emotional fatigue and spiritual dissonance.

Nevertheless, many women resist these constraints through what can be described as *strategic persistence*. They avoid overt confrontation, not out of fear, but from a shrewd understanding of institutional culture. Instead, they lead with consistency, demonstrate competence, and quietly challenge prevailing stereotypes by simply being excellent. Esther Lengoji, a regional Women's Ministries director from Maralal, articulated this non-confrontational resistance:

> "You learn quickly that arguing only makes you seem difficult. So I decided to be the best in what I do. I organize, I pray, I train women, I teach. And slowly, even the doubters start to respect that. They won't admit it, but you see it in their changed behavior."[428]

This mirrors what theologian Isabel Apawo Phiri has termed "The Theology Of Presence"—a resistance practice where women remain actively engaged in church life,

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[427] Oral interview with Rebecca Njeri, Dol Dol, April 4, 2024.
[428] Oral interview with Esther Lengoji, Maralal, April 15, 2024.

using visibility and excellence as tools for challenging exclusionary norms.[429] Similarly, James C. Scott's idea of "hidden transcripts" is useful here: women cultivate influence behind the scenes, subtly undermining dominant gender ideologies without direct confrontation.[430]

Mentorship also emerges as a vital form of resistance. By nurturing the next generation of female leaders, today's women leaders are shifting the gender culture of the church incrementally**.** Rhoda Mwikali, a Sabbath School director in Nyahururu, emphasized the significance of intergenerational influence:

> "It's not just about me getting a position. It's about making sure my daughters in the faith don't have to beg to be heard. I teach them how to lead devotions, chair meetings, and speak with confidence. Even if the system doesn't change immediately, we're building something stronger in the background."[431]

Such grassroots empowerment is shaping a quiet revolution within the Adventist ecclesial space—transforming leadership from within through relationships, mentoring, and long-term vision.

Still, it is important not to romanticize this form of resistance. Many women pay a high emotional and spiritual price for their persistence. The burden of having to continually justify their presence and over-perform often leads to burnout. Janet Mwathe, a former Children's Ministries leader in Nanyuki, reflected on her decision to step down:

> "I kept smiling, kept serving, but inside I was breaking. I gave everything, but at the end of the day, I felt invisible. Like I was just a name on a program. The real decisions were never mine to make."[432]

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[429] Isabel Apawo Phiri, "Doing Theology in Community: The Case of African Women Theologians in the 1990s," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 99 (1997): 68–76.
[430] James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 4–5.
[431] Oral interview with Rhoda Mwikali, Nyahururu, March 24, 2024.
[432] Oral interview with Janet Mwathe, Nanyuki, March 30, 2024.

Her testimony is a sobering reminder that transformation cannot rely solely on individual resilience. Structural reform is necessary to accompany and sustain these personal acts of resistance.

Beyond institutional challenges, women in leadership also face theological resistance. Many find themselves serving within a framework that affirms their labor but questions their legitimacy. This tension—between spiritual calling and doctrinal marginalization—creates a persistent internal struggle. As theologian Nyambura J. Njoroge observes, "The pain of leading without affirmation is the quiet suffering of women in ministry. Their service is accepted, but their authority is denied."[433] Unless the church engages in serious theological revisioning—moving toward a more inclusive ecclesiology—this burden will remain a generational cycle.

In conclusion, the experience of women leaders in Laikipia–Samburu Station reflects both burden and boldness. They carry institutional weight on their shoulders but resist erasure through consistent presence, mentorship, and moral conviction. Their stories challenge the Adventist Church to reimagine leadership as shared responsibility, rooted in justice and inclusion. Yet unless this resistance is matched by theological clarity and structural reform, it risks becoming a noble struggle rather than a transformational movement.

