

**PERCEPTIONS OF THE LINK BETWEEN RELIGION AND THE
FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY: A CASE OF THE JOHANE
MARANGE APOSTOLIC FAITH OF SEKE AREA IN ZIMBABWE**

By

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DECLARATION

I declare that: PERCEPTIONS OF THE LINK BETWEEN RELIGION AND THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY: A CASE OF THE JOHANE MARANGE APOSTOLIC FAITH OF SEKE AREA IN ZIMBABWE is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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*Too many women in too many countries
speak the same language of silence.*

(From the poem “Silence” by Anasuya Sengupta 2005)

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AICs	African initiated churches
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CBOs	Community-based organisations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
FGD	Focus group discussion
FHHs	Female-headed households
GDP	Gross domestic product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JMC	Johane Marange Church
LAMA	Legal Age of Majority Act
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NAC	National AIDS Council
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NGP	National Gender Policy
NSSA	National Social Security Authority
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USA	United States of America
WiLDAF	Women in Law and Development
YWCA	Young Women Christian Association
ZDHS	Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Study

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explored perceptions of the link between religion and the feminization of poverty amongst research participants attached to the Johane Marange Church of Seke area in Zimbabwe. The study sought to explore whether the practices in the Johane Marange church exacerbated the feminization of poverty. A qualitative research approach was selected. Data included documentary sources, notes from observation, focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

It is found that according to the research participants, some of the church's traditions may drive the feminization of poverty in the area. In particular, the church's stance concerning young women's participation in higher education, people's health-seeking behaviour, its own understanding of the causes of and treatment for HIV and AIDS, its encouragement of early age at marriage for women and support of the practice of widow inheritance all contribute to a deepening feminization of poverty.

KEYWORDS

Feminization of poverty, Women, Poverty, Religion, Zimbabwe, Seke, Johane Marange

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

When one examines the issues of poverty the world over, women are found to be poorer than men. The United Nations (UN 2000:89) argues that the gap between men and women caught in the cycle of poverty has continued to widen in recent years. This alarming trend is referred to as the feminization of poverty.

In this chapter, the background to the study, the problem statement, the definitions of key terms and the research objectives are given. The limitation and scope of the study as well as its significance are suggested.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Generally, the feminization of poverty tends to point to the fact that in any given population, women are poorer than men. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1997:39) notes that no society treats its women in the same way it does its men. There are still many societies in which women are denied access to economic resources, control over their bodies, decision-making power and protection from violence. Moreover, in many developing countries, women marry before the age of 18 years, thereby being deprived of further chances for education and becoming exposed to the risks of early pregnancy (UN 2011:8).

Chant (2003: 1) stresses that women bear a disproportionate and growing burden of poverty at a global scale. This has become a virtual orthodoxy in recent decades. Governments and organisations, both local and international, are getting more concerned by this issue. In Zimbabwe, for example, a Ministry of Women's Affairs was put in place in 2005 to look into the plight of women. Local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), the Girl Child Network, and the Women's Trust are working hard to make a change. Internationally, development partners such as the UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continue to lobby for addressing the drivers of the feminization of poverty.

One of the first commitments that the UN's Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) stresses is that member countries must take measures which ensure that women can enjoy the same basic human rights and fundamental freedom as men (CEDAW 2003:1). This requirement is meant to protect women in the most basic way. Many countries in the world are members of CEDAW. They are signatories to this agreement hence are committed to giving constant feedback on the milestones they are covering in trying to improve the lives of women in their countries.

It is unfortunate that Zimbabwe, though a signatory to CEDAW, outraged advocacy groups and the general women population in 1999, when according to Oyekan (2002:153) a high court judge passed a judgment basing on the fact that the African tradition regards women to be inferior to men. Though this ruling was made in a particular case, it however highlighted the issue of the unfair treatment of women and brought to the fore the idea that human rights are gendered, in other words that women's rights are human rights (UNDP 1997:35).

Farrion (2009:1) suggests that: *"recent years have seen notable progress on issues of gender and human rights in standard-setting and to some extent application of those standards through international and domestic legislation and jurisprudence."* In this regard, the Zimbabwe Act of 1987, as well as the African Charter of 1990, states that education is a basic human right and that all children should be given that opportunity. However, some societies continue to deny the girl child that right to education. For example, statistics cited from the *Population Crisis* (in Cornwell 2003:8) show that two-thirds of girls of school-going age in Bangladesh are not in school. This is a major disadvantage to the girl child later on in life as she will be side-lined in development issues. In support of this Cornwell (2003:6) acknowledges that a child of a poverty-stricken, illiterate person is likely to experience a similar fate.

At a time when international organisations, especially the United Nations are calling for the uplifting of the lives of women, one wonders what the general feeling towards women is. The first Millennium Development Goal (MDG 1) focuses on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. MDG 3 aims at promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. MDG 5 aims at reducing maternal mortality. All three of these MDGs are in line with the 2008 The UN's theme of international women's day which stressed, "Investing in women". In societies where the lives of women had been neglected, more effort should now be put towards that end.

Governments must continue to invest in women, if they had not already started doing so. The issue of resources for use by women must be looked into, especially in very poor communities. The UN (2000:90) states that women are often denied access to critical resources such as credit, land and inheritance. This makes it difficult for them to make meaningful change in their lives. Chant (2003:15) stresses that most women are *de facto* owners of property. This means that they are holding the land on behalf of someone else. As such they cannot decide or make major decisions, such as selling or getting loans to improve the properties since they are not legal owners.

Governments of various nations have taken a keen interest in addressing the feminization of poverty (UN 2011). At the 1995 Beijing Conference the marginality of women, particularly the feminization of poverty was discussed at length. Zimbabwean government officials also participated in this and as a consequence, many policies have been put in place to address gender disparity regarding education, health and women's leadership roles in government.

Another important aspect of women's lives that fell into the ambit of this study is of marriage. In particular, the researcher wanted to explore perceptions concerning the ideal age at first marriage for women, decision-making power of women in the choice of a husband, arranged marriages, and whether women have a say over the number of wives their husbands will marry.

Walsh and Jones (2008:4) point out that women account for the majority of the world's poor, and that deprived women face serious health risks such as high maternal mortality rates, higher prevalence of HIV-infection and a high infant mortality rate for their offspring. It is obvious that poor health compromises one's working ability. One wonders whether information on protection against HIV is readily available in communities where polygamous marriages are the order of the day.

On the religious side, the researcher looked at the Johane Marange Church (JMC). The JMC is one of the many African initiated churches (AIC) in Zimbabwe. Its founder, Muchabaya Momberume, came from the eastern part of Zimbabwe. Glazier (2001:24) states that Momberume had deep religious experiences which led him to change his name to Johane Marange and to establish the church in 1932. He died in 1963 after establishing a church which has followers not only in Zimbabwe, but the rest of southern, central and east Africa. Today Marange followers are found the world over. Although Marange is revered and held as a prophet, he is not considered a messiah. However, his position as prophet gave him much power (Glazier 2001:4).

Mapuranga (2013) suggests that women's participation is curtailed in the JMC due to the church's adherence to Levitical laws and that the JMC's gender-discriminatory practices results in the subordination of women. Jules-Rosette (1987: 56) and Glazier (2001:40) agree that JMC doctrines and beliefs have strong elements of traditional customs. For example, the JMC practices polygamy and does not believe in modern medicine. Glazier (2001:25) stresses that members are sceptical about secular education.

Becher (1998:7), writing about the link between religion and the feminization of poverty, states that cultural taboos have been reinforced by religious teachings. Unless these taboos are brought to light and the negative teachings are dealt with through reinterpretations of scripture and traditions, most projects attempting to ameliorate women's status will stop short of their objectives. Here the argument is that the Bible should be interpreted in such a way that women are

not side-lined or oppressed. These scholars believe such issues will address gender imbalance.

Sweetman (1998:61) argues that in Genesis 1 verses 26 to 28, God gave both man and woman equal authority over nature. Why then should women be denied the right to equally control to the means of production? In both religious and traditional societies, women have to fight to own resources such as land. In Zimbabwe, the government had to create a quota system which would be used as a yard stick to measure if women were benefitting equally from its social systems.

Walker (as quoted by Sweetman 1998:7) argues that in many societies, the roles, positions and rights of women are regulated by religious ideas that work through social institutions. In such societies, religion is often used to justify customs and traditions intended to ensure women's conformity to conventional or restrictive gender roles.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

While there has been much research in the area of the feminization of poverty (Bell 2004; Beneria & Feldman 1992; Meer 1994; Moghadam 2005; UNIFEM 2002 & 2005), there is a paucity of research on the role the church in this area especially in Zimbabwe. This research therefore intended to investigate perceptions of the link between religion and the feminization of poverty. The central problem statement that the researcher set out to answer was: *“What are perceptions of Zimbabweans who belong to the JMC regarding the link between religion and the feminization of poverty?”*

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Primary and secondary research objectives drove this study.