4.9. Chapter Conclusion

The leadership structures of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station remain deeply gendered, reflecting a persistent tension between official policies of inclusion and informal practices of exclusion. While the Church's global and national frameworks may express openness to women's participation in ministry and administration, the actual implementation at the local level reveals a stark dissonance. As this chapter has demonstrated, the mechanisms of exclusion are not merely procedural but ideological—embedded in the way nominations are conducted, leadership is conceptualized, and training is delivered. Men continue to dominate strategic and doctrinal

[433] Nyambura J. Njoroge, *Kiama Kia Ngo: Theological Ethics and Gender in the Church* (Limuru: Zapf Chancery, 2007), 112

spaces, while women are largely relegated to caregiving and supportive roles, reinforcing a division of ecclesial labor that mirrors patriarchal social norms. The informal gatekeeping mechanisms—such as male networks, theological conservatism, and cultural expectations—render the formal inclusion clauses ineffective in practice, transforming what appears to be a policy of equity into an instrument of symbolic inclusion without substantive change.

This deeply embedded inequality is further perpetuated by the nominating committee system, which acts as a conservative filter that recycles male leadership while resisting structural transformation. Despite the fact that women play indispensable roles in departments like Dorcas, Children's Ministries, and Health, they are rarely seen as candidates for decision-making roles. Leadership training, too, reinforces this hierarchy by focusing on administrative functionality while failing to engage with theological frameworks that promote gender justice. As a result, both male and female leaders are trained to operate within the constraints of patriarchal norms, rather than being equipped to challenge or transcend them. The cumulative effect is a system that appears participatory but functions hierarchically—a church that preaches spiritual equality while practicing ecclesiastical inequality.

Nevertheless, the lived experiences of women in Laikipia–Samburu Station reveal not only exclusion but resistance. While formally marginalized, women have developed informal networks of influence, exercised soft power through mentorship and care work, and cultivated leadership in domains overlooked by the official hierarchy. In doing so, they have established a parallel economy of ecclesial labor—one that is relational rather than positional, and often more impactful in shaping the daily spiritual lives of congregants. These women operate within the structures even as they subtly resist and reconfigure them. Their leadership, though frequently unacknowledged, sustains the moral and spiritual vitality of the church. In this sense, their very presence is an act of theological and institutional defiance, offering a living critique of the narrow leadership paradigms currently in place.

However, the burden carried by these women—especially those who break through to formal leadership positions—is immense. They are expected not only to lead but to represent; not only to succeed, but to justify their presence by outperforming their male counterparts. This "burden of representation" exposes the fragility of their acceptance

and the conditional nature of their authority. It also highlights the emotional and spiritual cost of serving in institutions that recognize their labor but deny their legitimacy. Yet, it is precisely through their quiet resistance, persistent excellence, and mentorship of younger women that they sow the seeds of long-term transformation. Their contributions challenge both the theological assumptions and institutional practices that sustain gender inequality, gradually creating space for a more inclusive and just ecclesiology.

In sum, the landscape of gender and leadership in the SDA Church in Laikipia–Samburu Station is one marked by paradox and possibility. The structures of exclusion are real and resilient, but so too are the forms of resistance mounted by women whose faith and determination have enabled them to serve powerfully in spite of institutional constraints. True transformation will require more than the token inclusion of women in existing hierarchies—it demands a radical rethinking of leadership itself. This involves revising the theology that underpins gender roles, restructuring nomination and training processes, and reimagining power as something to be shared rather than hoarded. The following chapter will explore emerging efforts to move in this direction, offering case studies of congregational innovation, theological reform, and grassroots advocacy aimed at reshaping the gender dynamics of Adventist leadership in this region.

CHAPTER FOUR
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This section presents the summary of and conclusions drawn from the findings. It also presents recommendations and suggests areas for further research.The purpose of this research was to investigate women participation in Seventh Day Adventist church hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu Station, Laikipia County. This study revealead that women were the majority in membership but were under-represented in the church hierarchy where men held the higher leadership ranks. This research is of importance because many studies on women have ignored factors impeding participation of women in church hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu Station. An understanding of these factors shed light to the present male dominated systems in the church hierarchy.

This study was guided by the following three objectives: to account for the historical background of the SDA in Laikipia-Samburu Station. to assess the impact of SDA Women Ministries in the society in Laikipia-Samburu Station and to investigate factors impeding participation of women in SDA church hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu Station.