1.4.1 The primary research objective

The primary research objective was to investigate perceptions of practices in the Johane Marange Apostolic church that drives the feminization of poverty.

1.4.2 Secondary research objectives

Stemming from the primary objective, the following secondary research objectives were developed:

- 1) To gain insight into people's perceptions of the feminization of poverty and factors driving it.
- 2) To understand, from the perspective of the research participants, gender and the feminization of poverty in the context of Zimbabwean traditions.
- 3) To better understand the context in which the JMC operates.
- 4) To make recommendations regarding the role that the church play in dealing with the feminization of poverty.

1.5 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

The following terms are hereby defined so that their meaning in relation to this study is made clear: poverty, religion, AICs and traditions.

1.5.1 Poverty

The UN (in Gordon 2005:4) defines poverty as *“a denial of choice and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of the basic capacity to participate effectively in society, such as not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having schools or clinics to go to, not having land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living and not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence and often implies living on marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation. “*

Chambers (1983:120) views poverty as deprivation. He points out that a poor person lives a life in isolation, encapsulated by vulnerability, powerlessness, and

physical weakness. This creates a situation which is quite burdensome for those trapped in it. Chambers (1983:120) calls it the deprivation trap.

Chant (2007:3) explains that poverty *“is lack of power to control important decisions that affect one’s life.”* Narayan, Patel, Schafft, Randmacher and Kock-Schulte (1999 6) explain that poverty is pain. This pain comes as a result of dependency, hard work with little or nothing to show for it, little or no food and having no liberty to make very simple choices in life. Some people have often made the assumption that poor people are lazy. Narayan *et al* (1999:6) dispute this. They argue that if poverty is pain, why would poor people chose to remain poor? Poverty is not a choice. The answer to this lies in the deprivation trap as explained by Chambers (1983). This trap can give rise to the so-called intergenerational transmission of poverty and it is typical of households headed by women who have married young (Moghadam 2005). Due to early motherhood that results from the young age at marriage, these women face incomplete educational attainment and poor labour market prospects (Moghadam 2005).

1.5.2 Religion

Religious people put their trust in a god or a deity who is perceived to be all-powerful and all-knowing. The Oxford English dictionary (2005:765) defines religion as *“a particular system of faith and worship”*. This definition shows that religion is not only about belief in a supernatural power, but how the believers express their respect to this power.

1.5.3 Africa initiated churches (AICs)

There are many AICs in the world today. Isicheri (1995:129) notes that AICs range from churches that are indistinguishable from mission churches to those which are more deeply steeped in African traditions. According to this definition, some of these churches just use Christian vocabulary, but their practices are similar to those of the African traditional religions. They usually hold on to one or more African tribal belief system mixed with Christianity.

1.5.4 Traditions

Giddens (2003:39) defines traditions as beliefs or customs taught by one generation to the next, often through oral communication. Giddens (2003) explains that traditions are “*a set of customs and usages viewed as a coherent body of precedents influencing the present.*” These include the way a particular group of people speak, dress, eat and marry though not limited to the way they conduct themselves and a host of other social actions that people may engage in.

The Oxford English dictionary (2005:971) defines traditions as the passing on of customs or beliefs from generation to generation. From this definition it is clear that these traditions are unwritten laws which regulate the concerned people’s social life. Both definitions agree that oral tradition is responsible for passing these traditions from one generation to the next.

1.6 LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In terms of the scope, the researcher deliberately chose the JMC for its overt gender-discrimination. It is important to note that the JMC has a larger following in the eastern part of Zimbabwe, in the Marange area. The research site was the Seke area because the researcher resides in Harare and Seke is quite close by. Seke is near Chitungwiza, a town situated 30 kilometres from Harare. Thus the urban parts of Seke have high population densities with the majority of the population being informally employed. The area has basic service infrastructure such as tarred roads, piped water, electricity, refuse collection, schools and health care facilities. The surrounding rural parts of Seke rural have a heterogeneous population in terms of their socioeconomic status. Some members of the community are wealthy and have built modern houses and work in Harare, while some are poor peasant farmers.

The JMC is quite secretive and shies away from outsiders, especially those whom they feel are critical of their practices, beliefs and traditions. This could have been a major limitation in data collection. However, the researcher used a

variety of data-gathering methods such as documentary sources, participant observation, interviews and focus group discussions to gain rich data.

It is important to mention that this research is not about feminism or anti-Christian ideas. Whilst feminists' ideas on feminization of poverty are incorporated, it is not a forum to discuss feminists' ideologies.

Finally, whilst there are other issues such as lack of women participation in policy making or development issues at national level, these are only mentioned in passing. The research does not broaden to explore these issues.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Issues regarding the feminization of poverty and its link to religion form the basis of this study. The researcher investigated perceptions of the link between some aspects of religion and the feminization of poverty. The topic of the feminization of poverty has taken centre stage in recent years in many countries. It was this study's intention to contribute towards the current debate on the topic.

The results of the study can be of benefit to universities in Zimbabwe by providing information on the already existing body of knowledge on the topic. Moreover it may assist non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), and stakeholders with insights on perceptions of religious groups regarding the feminization of poverty. Lastly, the research will also benefit the government of Zimbabwe and governments everywhere on how to work with religious groups, especially on issues relating to the feminization of poverty in their societies.

1.8 A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH METHODS

In carrying out this investigation, qualitative research methods were used. Last (2001:147) defines qualitative research *“as any type of research that employs non-numeric information to explore individual or group characteristics, producing findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other quantitative means.”*

Qualitative data helps to enrich the understanding of complex problems and to explain why things happen. Data collection tools which are in line with qualitative research were used.

These were;

- Participant observations of church services,
- Key informant interviews with church leaders, and
- Focus group discussions with teenagers, young adults and the middle aged adults.

These methods are discussed in details in chapter six.

1.9 CHAPTER LAYOUT

Chapter One: Introduction. This chapter introduces the research by providing a clear background to the study. The problem is defined and placed into context. The objectives and justification of the study are spelt out. The significance of the study is explained.

Chapter Two: The feminization of poverty. In this chapter the researcher provides an overview of theoretical thought on the feminization of poverty. Here, the feminization of poverty is clearly defined. Its history, as well as some of its aspects is spelt out. Indicators for making feminization of poverty assessment are outlined and justified. Issues of gender and feminization of poverty in Zimbabwe are also reviewed.

Chapter Three: Zimbabwe and local traditions. In this chapter the researcher examines Zimbabwe's place in Africa and its history. This gives readers a background of how the traditions of Zimbabwe have been affected by history. Finally a background to the JMC in the context of Zimbabwean traditions is given.

Chapter Four: The Johane Marange Church. This chapter focuses on the JMC. A brief history of the founding leader of the JMC is given. After this, the church practices, traditions and beliefs are outlined.

Chapter Five: Research methodology. The research methodology is outlined in this chapter. The primary and secondary research methods used are discussed in detail. This helps the readers link the process and the objectives to the results.

Chapter Six: Research findings. This chapter focuses on the research findings in relation to the research objectives and data collected. It presents the conclusions from the analysis of the data in the light of the insights gained from literature and provides pointers for the link between religion and the feminization of poverty as perceived by the research participants.

Chapter Seven: Summary, conclusion and recommendations. This is the concluding chapter. It provides a summary, conclusion and gives recommendation for development practitioners. It focuses on interpreting research findings and how they relate to the problem statement.

1.10 CONCLUSION

The introductory chapter focused on the background to the problem, problem statement, research objectives and clarification of terms. The limitations and scope of the study were also examined. Lastly, the chapter layout was given.

CHAPTER TWO: THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter commences with a discussion of poverty, then introduces the concept 'the feminization of poverty' and gives a brief history of the phenomenon. It defines the feminization of poverty in terms of indices for its measurement. The last part looks at the views of those who do not agree that feminization of poverty exists, as well as feminization of poverty and gender patterns that are more specific to Zimbabwe.

2.2 POVERTY

The concept of poverty is a complicated one. Poverty cannot be defined by what people lack only or how much they can spend per day. There are many issues which must be considered for people to come up with a wholesome explanation of what it really means to be poor. According to UNDP (2002:47) the Beijing Platform for Action describes poverty as follows;

“Poverty has various manifestations including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increased morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate housing, unsafe environments, social discrimination and exclusion. Poverty is characterised by lack of participation in decision making and in civil, social and cultural life. Poverty occurs in all countries, as mass poverty in many developing countries and as pockets of poverty amidst wealth in developed countries”.

The description above shows that poverty is multi-faceted. Chambers (1983:120) also described the above conditions in his definition of poverty and grouped them into what he called the deprivation trap. He concluded that once a person is trapped into these conditions it becomes difficult to escape poverty. It must also be realized that people do not choose to be poor. It is a condition they are either born in or find themselves in because of situations beyond their control. Narayan *et al* (1999:6) explain that “*poor people are not lazy, stupid or corrupt.*” If anything, some of them are the most hardworking people who do most of the

back breaking, hard labour jobs which pay them very little. Whatever they get paid is hardly enough to cater for their most basic needs. Cornwell (2003:6) concludes that a poor person's labour is not valued.

It must also be noted from the description of poverty by the Beijing Platform that poverty does not only affect people from developing countries. Though there are pockets of poor people in the rich developed countries, the majority are found in the developing countries. The majority of the poor are found in the southern hemisphere. In Africa, they are in Sub Saharan Africa. According to the Millennium Project (2006:1) poverty in the developing countries means suffering from diseases that were eradicated from rich countries decades ago. Even preventable diseases such as cholera are still claiming lives in Sub-Saharan Africa. UNDP (1997:40) claims that diseases such as malaria, diarrhoea and pneumonia still kill millions of children in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is almost unheard of in the developed countries.

Children born into poverty have few chances of escaping from its clutches. The Millennium Project (2006:1) claims that fourteen million children from poor countries do not go to school. Their chances of getting a good education, getting better paying jobs are narrowed right from the beginning. Their parents do not earn enough to send them to school. This creates what Cornwell (2003:3) calls generational poverty. In such scenarios the whole extended families lives in poverty. Rakolojane (2002:iv) claims that the causes and effects of poverty are intertwined hence it becomes difficult to tell them apart.

Thus, when understanding poverty as related to inadequate access to scarce and valued social resources (Western, Dwan & Kebonang 2005: 127), then it follows that certain factors influence the access to such resources. Morazes and Pintak (2007) note that such factors are class, ethnicity, gender, age and urban versus rural residence. For example, poverty in the southern hemisphere means spending more time doing chores such as fetching water and collecting fuel wood- domestic chores often left to women and children. In a world where poverty is measured by how much a person spends per day, women do not have the capacity to earn money from their gender assigned duties. Even when they

have time in-between carrying out their gender assigned duties, more in terms of unpaid labour is expected from them. Cornwell (2003:8) quotes the president of Burkina Faso who agreed that society expects the woman to work hard. This hard work comes in the background of very little knowledge because; the UNDP (1997:64) states that there are gender biases in education against women. Women's gender roles prevent them from participating in many activities outside their family boundaries.

2.3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

The feminization of poverty is a fairly new topic in the development arena. According to Pressman (2003:1) its discussion started in the mid-20th century and Diana Pearce was its mastermind. She had a keen interest in gender patterns in the evolution of poverty rates. Her interests were mainly on women in the United States of America (USA) between 1950 and 1970. Pressman (2003:1) further states that Pearce's initial definition of the feminization of poverty was an increase of the proportion of women among the poor. Considering what Pearce's interest was back then, it was an appropriate working definition. Pearce's main focus was on female-headed households (FHHs).

Departing from this view, the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) (2007:2), BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies (2001:2) and Makaza-Mazingi (2008:62) note that the feminization of poverty can occur in all types of households and is not only confined to FHHs. BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies (2001:2) asserts that even in male-headed households some men may retain a share of their income in order to maintain personal consumption levels at the expense of contributions to the household. The YWCA (2007:2) stresses that *"as such some women and children who live in households with income substantially above the poverty line may in fact experience poverty as a result of inequality within their families."* This leaves the rest of the family without enough resources. Such arguments have led to the broadening of the topic.

Debates on the feminization of poverty gained momentum in the 1980s when it was realised that urban women in Africa and Latin America were capable of

working in the informal sector. However, the UN popularised the notion of the feminization of poverty during the 1990s. This was also a subject of discussion at the Beijing conference. Pressman (2003:1) states that it was then that governments realized that the feminization of poverty was an issue which needed urgent attention. Ever since then, many scholars have taken a keen interest on the subject (see Bell 2004; Beneria & Feldman 1992; Meer 1994; Moghadam 2005; UNIFEM 2002 & 2005).

The definition of the feminization of poverty has also evolved with time. From a simple one which simply pointed to the fact that the number of women among the poor was increasing, to one which now looks at the complexities of life.

2.4 A DEFINITION OF THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

As noted earlier on, many scholars and organisations have come up with definitions of the feminization of poverty. Sahoni (1998:6), for example, defines the feminization of poverty as whatever the socio-economic or intellectual level of countries, a poor woman anywhere is poorer than a poor man. Sahoni (1998) realizes that the feminization of poverty is universal. It disregards the economic status of a country; women are vulnerable to poverty anywhere. According to a study by Pressman (2003:1) the economic situation and development level of a country does not *per se* improve the poverty status of women. Pressman (2003) further notes that this is true even in first world countries such as the USA.

Lopi (2004:34) explains that the feminization of poverty is present when women relative to men have a higher incidence of poverty and when their experience of poverty is more severe and on the increase. Here, the emphasis is on the severity of poverty on the women's side. Lopi (2004) also stresses the fact that the poverty rates are increasing. This definition points to the fact that women represent the majority of the poor.

The UN (2000:260) stresses that "*the feminization of poverty is a change in the levels of poverty biased against women or FHHs.*" The UN goes on to add that it can also mean an increase of the role that gender inequalities have as a

determinant of poverty, which would imply a feminization of the causes of poverty. This looks like a comprehensive definition in that it goes further to point out that even the causes of poverty can also be feminized. The fact that the UN notes that the feminization of poverty is also linked to gender inequalities is very important. This helps societies to get to the root of the problem.

Having looked at the three definitions of feminization of poverty, this dissertation will use aspects from all the three definitions. The above definitions have all brought out important issues about feminization of poverty which will be discussed in this paper. These are:

- Feminization of poverty is universal.
- It is severe.
- It is on the increase.
- Gender imbalances disadvantage women.
- When one makes an analysis of poor societies, women are found to be poorer than men.

2.5 CAUSES OF THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

The feminization of poverty is mainly caused by inequalities that are found within societies. Chant (2007:2) gives a list of some causes of the feminization of poverty, namely:

- 1) family composition
- 2) family organisation
- 3) inequality in the access to public services or in their quality
- 4) inequality in social protection
- 5) legal and cultural constraints in public life
- 6) labour market inequalities

The issues are discussed in detail below.

2.5.1 Family composition as a cause of the feminization of poverty

There are many types of family compositions such as a nuclear family, a polygamous family, extended family units or single-parent families. However, when it comes to the feminization of poverty, the focus often falls on single-parent families, especially FHHs. The Mexican Ministry of the Economy (as quoted by Chant 2007:2) stresses that single-parent FHHs are more vulnerable to poverty and their numbers are elevated.

The composition of a family can predispose it to the feminization of poverty. Chant (2007:2) notes that dissolution of marital unions and higher male mortality rates are causes of the feminization of poverty. This is mainly so in cases where the husband was the breadwinner and the wife is formally unemployed. This leaves the family in a desperate position, often creating a sense of helplessness and in most cases dire poverty for the remaining spouse and children. The YMCA (2007:2) notes that in such cases as above, the children being raised in these families may not be able to pull themselves out of poverty.

Child-headed households¹, especially those headed by girl-children as well as polygamous family units, are also regarded as vulnerable to poverty and related to the feminization of poverty. Girls in child-headed family units often end up taking over the role of family welfare. In its study of child-headed family units in Zimbabwe, UNICEF (2005:47) notes that three-quarters of child-headed families are led by girls. As a result of such scenarios most of these affected children lose their childhood as they must fend for younger siblings. According to this study by UNICEF (2005:46) girls from child-headed families are not treated as children in their communities, even though they treat girls the same age with parents as children. The community views girls from child headed families as mothers and

¹ Displacement and family dislocation due to wars and the effects of HIV and AIDS have given rise to an increase of child-headed households. UNICEF (2005:46) defines it as “*when a child or children take over as the head of their household and fend for themselves without any adults to look after them.*” In traditional African families, the extended family normally took over such households and looked after the children. But because of economic reasons, most families are failing to do so.

expects them to work hard to care for their younger siblings. These girls often drop out of school due to lack of money for fees as well as to create time to fend for food and child care. Such a scenario predisposes these young girls to feminization of poverty.

Polygyny may also drive the feminization of poverty. Hayase (1997:296) claims that in Sub-Saharan Africa polygyny is not only a type of marriage but a value system. A man is regarded highly in his community because of, among other possessions he may have, the number of wives and children he has. However the same research noted that in Sub-Saharan Africa, Zimbabwe has one of the lowest rates of polygyny, which is less than twenty per cent. It does not however, mean that all men in monogamous relationships are faithful to their partners. Hayase (1997:298) stresses that it is common for Zimbabwean men to have mistresses they maintain outside their family union. This creates an even worse scenario in that this mistress has no legal claim to the man's assets should he pass away.