This research contributes to SDAs body of knowledge and identifies gaps in women participation in church hierarchy. Results from this study add to the discussion on women participation in SDA and creates awareness to the church to redress to challenges facing women in church hierarchy. This study was based on patriarchal theory by Iglitzin and Ross as the root cause of female domination. The theory was reviewed and found appropriate in illuminating the participation of women in SDA church hierarchy and consequently adapted. This theory was relevant in understanding women participation in church hierarchy. The theory therefore, provided a theoretical framework for the entire study. Primary data for this study was obtained using questionnaires, interviews, non-participant observation; while secondary data was through document analysis. The data obtained was categorized and thematized to form the basis for analysis and interpretation.

5.2. Conclusions

This study explored the historical origin of Seventh Day Adventist Church, its Worldwide Mission, power structure, women and leadership, challenges, and historical

background of Laikipia-Samburu Station. The SDA church in Laikipia-Samburu Station traces its origin from the advent of SDA church in Kenya in the early part of 1900s. In the year 2012 Central Kenya Conference proposed to create Central Rift Valley Conference curved from Central Kenya Conference, which is the mother conference of Laikipia-Samburu Station. The study established that women were not active in the SDA church politics compared with men. There was still low women involvement in church leadership committees both at the local church level and at district committee level both in terms of the numbers in these committees and the portfolios held in the committees.

The challenges women face participating in the church leadership established that women in the SDA Church in Laikipia-Samburu Station revolved around the participation in leadership hierarchy. Some of the outstanding challenges include; lack of clarity on ordination of women which the church has never adopted, the narrowing space for women in church politics, lack of adequate platform that provides a voice for the women. Another challenge is women level of education where in local churches fewer women do not have adequate education. The suggested solution to these challenge is that; ordination of women should be allowed in the church and an agreed percent of women be established in the church leadership.

Regarding factors impeding participation of women in church hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu Station, this study investigated factors impeding participation of women in SDA church hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu Station. This research revealed that SDA structure existing today has not changed much from the missionary period. This structure has not been transformative, it has allowed men to participate in church hierarchy while women remain at lower levels. This study identified the need to change the male dominated systems and tailor-make them to suit the needs of women. In this way, more women would participate in higher levels of church hierarchy. This study established that gender representation in church hierarchy in practice is not balanced. For instance, although SDA constitution states that men and women have equal chances for participation; even in local church committee where women are majority men are dominant in administrative leadership. Results showed that SDA church leaders at lower hierarchy were women. Nevertheless, even in business committees where women stood a chance to be co-opted they were not preferred. Researcher's urguement is that

women should be co-opted when opportunities arise. In this way a more balanced representation is achieved.

The study also established that SDA trains men and women in the same theological colleges. This study revealed that since the inception of Laikipia-Samburu Station no woman ever trained in theological studies. The researcher notes that this is an impeding factor since SDA ministers are theologically trained. The study further reveaved that the major factor impeding participation of women in church hierarchy is the issue of women ordination. The SDA church has no written church policy prohibiting ordination of women but after completion of theological training women are commissioned while their male counterparts are ordained and licensed. Therefore, women who are theologically trained have limited ministerial power in SDA church. SDA scholars proposing women ordination argue that General Conference Sessions can revise Church Policies and alter constitution to allow women ordination which is a New Light in SDA church. This study equally revealed that in SDA women ordination is not against the scriptures but the SDA World Wide Church insists that it must be a globally accepted practice.

Concering The Impact of the Church Leadership, this study assessed the impact of SDA Women Ministries in society in Laikipia-Samburu station. The data revealed that women's roles are confined in the marginal levels of the church hierarchy. In addition, women's presence in leadership becomes visible in Women's Ministries. Pastors interviewed admitted that women are not given enough opportunity in the church hierarchy as decision-makers. This research found out that SDA Women Ministries has positively impacted to the society in Laikipia-Samburu Station: socially through capacity building of fellow women, student sponsorship on deserving cases and offering mentorship programs to empower women among others services. Also the society has benefited through evangelization resulting in numerous conversion to SDA.