In polygamous marriage systems, women and children do most of the unpaid domestic work. In some rural areas - once a man has cleared the fields for his new wife - it becomes the wife's responsibility to make it productive. Hayase (1997:296) states that men are motivated to have more wives and children because they are a source of cheap labour. In such unions women have very little property rights and are treated essentially as a form of property. They are more vulnerable to poverty than women in monogamous unions should their spouse die or should the union end.

2.5.2 Family organisation as a cause of the feminization of poverty

Family organisation has to do with how a family plans and uses its resources. According to Chant (2007:2) the feminization of poverty is linked to specific gendered division of labour and consumption within the household. Gender roles regulating the control over resources and intra-household distribution also come into play. The way a family distributes its resources matters in terms of feminization of poverty. Makaza-Mazingi (2008:64) stresses that a household

with a high income does not mean that women have access to such financial resources. It depends on how the resources are distributed within each particular family. It is quite common in some families for husbands to retain most of their income for their own personal use. This, in most cases, leaves the rest of the family with very little to survive on. The unequal allocation of resources within a household results in women receiving little or inadequate nutrition and health care. This intra-household unequal distribution of resources perpetuates female disadvantage and implies gendered vulnerability to destitution. It is not only resources that are unequally distributed, but also decision-making power. In this regard Cornwell (2003:17) argues that in households where men are absent, women's dependence on male children and on the absent men are exacerbated, because the women are not allowed autonomous decision-making. Kabeer (1991) thus states that women's poverty is more profound compared to that of men as destitute women are unable to seek paid work or to control and dispose of their own income. Moreover women are unable to exercise rights of ownership to the same degree as men.

2.5.3 Inequality in the access to public services as a cause of the feminization of poverty

There are many scenarios where women are disadvantaged, even in the provision of public services. Chant (2007:2) claims that barriers to education of girls, educational segregation by sex and the lack of women-specific health care interventions disadvantage women, and create the roots of the feminization of poverty. Women and girls must have equal access to education and must not suffer any discrimination in their pursuit of doing so. Cornwell (2003:8) quotes the following figures from the Population Crisis Committee about Bangladesh, where one-third of female deaths relate to pregnancy and child birth; two-thirds of school-age girls are not in school; female enrolment at university is less than two per cent; only seven per cent of women work for pay. Though this is an extreme example in terms of figures, such scenarios are quite a reality for most women. This type of scenario further pushes women into the depths of intergenerational poverty.

Often agricultural extension services in rural areas target men only (Okelo in Cornwell 2003:17). This is despite the fact that women often act as the *de facto* heads of households of families in the absence of men. This not only works negatively for women, but for the whole family because if important knowledge is withheld from them, then they will continue to be ignorant about likely improved farming methods, thereby exacerbating problems related to family food security. Cornwell (2003:17) concludes that because of this type of exclusion, women have very little access to non-formal education to supplement the little formal schooling they have.

In countries such as Zimbabwe, the UNDP (2002:160) has noted an increase in maternal mortality as well as an increase in dropout rate of girls from school since the economic meltdown. This is a major drawback on the elimination of feminization of poverty. Most poor families hold the notion that the girl child will get married and move on to her husband's family. As for the boys, they are destined to stay within the family, so if they are educated they will look after the family. Hence, they think that it is profitable to educate boys. One might conclude that this is a family's choice and is not government's fault. However, this simply points to the fact that there is no social protection for the female child by the government.

It must be borne in mind that women require skilled care in order to reduce maternal mortality and morbidities which make women fail to function normally. UNIFEM (2005:48) stresses that women need quality facilities and skilled health workers if MDG 5 is to be achieved. However, because of poverty, most African governments do not give priority to make such provisions for millions of women who desperately need them.

2.5.4 Inequality in social protection as a cause of the feminization of poverty

In developed countries, world over, social protection of all citizens is a priority. Although it is not a priority in most developing countries to offer social protection to citizens, the government of Zimbabwe realised the problem of inequality in

social protection and enacted the National Social Security Authority (NSSA) in 1995. The main reason why the NSSA was established was to cater for non-civil service employees whose employment could not give them reasonable pensions (Ministry of Information 1998:23). Most of those affected are women. They are the majority of the farm workers, domestic workers and informal traders. Gimenez (1989:43) states that women are the majority in the labour market where there is lower access to pensions. The government's initiative of establishing the NSSA is quite a noble idea. However, UNIFEM (2005:52) argues that very few employers make the contribution on behalf of their workers. Their argument is that the workers should make the contribution themselves. However, given their meagre wages, most farm workers and domestic workers cannot afford to make a contribution.

Chant (2007:2) notes that there were inequalities in benefit values in targeted policies in Zimbabwe, because before 1985, only women paid income tax. Men were seen as carrying the full burden of a family's financial needs and were hence exempted from paying income tax. This was regarded as unfair practice and the government had to rectify it. In 1985, the Government of Zimbabwe also corrected the gender discriminatory practices regarding pension contributions. The Public Service Pensions Regulations of 1985 made provision for women to contribute to their pensions at the same rates as male contributors. This was a step in the right direction in as far as countering the feminization of poverty was concerned as it meant that women would also be cushioned from poverty upon retiring.

Issues of paid maternity leave have also been corrected and now women in Zimbabwe get hundred per cent salary when on maternity leave. However, UNIFEM (2005:121) reports that most women in the private sector in Zimbabwe do not enjoy the same maternity benefits. There is thus a need for government to encourage gender mainstreaming in the workplace by promoting maternity protection in all sectors including the private sector. In addition, UNIFEM (2005) mentions working conditions in the private sector that predispose women to the feminization of poverty, for example women being dismissed when they complain about pensions, taxes or salaries whilst on maternity leave.

2.5.5 Legal and cultural constraints in public life as a cause of the feminization of poverty

Meer (1990) observes that persistent gender inequalities in households, labour markets, legal and political systems make women more vulnerable than men to poverty. This section looks at issues of property rights (in the form of land distribution and governmental support to women farmers), discrimination in the judiciary system (in the form of legal systems and attention given to violence against women) as well as constraints in community and political life. Cornwell (2003:9) points out that social and cultural beliefs as well as socioeconomic factors combine to put women at a disadvantage in public life. It is difficult for women to reconcile family life with employment. For example, in a society where domestic care and work is regarded as exclusively women's work, employed women who have to be absent from home for long periods find it very difficult to attain public life.

Moghadam (2005:29) aptly notes that: *“the state has an obligation to provide mechanisms for the realization of citizens’ socio-economic as well as civil and political rights. In theory, the state is entrusted to utilize various forms of revenue (e.g., taxes, rents, tariffs) to ensure human development. And yet, states’ capacity to willingness to do so varies across the world-system.”* While the Zimbabwean government encourages equal opportunities for all in Zimbabwe, when it came to issues of land redistribution, NGOs such as Women's Trust had to launch major campaigns so that women would also be considered. However, these women farmers continue to suffer inequality in as far as support from government is concerned. Maringira and Sutherland (2010:1) argue that when farming implements were being loaned to farmers by the Reserve Bank, women were not considered. Normally government sets aside a given quota for women when working on targeted policies. It is in such scenarios that women suffer because of social protection inequalities.

The UN (2011:8) reports that *“despite major progress on legal frameworks at national, regional and international levels, millions of women report experiencing violence in their lifetimes, usually at the hands of an intimate partner. Meanwhile,*

the systematic targeting of women for brutal sexual violence is a hallmark of modern conflicts.” In Zimbabwe, most cases of domestic violence are not given much attention when they are reported to police. UNICEF (2005:48) argues that domestic violence against women reduces their choices. Most women who are in violent unions seem to lose their confidence and they carry a sense of hopelessness about them.

In addition to gendered violence much can still be done in Zimbabwe to make legal systems more responsive to the plight of impoverished women. Mushonga (2006:1) asserts that even when the Zimbabwean parliament is called to review some of these issues, they are often unable to do so due to certain legal constraints. According to a document presented by the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development (2009:7) the constitution of Zimbabwe still discriminates against women on the basis of customary law. These are mostly cultural issues pertaining to inheritance which came into being a long time ago. Table 2.1 (below) depicts some comparative statistics regarding domestic violence in Zimbabwe and other African countries. It shows that compared to the other counties in the table, Zimbabwe embraces liberal laws to address violence against women, although its incidence of physical and sexual violence perpetrated against women by their intimate partners remains relatively high/

TABLE 2.1 INDICES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES, 2011

Country	Violence against women laws			Prevalence of intimate partner violence			
	Domestic violence	Sexual harassment	Marital rape	Physical violence 2000-2010		Sexual violence 2000-2010	
				Ever (%)	Last 12 months (%)	Ever (%)	Last 12 months (%)
Kenya	No	Yes	No	37	31	17	14
Mozambique	Yes	Yes	No	36	15	12	6
South Africa	Yes	Yes	Yes	13	6	4	-
Uganda	Yes	Yes	No	48	35	36	25
Zimbabwe	Yes	Yes	Yes	30	25	19	13

Source: UN 2011:137

Even when legal systems are improved to address gender inequality, women will have to be educated regarding their rights in order for them to benefit from such changes in laws and policies. Most women continue to suffer because of ignorance. UNICEF (2005:47) states that “*many women are ignorant of the existence of laws that recognise their rights and can be invoked for their protection*”. Organisations such as the Women and the Law, the Women’s Trust, and the Musasa Project try to raise awareness about important laws women must know, as well as constitutional rights that women must stand up for.

2.5.6 Labour market inequalities as a cause of the feminization of poverty

In many patriarchal societies, labour-market discrimination and occupational segregation mean that women are subjugated to low-wage, secondary employment sectors such as the informal sector or flexible labour systems (Moghadam 2005:23). When considering causes of the feminization of poverty, issues of occupational segregation and intra-career mobility must therefore be considered. Traditionally career areas such as politics, administration and even managerial positions have been no go areas for most women. Rather, in Zimbabwe it was normal for women to take careers in the field of nursing or teaching. However in 1985 the Government corrected this mind set through the Labour Relations Act of 1985 (Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development 2009). This law prohibits employers from discriminating against prospective employees on the basis of gender. However, women who have chosen male dominated areas, such as motor mechanics, construction and mining engineering, still face discrimination on the labour market.

2.6 INDICES OF THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

An understanding of the causes of the feminization of poverty leads researchers like Chant (2007) to consider measures or indices to capture gender-based differences in material deprivation. For example, indices for assessing the feminization of poverty prescribed by BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies (2001:7), the YWCA (2007), Makaza-Mazingi (2008) and Fukuda-Parr (1999) are:

- The proportion of women's vis-a`-vis men's participation in informal sector activities
- Women's relative lack of access to credit
- Women's relative health status measured in terms of maternal mortality rates or nutritional status
- Women's relative levels of education
- Women's participation in paid employment
- Women's ownership of resources such as land and capital

These indices, according to BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies (2001:5), are the starting point in trying to measure gender-sensitive social transformations intended to eradicate the feminization of poverty. However, BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies (2001:5) warns that more needs to be done to de-feminize poverty than what can be captured by these five quantitative measures. Jain (2005:108) stresses that *"focusing on women in isolation from their social relationships, does little to address the power imbalances rooted in these social relations that lead to women's greater vulnerability"*. This means that addressing the above indicators is a good gesture, but it must be borne in mind that without educating society as a whole on issues of feminization of poverty, it might be a waste of time and resources. Therefore both women and men must be targeted when the feminization of poverty is discussed.

The UN (2011:102) claims that *"The MDG targets on health and education (MDGs 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6) cannot be met unless all girls have the chance to go to school and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are addressed."* It must also be borne in mind that low levels of educational attainment bring with it a host of other issues. The YMCA (2007:7) further alleges that a lack of education is linked to absence of choice, denial of opportunity, inability to achieve life goals, poor nutrition and negative health outcomes. So, it is quite safe to conclude that women must attain a higher level of education if they are to be in a position to benefit from the various programs that work at eliminating feminization of poverty.

Makaza-Mazingi (2008:66) argues that “*meaningful empowerment of women, which includes education and ownership of resources (land and capital) is a critical factor in achieving the de-feminization of poverty in southern Africa*”. In support of this, Narayan *et al* (1999:6) note that low investment in women’s economic and technical capabilities need to be addressed so that women are awarded equal opportunities to men. As long as women do not have access to productive resources, lack access to information on reproductive health, lack access to education and are forced into early marriages, the issues discussed above will continue to draw more women into poverty. It must be noted that education continues to be a major factor which pulls women out of poverty. The Zimbabwean Education Act (1997) and African Charter (1990) state that education is a basic human right. Without it people will suffer deprivation. The effects are more negative if only one sector of society becomes more disadvantaged.

In addition to educational attainment, Makaza-Mazingi (2008:66) argues that there is need to redistribute assets in favour of women and increase access to capital through promoting credit, strengthening women’s rights and access to job and welfare programs. Redistributing assets will give women a boost in empowering them. White and Killick (2001:15) state that it is clear that there are gender disparities in access to, and control of directly productive assets such as land, credit, human capital in the form of education and health, that women suffer in particular. Most women do not have access to productive resources such as land or draught power. Even in cases where women are left as *de facto* owners, they do not benefit fully from doing so. In support of the above BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies (2001:4) notes that poverty reducing programs may not reach women directly, due to their lack of command over productive resources and control of output. This is a major drawback in efforts which are meant to alleviate the feminization of poverty.

Concerning women’s relative health status measured in terms of maternal mortality rates or nutritional status, the UNDP (1997:215) indicates that in Africa a woman is 45 times more likely to die during childbirth than women her age in Sweden or Denmark. There are very few health facilities in most poor

communities. And it is almost impossible for most poor women to access them because of either cost or distance. Walsh and Jones (2008:6) point out that there is a link between lost economic productivity and women's poor health. The UN (2000:3) has estimated over \$15 billion in global costs through diminished productivity due to the death of women and new born babies. Walsh and Jones (2008:7) further stress that the benefits from improvements in women's health and status have been shown by UNICEF and other organisations to have a positive effect on child wellbeing, helping to break the effects of lifecycle and intergenerational poverty.

Chant (2007:115) emphasises that any measurement of the feminization of poverty as a trend needs to *consider "the wider socio-economic contexts in which they are situated"*. In particular, gender relations as outcomes of the wider political economy of a society should be considered. In this regard, the YWCA (2007:1) suggests that in addition to the five socio-economic indices as described above, the following four indices are important in describing women's place in society that render them vulnerable to persistent poverty:

- Women's lack of choice in decision-making
- Denial of opportunities for women
- Women's inability to achieve life goals
- Limited education opportunities for women.

Fukuda-Parr (1999:101) notes that in societies throughout the world, women face more restrictions on choices and opportunities than men do. Poor women are often excluded from institutions that make important decisions. Fukuda-Parr (1999:101) further alleges that even women who were slightly better than poor men were included among the poor because they commanded less respect and do not enjoy autonomy in decision-making. It is this lack of choice and opportunities which makes the life of most poor women burdensome and depressing. White and Killick (2001:15) note that there is a particularly high incidence of poverty in polygamous households. For most women, lack of choice is the main reason that makes them stay in polygamous unions. BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies (2001:1) alleges that in polygamous relationships,

women's claims on their husbands' income may diminish. This leaves most women in a state of helplessness. They may have to work extra hard to take care of themselves and their children.

Lack of choice is also the reason why there are many child brides. Sahoni (1998:31) states that in cases of arranged marriages, the reason why girls are married off early is to make sure that they bond with their husbands. It also ensures that the child bride has no experience of independent adulthood prior to becoming a wife or parent. At this tender age the child has no choice and is dependent on the adults around her for guidance. This creates a cycle where the uneducated with very little economic stability marry their daughters at early age creating a bondage of poverty.

Denial of opportunities is a major drawback to the eradication of feminization of poverty. ISIS International (1995:1) stresses that literacy or critical consciousness education, along with income generation capacity, has been perceived as the golden door of success. Women who are poverty bound suffer exclusion, in development processes. Improving women's literacy is important in the fight for elimination of the feminization of poverty. However, Tipp (in Sweetman 1998:65) stresses that it should not only be the focus of organisations and governments to enrol girls in school. They should make sure that they stay there and avoid early marriage. This will help them to develop beneficial skills which give them more empowerment.

In agreement with the above, Sahoni (1998:98) is of the opinion that education has intrinsic value for the female. It enriches her, adds to her awareness and esteem. It also opens options for her outside her role as daughter, wife and mother. Not only is education a human right, but it is a crucial means of breaking the poverty cycle.

The researcher decided to use some of these indices as the basis for questions posed to research participants to understand perceptions of the feminization of poverty in the selected research area. Access to safe water and sanitation was left out because Seke is an urban area where these are provided by the local

authority. In particular, the following dimensions of the feminization of poverty were investigated:

- Denial of opportunities and absence of choice, dignity and self-esteem
- Women's inability to achieve life goals
- Access to maternal health and information
- Access to resources such as employment, civil participation, land ownership and credit
- Women's educational attainment

2.7 RELIGION AND THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

Browning and Browning (1991:1) blame the feminization of poverty on the breakdown of the family unit as a normative structure in society – a problem they regard as something that religion should address. Moschella (2012:2) adds to this view by suggesting that the breakdown of traditional family units is related to the fact that more wives and mothers are joining the labour force. Moschella (2012) suggest that organised religion should offer solutions to correct the situation and take care of the feminization of poverty.

Thus for these authors the solution lies in strengthened family units. According to Browning and Browning (1991:1) the ideal family unit should have a bonded mother and father raising their children together. They point out that both parents may be working or one may stay at home to take care of the children whilst the other parent goes to work. Hollinger (1988) stresses that many religions favour strong family units. He points out that in Genesis chapter 2 verse 24, it is stated that a man shall leave his family and be joined to his wife. This same information recurs in the New Testament in Matthew, Mark, Hebrews, Corinthians, as well as Ephesians.