The study further established that women also were involved in a crusade which was organised by the station at Ngumo Boys Muhotetu Local church, Rumuruti district and that women fully participated during a seminar organised by the station at Ngumo Boys. The study also established that various women are active in department management for example; Milly Gichuhi, Ruth Mouko, Rahab Muthoni, Mary Muchemi who were the Women's Ministries chair at the Station level and also Winnie Jucu Kinithia who was the youth leader at the station level. Mrs Ateka served in a capacity of headteacher

Nyahururu SDA Primary School. These women involvement in the management is a clear indication that although few women were involved in the station leadership, there was an effort that involve women in the church leadership at different hierarchies.

This data revealed that through Dorcas Society and ADRA, SDA women positively impacted the lives of the society through clothe distribution, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, crisis counseling, visitation, and relief food distribution among other vital services. To this end the researcher commends the efforts of Women Ministries and urges the church to have emergency kitty to enable women respond to crises promptly. Dorcas Society as an outreach had visible impact in Laikipia-Samburu Society. This included distribution of food and clothing, sponsoring students in learning institutions and organizing medical camps. Other contributions included visitation, counselling the sick and comforting the bereaved. In addition the interviewee observed that many women, Deaconesses, elders and church leaders in the church grow into leadership through Women Ministries and Dorcas Society. The Dorcas Society therefore has had a positive impact not only to the women in the station but also the women living around the station.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the objectives and findings, the following refined recommendations are proposed:

1. **Awareness and Sensitization**

   The SDA Church should conscientize its members on the biblical and theological foundations for women's participation in leadership. This can be achieved through retreats, workshops, and seminars facilitated by experts in theology, gender, and church history. Such initiatives will dismantle misconceptions about women's leadership and create a culture of inclusivity within congregations.

2. **Theological Training and Ordination**

   Women should be accorded equal access to theological colleges and seminaries as men, and subsequently be considered for ordination and licensing. Ordination

would not only legitimize women's ministerial roles but also allow them to sit in decision-making bodies such as Union, General, and Local Conference Sessions, where policy and constitutional reforms are deliberated.

3. **Institutional Support and Resourcing**

The SDA Church hierarchy should provide stronger support to women by expanding the mandate and resourcing of Women's Ministries and Dorcas Society. Adequate financial allocations, supplemented with professional facilitators, would enable these ministries to effectively implement community programs. Special attention should be given to arid and semi-arid regions like Laikipia–Samburu Station, where women face additional socio-economic vulnerabilities.

4. **Policy and Constitutional Reform**

The SDA Church should re-examine its constitution and governance structures to provide explicit recognition of women in ministerial leadership. This could include constitutional amendments that open up ordained ministry and higher administrative offices to women.

5. **Gender Quotas and Representation**

The church may adopt gender quotas or minimum percentages for women's candidacy in elections and appointments. This affirmative action would guarantee women's visibility, foster equity in leadership, and dismantle systemic barriers to women's participation in decision-making.

6. **Ordination Resolution at General Conference**

Finally, the study recommends that the General Conference adopt a resolution to allow women's ordination during its quinquennial sessions. Such a resolution

would not only align with global discourses on gender equity but also legitimize women's leadership across all levels of the SDA hierarchy.

5.4. Areas for Further Research

This study investigated participation of women in SDA Church hierarchy in Laikipia-Samburu Station, Laikipia County. It is the view of the researcher that more need to be done in the following areas:

1. Research on whether the congregants would prefer inclusion of ordained female pastors in the ministerial hierarchy in SDA church. This would form the basis for generalization of the findings of this study.
2. Research on women's transformative role in the church would also be necessary in order to add more information on the findings of the current study.
3. Research on issues of liberating ways of reading the scriptures would also be an area of interest to future scholars.