From their Christian perspective, Browning and Browning (1991:2) prescribe that true Christian love within families will solve the feminization of poverty. They describe three types of love which can possibly keep families intact. These are;

- 1) Sacrificial love: This type of love is advocated for by many fundamentalist Christian groups. They use it to legitimise male authority, the traditional family and the submission of women. Sociologist Cancian (in Browning & Browning 1991:6) calls a family based on sacrificial love, 'the duty family'. The wife submits to her husband out of duty and not out of real love.
- 2) Self-fulfilment: The second type is an independence type of love. This is the type of love where the husband and wife view marriage as a means towards individual fulfilment. If one loves one's neighbour as oneself, loving one's spouse becomes automatic. So loving one's spouse actually brings personal fulfilment.
- 3) Christian love: This model still hangs on the second commandment and stresses that one must love one's spouse as themselves. This means meeting their needs unselfishly. It requires for both parties to take their needs and claims seriously. This type of love fits the needs of the family around the issues of shared authority, equal financial power and equal roles in raising the children and meeting each other's needs.

However, Browning and Browning (1991:4) are quick to point out that sacrifice *"cannot be manipulated to justify perpetual oppression, submission, vulnerability or inequality on the part of the husband or wife."* For example self-sacrifice does not imply a justification of physical or mental abuse. Hollinger (1988:3) agrees with this statement and stress that a marital partner has the right and responsibility to resist abuse. Moschella (2012:2) states that Catholic doctrine encourages married couples not to settle for anything that is less than genuine love. This creates stability, happiness and fulfilment within families, hence reducing the feminization of poverty.

Hollinger (1988:2) prescribes that over and above the issues of love within families, the youth must be taught these love ethics within youth ministries. The idea is that once they are taught these traditions before they get married, they will uphold them and establish better families in the future. UNPFA (2005:45) is also in support of the above statement and insists that girls and boys must be raised to respect each other, to aspire equally to educational and work opportunities and to expect fair treatment in relationships.

2.8 GENDER AND THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY IN ZIMBABWE

Having discussed issues of feminization in general it is important for this concept to be looked at in relation to Zimbabwe. In this section the issues of feminization will be discussed in response to issues that are context-specific to Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwe government has done a lot in trying to alleviate gender issues and feminization of poverty. The document presented by the Ministry of Women Affairs Gender and Community Development (2009:15) notes that:

- At independence in 1980 primary education was declared a universal right of every child (Zimbabwe Government 1997:1)
- Through the National Gender Policy (NGP), the government ensured that a number of places at its universities and colleges are reserved for female students. Nevertheless the gender gap at tertiary level remains wide.
- The NGP allows pregnant women to continue with their tertiary studies where before they would have been forced to discontinue.
- The government has intervened with a policy that says that 20% of all resettled land should go to women.
- The Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA) was adopted in 1982 and declared all Zimbabweans to have full adult status at the age of eighteen. The LAMA thus addressed the issue of women's disadvantage under African customary law. However, the LAMA came under attack almost immediately as an affront to “traditional African cultural values” (Ranchod- Nilsson 2006: 61). Moreover, in 1999 the Zimbabwean Supreme Court ruled that the LAMA does not ensure that women are treated as adults under customary law. This ruling thus overturned the privileges awarded to women under the LAMA concerning their right to consent to marriage on their own and inherit property (The Women's Watch 1999).
- The Labour Relations Act accepted in 1984 and consolidated in the Labour Relations Act of 1996 prohibits employers from discriminating against prospective employees on the basis of gender.

- The Matrimonial Cause Act of 1987 provided for equitable distribution of matrimonial assets on divorce.

These are some of the measures which have made a great difference in the lives of many women, their families as well as communities where they come from. It has also improved parity where there were gender gaps. Policies such as affirmative action have seen many girls/women attain higher education.

Many NGOs both local and international are trying to reduce the gender gap by designing programmes that will remedy this situation. For example, during the initial stages of the land redistribution in 1999, the Women's Trust campaigned tirelessly that women must be considered when land was being redistributed. This produced some positive results. The government has yet to publish its evaluation on how many people benefited from land reform and in particular how many women were considered.

However, it is quite clear that women still face many obstacles that bar them from breaking free from poverty. The UNDP (1997:64) explains that the wide range of biases in society mean that when adversity strikes, it is women who are more vulnerable. The biases that affect women mostly are unequal opportunities in education, employment and asset ownership. The UNDP (1997:64) has noticed that in Zimbabwe from the early eighties the government had almost managed to eradicate gender biases in primary education. However, when school fees were introduced in the late nineties, the biases reappeared in favour of boys. It seems parents consider it better to send boys to school than girls. This lack of opportunity to education continues to affect girls and later on women as it disconnects them from competitive employment.

Despite these changes, Zimbabwe is still often criticized for its gender discriminatory practices. For instance Masuku (2010:1) argues against President Mugabe's support of the JMC traditions. President Mugabe openly said he is supportive of the JMC practices such as polygamy and their refusal to use modern medicine (Vengeyi 2013:71). This outraged many civic groups. They

argued that such utterances were retrogressive and against what women continue to fight for.

Moreover, many rural women in Zimbabwe are still denied the right to protection by the law. Zimbabwe, a member of CEDAW and Southern African Development Community (SADC), which both stress that there should be no discrimination against women still has a long way to go in fulfilling this. Zimbabwe also adopted the Dakar Platform and the Beijing Declaration which both call for the promotion of human rights of women and elimination of all forms of discrimination. However, Mushonga (2006) has noted that all the above agreements cannot protect women as under Section 111B of the constitution of Zimbabwe, *“they shall not form part of the law of Zimbabwe unless incorporated into the constitution.”* So in a nutshell all the treaties that Zimbabwe signs do not serve to benefit its citizens unless they are part of the law.

In a survey by Maringira and Sutherland (2010:1) the Reserve Bank did not reserve a quota for women when it distributed farming equipment on credit to the beneficiaries of land reform. They further alleged that women in top positions like parliamentarians benefit, but most rural women do not.

HIV and AIDS have a role to play in the increased the feminization of poverty. Makaza-Mazingi (2008:65) asserts that *“women and girls within and across households shoulder the burden of care for HIV patients due to the gendered nature of division of labour in the home and societal level.”* Care-giving for HIV and AIDS patients in Zimbabwe has been made very difficult by the crumbling of the public health care system. Women have to bear this care giving burden with very little assistance from medical personnel. This makes them vulnerable not only to infection, but to more poverty. They have very little time to do their usual income earning activities like tending to fields or selling their wares.

2.9 ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

Chant (2007) and Davids and Van Driel (2005) argue that the term the feminization of poverty is too broad to be useful. Three major problems that support their arguments relate to definitions and assumptions, empirical support for the feminization of poverty as a social phenomenon and conceptual issues. These are discussed below in greater detail.

2.9.1 Problems in defining the phenomenon and the assumptions undergirding the feminization of poverty

Davids and Van Driel (2005:5) stress that “*women’s impoverishment has become a global orthodoxy that goes unchallenged as a fact of global poverty.*” Consequently, poor women become regarded as a homogeneous group, instead of looking at other variables that render some women more vulnerable than others. Another, related problem is that the feminization of poverty is assumed to be chiefly related to monetary poverty. Fukuda-Parr (1999:6) argues that the feminization of poverty is not just about a lack of income. It encompasses assessments of capabilities, livelihood, subjectivities and issues of social exclusion. Razavi (1999 in Chant 2003:3) stresses that “*from a gender perspective, broader concepts of poverty are more useful than a focus on purely household income levels.*” This is because gendered disadvantage is multi-dimensional and includes a lack of power to control important decisions that affect one’s life.

2.9.2 Problems in the empirical substantiation of the feminization of poverty

Many organisations stress the enormity of the feminization of poverty as a global phenomenon, yet finding quantitative measures to track trends are problematic. The UNDP (2003:143) states that although the feminization of poverty is identified as a challenge, there is a paucity of data to support of these assertions, as few countries collect and present sex-disaggregated statistics.

The claim that of the 1.3 billion poor people on earth, seventy per cent are women has been quoted by many scholars and organisations. For example the Millennium Project (2006:1), Sweetman (2005), as well as Browning and Browning (1991) are quoted as pointing out that the number of women living in poverty is higher than that of men. Yet, Chant (2003:4) points out that there is only one country in Latin America which has managed to differentiate poverty between man and women. Chant (2007) further points out that though simple head counts can be done to identify poor men from poor women, it becomes difficult when dealing with married couples in terms of asset ownership. In many households, it is difficult to differentiate on who owns what in when dealing with couples. It is much easier to do so when dealing with lone parent families. Of which if it is that case, Chant (2003:4) argues that female headed families can easily be seen to suffer more from feminization of poverty.

2.9.3 More specific conceptual problems

In this section issues of freedom, stigma, inequality and gender relations will be looked into.

- 1) Chant (2007) argues that there is more emphasis on incomes, consumption and assets when dealing with feminization of poverty issues. This becomes difficult to differentiate and translate to individual equivalents according to gender, age, etc. When such assumptions are made, it must be borne in mind that different families have different preferences to assets and money use. For example some families prefer staying in a certain part of town which is considered poor, making people to judge them as poor, yet it is by choice that they stay in such an area.
- 2) Chant (2007) claims that sometimes household income may bear no relation to women's wellbeing. Inequitable resource allocation can often lead to secondary poverty among women and children in male headed families. Here Chant's argument is that marriage does not protect women from poverty. Women may suffer poverty in a marriage where the earnings are quite high, but because of unfair allocation of resources, they fall into the poverty bracket.

- 3) There is also the issue that feminization of poverty tends to ignore gender relations. Chant (2007) claims that if poverty is feminizing, then the masculinizing of wealth, power, privilege and asset accumulation should be on the rise. Chant's argument is that there should be an increase in the number of men who are powerful and have accumulated so much wealth as we see more women feminized by poverty.

2.10 CONCLUSION

Having reviewed the literature on the feminization of poverty, the next chapter will be looking at Zimbabwe and her traditions.

CHAPTER THREE: ZIMBABWE AND HER TRADITIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will outline the geographic location and demography of Zimbabwe. It will further discuss the history and traditions of Zimbabwe. Issues of inheritance, land tenure, marriage, religion, health care, education, economy and HIV/AIDS will be looked at. This will help the readers gain an insight of the background of African Initiated churches in Zimbabwe, in the context of the traditions of the people therein.

3.2 GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AND DEMOGRAPHY OF ZIMBABWE

The name “Zimbabwe” is a Shona word derived from *zimba ramabwe* (big houses of stone), meaning royal residence (Ministry of Information 1998:5). This name is derived from the Great Zimbabwe, a monument located in the central southern part of Zimbabwe. It was the royal residence of the *Munhumutapa* Empire in the 12th century.

Zimbabwe, formally Rhodesia until 1980, is located in central southern Africa. It was a British colony for about 100 years. Muir (2009:1) states that because of its colonial history, as well as its economic and socio-cultural life, it is generally identified more with southern Africa than central Africa. Zimbabwe borders Zambia to the northeast, Botswana to the southwest, South Africa to the south and Mozambique to the east and northeast (Ministry of Information 1998:6). Joyce and Cubit (1999:5) record that Zimbabwe is 390 000 square kilometres in area.

The population of Zimbabwe has continued to grow over the years. Muir (2009:2) states that at the beginning of the 20th century Zimbabwe had a population of about 600 000 people. However, the last census in 2002 recorded its population at 12 891 000. The UNDP (2002:132) points out that 70 per cent of Zimbabwe’s

population lives in the rural areas. Thirty percent live in the urban areas, with Harare and Bulawayo accounting for most of the population.

The population of Zimbabwe consists of mainly the Shona and the Ndebele ethnic groups. The Ministry of Information (1998:8) states that the largest ethnic group is Mashona. They consist of the Korekore, Manyika, Ndau, Zezuru, and Karanga. They mostly live in the northern two thirds of the country. The second largest groups are the Matebele or Ndebele and the Kalanga groups. They mostly live in the southern one third of the country. According to the Ministry of Information (1998:8) one per cent of the population are whites and Asians.

The cultures and traditions of Zimbabwe cannot be looked at in isolation of its colonial past. The legacy left by its former colonial masters has shaped every aspect of the country. Though people have tried to maintain their cultures, the effects of the European settlers are easy to notice in all households.

It must also be noted that issues of marriage, religion and inheritance are similar for the Shona and the Ndebele. There might be some differences here and there but this research did not broaden to review them.

3.3 ZIMBABWE'S ECONOMY

Zimbabwe's economy is dependent on agriculture, mining and manufacturing. Zimbabwe was considered the bread basket of southern Africa in the eighties. According to the US Information Centre (2010:3) Zimbabwe was the second largest world producer of tobacco in the early eighties. The Ministry of Information (1998:16) states that agriculture was the backbone of Zimbabwe's economy prior to 2000. The sector contributed eleven to fourteen per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP), and it employed seventy per cent of the population. The US Information Centre (2010:2) states that this sector alone provided sixty per cent of the raw materials for the industry and provided forty-five per cent of the country's exports.

Mining was another major foreign currency earner for Zimbabwe. The Ministry of Information (1998:20) recorded that mining contributed eight per cent to the country's GDP, six per cent to employment and was the second foreign currency earner bringing in forty five per cent of the foreign currency earnings to the country. Its contribution also spilled over to manufacturing.

Manufacturing in Zimbabwe was well developed and was supported by good infrastructure. The Ministry of Information (1998:20) points out that this sector was one of the most developed and diverse in Africa. Manufacturing contributed twenty-five per cent to the GDP and accounted for sixteen per cent of wage employment. The industry produced goods for both the local market and for export.

When Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, it inherited good infrastructure in terms of roads, hospitals, railways, dams and schools. However, these were not enough as they were not providing adequate services especially for the rural population. The government embarked on a massive development scheme to improve and increase the already existing ones (Ministry of Information 1998:13). More dams, hospitals, schools, colleges and roads were constructed and this brought in more investors to the country.

Zimbabwe has suffered a major economic recession in the past decade. There are a number of issues that are blamed for the downward spiral of the Zimbabwean economy, including:

- The payment of gratuity to war veterans,
- Zimbabwe's involvement in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and
- Land reform

According to economic experts, the government did not have resources to pay out war veterans gratuities. They had to look for resources which they did not have to make this crucial payment. The military support which the government gave to the DRC during their civil war also drained the economy of its already

scarce resources. Although land reform was necessary, it had negative effects in that there were no funds for its proper implementation. Production on most of the farms plummeted and it meant major revenue loss to the government (US Information Centre 2010:2). Many people lost their jobs as new farmers had no resources to profitably manage the farms and employ workers. And the local industry which was heavily dependent on farming could not continue to function profitably.

Hanke (2008) states that in 2008, Zimbabwe's inflation reached 89,7 sextillion per cent. As shown in Table 3.1 below, Hungary was the only country it failed to beat when the world's worst inflation figures are compared.

TABLE 3.1: THE HIGHEST MONTHLY INFLATION RATES IN HISTORY

COUNTRY	MONTH WITH THE HIGHEST INFLATION RATE	HIGHEST MONTHLY INFLATION RATE	EQUIVALENT DAILY INFLATION RATE	TIME REQUIRED FOR PRICES TO DOUBLE
HUNGARY	July 1946	$1,30 \times 10^{16}\%$	195%	15,6 hours
ZIMBABWE	Mid-November 2008	79,600,000,000%	98%	24,7 hours
YUGOSLAVIA	January 1994	313,000,000%	64%	1,4 days
GERMANY	October 1923	29,500%	20,9%	3,7 days
GREECE	November 1944	11,300%	17,1%	4,5 days
CHINA	May 1949	4,210%	13,4%	3,6 days

SOURCE: Hanke (2008)

The economic decline reached its peak in November 2008. The economy started to stabilise in 2009 after the establishment of the coalition government and the adoption of multiple currencies. However, even with some growth being noted in the past two years, the Tetrad Group (2010:1) notes that Zimbabwe still has the lowest per capita income in the world. However, international bodies such as the IMF and World Bank are satisfied with the current growth and argue that it is following the right path to recovery. Banya (2010:6) notes that the Ministry of Finance's mid-term financial report of 2010 recorded a growth of eight per cent.

This came about because of the higher gold and platinum prices which boosted exports, as well as good harvests in some parts of the country.

There are major hurdles which Zimbabwe still faces even when it is experiencing this growth. The Tetrad group (2010:2) argues that more funding is still needed in the agricultural sector as unemployment is still high. The US Information Centre (2010:3) argues that unemployment is in the region of around eighty per cent. Government is still the sole major employer and this is not a healthy situation for a struggling economy.

Most poor people in the rural areas do not even notice this economic growth which the government and the IMF are talking about. Banya (2010:6) argues that the gap between the rich and the poor is still wide. Most of the infrastructure especially roads and railways are in need of repair. Education and health systems still need a lot of boost from the government. There is still more to be done in order for Zimbabwe to record growth which will be reflective on the welfare of its population.

3.4 LAND TENURE

Land is a very sensitive topic in Zimbabwe. Muir (2009:2) states that before the land reform program of the year 1980, forty per cent of the land was owned by white commercial farmers. The other sixty per cent was either owned by the state as protected land for wild life, flora and fauna or by communal farmers. Most of the land reserved for flora and fauna is in the eastern highlands. Prior to 1980, seventy per cent of the arable land was in the hands of white commercial farmers who constituted just one per cent of the population (Ministry of Information 1998:18). This created an imbalance especially in the rural areas. Esterhuysen (2004:2) points out that with no allocation of property rights, communal lands were characterised by poor use of land. Land degradation is not a common phenomenon in fields only, but also in pastureland. Pastureland is scarce, thereby forcing many families to rear small herds of livestock.