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1.	Caroline Nkatha	Female	46	Rumuruti	March 22, 2024
2.	Daniel Kibet	Male	51	Nanyuki	April 6, 2024
3.	Mary Lekolool	Female	54	Dol Dol SDA Church	July 2024
4.	Daniel Kiprop	Male	48	Wiyumiririe SDA Church	August 2024
5.	Samuel Mwangi	Male	57	Nanyuki Central SDA Church	July 2024
6.	Esther Lengoji	Female	43	Maralal	April 15, 2024
7.	Family Life Facilitator (Name Witheld)	Female	45	Sipili SDA Church	August 2024
8.	Female Elder (Name Witheld)	Female	52	Laikipia–Samburu Station	March 3, 2024
9.	Grace Chepkemoi	Female	39	Kinamba	March 25, 2024
10.	Grace Muthoni	Female	41	Kinamba	April 12, 2024
11.	Grace Njoki	Female	44	Kinamba SDA	August 2024
12.	Jane Wacera	Female	50	Nyahururu	July 2024
13.	Jane Wanjiru	Female	38	Dol Dol	April 2, 2024
14.	Janet Mwathe	Female	47	Nanyuki	March 30, 2024
15.	Naomi Lekale	Female	42	Rumuruti	March 18, 2024
16.	Rebecca Njeri	Female	36	Dol Dol	April 4, 2024
17.	Station Women's Ministries Coordinator (Name Witheld)	Female	51	Maralal Town SDA Church	July 2024

18.	Rhoda Lempiris	Female	48	Maralal	April 10, 2024
19.	Rhoda Mwikali	Female	49	Nyahururu	March 24, 2024
20.	Sabbath School teen participant (Name Witheld)	Female	17	Maralal	August 2024
21.	Esther Wanjiru	Female	45	Rumuruti Women's Ministries	July 2024
22.	Ruth Njoki	Female	43	Kinamba Church	February 25, 2024
23.	Joseph Kariuki	Male	56	Rumuruti Church	March 2025
24.	Female Departmental Leader (Name Witheld)	Female	46	Kinamba Church	March 2025
25.	Lay Member (Name Witheld)	Female	35	Kinamba Church	February 2025
26.	Kimani Mwangi	Male	53	Nyahururu Church	February 2025
27.	Youth Leader (Name Witheld)	Male	29	Rumuruti Church	March 2025

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Structured Interview Questions

SECTION A: Women's Participation in SDA Church Leadership

1. In what official leadership roles have you seen women serve in your local SDA church?
2. Are there specific departments or ministries where women are more likely to serve? Why do you think that is the case?
3. Have you ever served in a leadership role? If yes, which one(s), and for how long?
4. What motivated or discouraged your involvement in church leadership?
5. How are women chosen or nominated for church roles in your congregation?
6. Are there differences between the role's women play in urban versus rural SDA churches in this region?
7. How are women's contributions in leadership acknowledged or recognized by the church community?
8. Do you think women's leadership contributions are taken as seriously as those of men? Why or why not?
9. What informal leadership roles do women play in your church?
10. Have there been instances where women have led successfully in traditionally male-dominated roles? Please describe.
11. In your view, what are the biggest barriers to women's participation in church leadership?
12. How do women support each other in advancing into or sustaining leadership roles in the church?
13. Are there any mentorship or training programmes within the church specifically aimed at developing women leaders?
14. How does the congregation respond when women take up visible leadership positions?
15. How do generational differences (older vs. younger women) affect participation in church leadership?
16. Are there women who are role models of leadership within your local or regional church? Who are they, and what impact have they made?

17. What recommendations would you make to improve women's leadership involvement in the SDA church?

SECTION B: Structure and Operation of the Leadership Hierarchy

1. Can you describe how leadership is structured in your local church and how it connects to the conference and union levels?
2. What are the key decision-making organs within the church (e.g., boards, committees)? Who serves in them?
3. How are leaders selected or appointed at each level of the church (local, district, conference)?
4. Who chairs and dominates the church boards and nominating committees in your experience?
5. Are there written policies or manuals that govern leadership appointments and roles? How strictly are these followed?
6. What role does ordination play in determining who can serve in top leadership positions?
7. What is your understanding of the qualifications required for positions like elder, pastor, or departmental head?
8. Are there leadership positions that are considered too high or unsuitable for women? Why?
9. How often do church elections or appointments occur, and how transparent is this process?
10. Have you ever participated in a nominating committee? What was the process like?
11. Are there any checks and balances to ensure diversity and inclusion in leadership selection?
12. In your opinion, is the current hierarchical model participatory or restrictive? Please explain.
13. How does church hierarchy relate to cultural values or community structures in Laikipia–Samburu?
14. What role do male leaders play in supporting or resisting women's leadership inclusion?

15. Are there any recent changes or reforms in the leadership structure that affect women's participation?
16. What influence does theological training have on who rises through the leadership ranks?
17. If given a chance, how would you restructure the current church leadership system to be more inclusive?

SECTION C: Impact of Leadership Hierarchy on Women's Participation

1. How does the current leadership structure either enable or hinder women's active participation?
2. Do you think the leadership hierarchy reflects or challenges the church's stated values on equality?
3. In your experience, how does being male or female influence one's chances of being selected as a leader?
4. Are there spiritual or doctrinal justifications given for excluding women from certain roles? Which ones?
5. How does the requirement for ordination affect women's access to senior church roles?
6. Have there been cases where women were nominated but rejected due to their gender? Please explain.
7. How are women represented (if at all) in strategic planning or policy decision-making forums?
8. Are there instances where women have challenged or resisted the structural limitations placed on them?
9. What are the consequences (social, spiritual, or institutional) for women who question or oppose the leadership structure?
10. How do men within the leadership hierarchy respond to women's calls for inclusion?
11. What kinds of informal leadership strategies do women use to influence decisions?
12. Do you think the leadership structure affects young girls' aspirations toward church leadership? How?

13. Have you witnessed any positive reforms that have improved women's inclusion? What prompted them?
14. In what ways has the hierarchy promoted or hindered the spiritual growth of women?
15. How does the leadership structure shape the preaching, worship, and theological engagement of women?
16. What role does the General Conference or union leadership play in shaping local attitudes toward women's leadership?
17. What practical steps would you recommend to make the church leadership hierarchy more gender-inclusive?

Appendix II: Schedule for Document Analysis

The research purposely analysed both past and present records of the official documents so as to provide supportive data. They entailed the following information pertaining to sample congregation for the study.

1. Church District Leadership since the year of inception.
2. Local Church Committee Leadership since the year of inception.
3. Church District training attendance documents.
4. Membership admission registers in the sample congregation.
5. Records of both the Board of Management and annual general meetings.
6. Annual Women's calendar of events.

Appendix III: Observation Criteria

During church events, services, functions and meetings

1. Number of men and women present.
2. Roles performed by both men and women.
3. Roles played by distinct gender.
4. Seventh Day Adventist institutions
5. Outreach Activities and meetings.
6. Women activities and meetings.

Appendix IV: Authorization Letter

LAIKIPIA UNIVERSITY

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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
GRADUATE SCHOOL

Ref: MR24/ 2349/14/7

17th December 2020

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: DORCAS NYAMBURA MWANGI – MR24/ 2349/14

The above named student is a Postgraduate student at Laikipia University undertaking a Master of Arts degree in Religion in the School of Humanities and Development Studies.

Her research proposal entitled "**WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH HIERARCHY IN LAIKIPIA – SAMBURU STATION, LAIKIPIA COUNTY**" was **examined and approved** by the Board of Graduate School.

She is hereby authorized to conduct her research.

Any assistance accorded to her is highly appreciated.

Thank you.

S. Muchendu
For DIRECTOR

Appendix V: Nacosti Research Permit

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 110643

Date of Issue: 18/March/2021

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Ms.. DORCAS NYAMBURA MWANGI of Laikipia University, has been licensed to conduct research in Laikipia on the topic: WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH HIERARCHY IN LAIKIPIA – SAMBURU STATION, LAIKIPIA COUNTY for the period ending : 18/March/2022.

License No: NACOSTI/P/21/9456

110643

Applicant Identification Number

Director General
NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Verification QR Code

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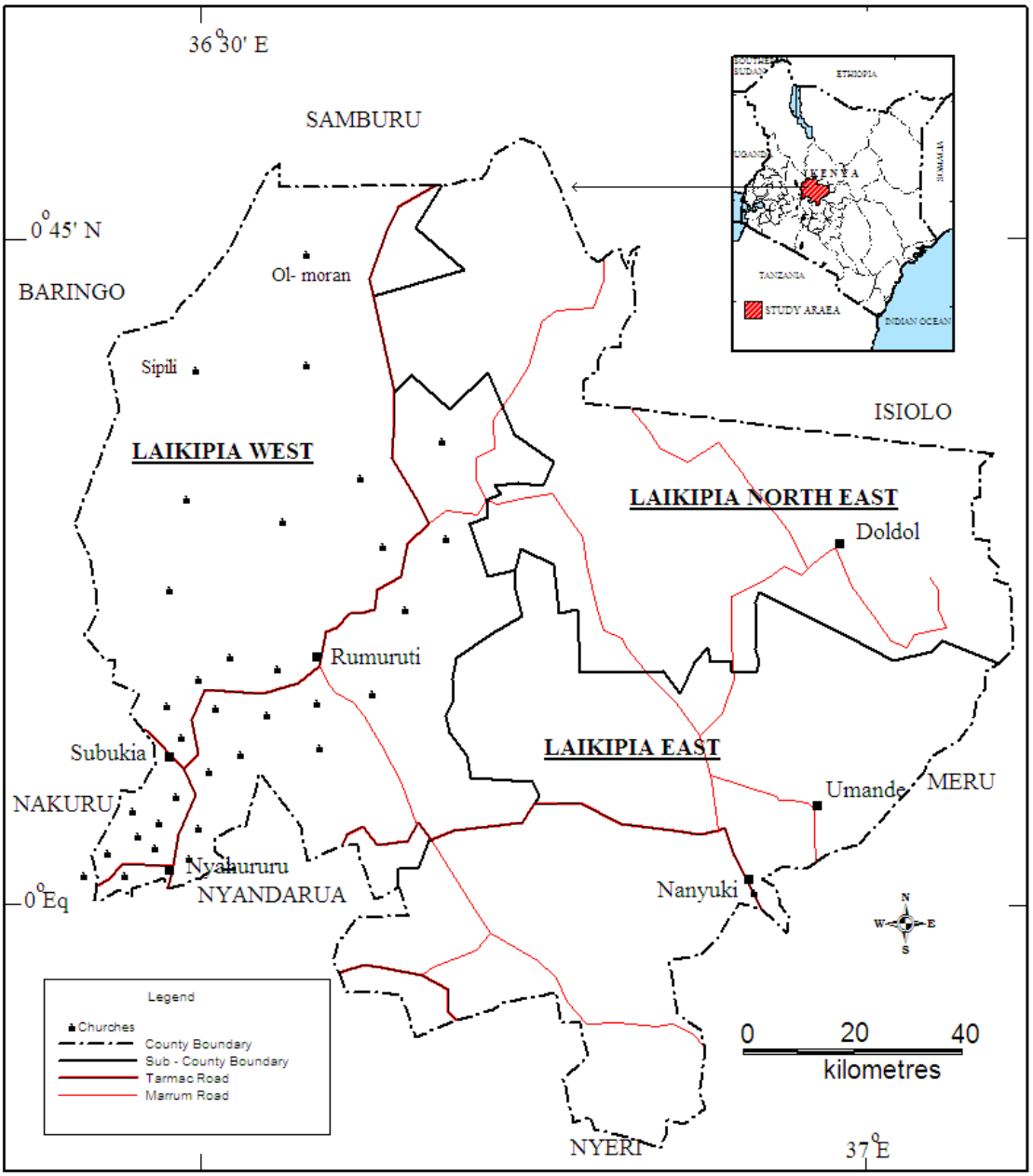
Appendix VI: Map of Laikipia County Showing the Churches in Laikipia West Sub-County.



Source: Moi University Department of Geography and Environmental Studies GISLab.