The president holds the rights to all communal land in Zimbabwe and allocates it through rural district councils. Consent to use the land is granted by rural district councils who invoke customary law. Chiefs have the powers to allocate land to married men within their communities. Muir (2009:2) further points out that a woman can have access to land through her husband. This shows that traditionally women and single people are not entitled to land. Oyekan (2002:121) notes that wives and daughters find it difficult to control land in the event of death of a husband or father.

There are still discriminatory practices in the distribution of land. As noted by Women in Law and Development (WILDAF 1998:3) discriminatory land distribution practices which favour men over women are justified in terms of culture and preference for sons over daughters continue in inheritance matters. Though the above issues are still in existence in many areas in Zimbabwe, NGOs, civil society as well as the Ministry of Women Affairs are fighting hard to rectify these issues. However, unfair distribution of land continues to affect many women especially in rural areas and poor communities. As previously stated, the constitution needs to be changed first so that the declarations which Zimbabwe signs can effectively protect women. However, even in cases where Parliament manages to change these laws, many women in rural areas or from poverty-stricken backgrounds remain ignorant of the laws which are in their favour.

3.5 MARRIAGE AND INHERITANCE

Most Zimbabweans come from patrilineal families; this means one's family tree is traced through the male line. After marriage the wife moves to her husband's family. However, the Tonga is one of the few matrilineal societies in Zimbabwe; the husband moves to his wife's home area after marriage (Muir 2009:3).

In Zimbabwe there are two types of marriages. Oyekan (2002:158) states that people can marry under customary law, or they can have a civil marriage. The civil marriage is one which is officiated either by a court official or a registered member of the clergy. A civil marriage remains monogamous. There are two types of customary marriages. The first one is the unregistered customary

marriage. This is when people just marry according to their traditions and do not register their marriage with the Registrar of Marriages. According to WiLDAF (1998:1), in such a union the wife cannot succeed to or share in her husband's property as his heir. However, such unions are recognised by the courts when women are claiming child support. WiLDAF (1998:3) further stresses that in such a union, children belong to their father.

The second type of customary marriage is the registered customary marriage. In this case, after a traditional marriage, the concerned parties will register their marriage with the Register of Marriages (WiLDAF 1998:1). Customary marriages are still very common in Zimbabwe. However, it must be noted that all customary marriages are potentially polygamous in that they do not restrict the husband to one wife. Both civil and customary marriages are dissolved by either death or divorce. Divorce is not very common because it has stigma especially for women. WiLDAF (1998:3) states that most women would rather suffer spousal abuse than be divorced.

Arranged marriages are only common between members of certain faiths and cultures, but are now rare in Shona customs. Most families prefer their children to choose their own marriage partners. Jackson (2012) certainly found such changed perceptions regarding arranged and negotiated marriages in favour of greater personal choice and elopement in her study of conjugality in south-central Zimbabwe.

Most families consist of husband, wife/wives, children and members of the extended family. The Ministry of Information (1998:9) stresses that in urban areas households are smaller and tend to be nuclear. In polygamous families, especially in rural areas, each wife has her own house and a share of the field. Polygamy is still widespread, but declining because of land constraints and low incomes (Jackson 2012). As Jackson (2012: 48) explains: "*There was not a general opposition to polygyny amongst rural women, most polygynous marriages were to wealthier men, and one woman explained that she simply wanted a spouse 'who could care for me properly'.*"

Oyekan (2002:158) states that authority is vested in men and wisdom is vested in age. After marriage, a man assumes the headship of his family. But in wider family affairs the elders are more influential. Women also gain authority and respect with age. This means the daughters-in-law have to take over the household work from their mother-in-law. Even after they have been given their own land by the chief, they are expected to come and help especially with field work.

Inheritance laws for married people are guided by the type of marriage that binds the parties involved. According to Muir (2009:2) *“in customary marriage, all property rights during marriage or after divorce or death belong to the husband. Disposition of the estate and guardianship of children are determined by male relatives of the husband.”* This is still a very common practice in the rural areas. WiLDAF (1998:2) has helped many women to get fair treatment in divorce issues, but this was only applying to women in urban areas. This has helped many women get legal representation so that they do not lose custody of their children and property. However, even in such cases this can especially be difficult where there is no will from the deceased.

In her study of the traditional inheritance laws, Muir (2009:2) notes *that “women may retain property that is traditionally associated with their domestic role, such as kitchen utensils.”* One of the patrilineal implications is that immovable property is regarded as men’s property. WiLDAF (1998:2) states that this includes the family home, cars and investments such as businesses. As mentioned earlier, some women put up a legal fight so that they have access to the immovable property after death or divorce from their spouses. Oyekan (2002:156) states that even though changes in the inheritance law recognise women’s contribution, it is difficult for some women to claim property rights in the face of family opposition. In instances where there is a civil marriage ended by either death or divorce, women have rights to a share of the property, though they still face the same challenges.

3.6 RELIGION

Zimbabweans had their own religious beliefs before the arrival of missionaries. Gelfand (1959) was one of the first few Europeans to give a thorough review of traditional religion in Zimbabwe. Gelfand (1959:36) explains that both the Ndebele and the Shona believed in one supreme creator. The Ndebele call Him *Mulimu*, (the provider of rain and guardian of nature), while the Shona call Him, *Mwari* or *Musikavanhu* (the creator of humankind). The supernatural being is appeased by both the Shona and Ndebele through ancestral spirits to overcome illness, misfortunes and bring rain. Bourdillon (1987:343) points out that this supernatural being is appeased through spirit mediums (*svikiro/homwe*) and lion spirits (*mhondoro*). The supernatural being also communicates with the people through the same spirits. A spirit medium when possessed speaks in a lilting voice and may utter incomprehensible jumble which those close to him or her will interpret to the rest of the people (Bourdillon 1987:343).

However, with the arrival of white missionaries, there were significant changes in religious practices. According to Oyekan (2002:158) fifty per cent of the population practice syncretism (part Christian, part traditional religion), twenty five per cent practices Christianity, 24 per cent practice traditional religious practices and one per cent are Muslims. The 2010-2011 Demographic and Health Survey in Zimbabwe (ZDHS) found that 85% of the population are Christian (including syncretic forms), 3% belong to African traditional religions, less than 1% identifies as Islam and other religions, and about 12% of the population indicated that they were non-religious (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency & ICF International 2012).

Muir (2009:3) states that in African traditional religion (religions indigenous to Africa), the spirit of a deceased person returns to the community after a ceremony. The spirit of a deceased person two or three generations before (ancestors) is even more revered, and has a powerful influence on family life. These ancestors are honoured at ceremonies to celebrate good harvests. They are also appeased when misfortunes happen, e.g. death or loss of a job. Gelfand

(1959:56) noted that these spirits also get angry and they communicate this through mediums. He further alleges that families seeking to avenge a death or enforce debt payment may consult diviners (*n'anga*).

Many Ndebele and Shona people converted to Christianity at the turn of the nineteenth century because of the many advantages that it offered. Besides worshiping an all forgiving and loving God, the new religion brought with it education and hospitals. Bourdillon (1987:352) points out that the Ndebele and Shona people converted to Christianity because of missionary hospitals. At the hospitals they could get treatment for their health problems as well as explanations of their causes. Bourdillon (1987:352) explains that coping with disease had traditionally been a central feature in Shona religious practice and remains a focus for Shona religion in its various contemporary forms. This may be the reason why there are large numbers of Ndebele and Shona people who practice syncretism. They probably would be trying to get answers to their problems from all angles.

Oyekan (2002:149) states that *“many Christians continue to believe in spirits and the power of witchcraft and seek spiritual guidance from both belief systems.”* Churches such as Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist are conservative in the way they interpret the bible and its teachings. Issues of spiritual healing are not part of everyday Christians in these churches. Pentecostal churches embrace faith healing in their church services. However, they together with the Protestants, Catholics and Anglicans, seek the help of medical practitioners when they are unwell. Bourdillon (1987:351) notes that AICs *“tend to interpret the bible more in accordance with traditional values. Faith healing, savings organisations (e.g. burial societies) feature strongly in their activities.”* Traditional practices such as polygamy are also embraced in some of the AICs.

3.7 HEALTH CARE

Traditional and modern medical practices are used in Zimbabwe. Traditional medical practices are when people use diviners and traditional herbalists to get solutions to their health problems.

The government-provided public health care system has recently been challenged by severe financial constraints due to the sustained under-performance of the economy. The Ministry of Information (1998:13) states that there is a health care system of clinics, primary health centres, district hospitals, provincial hospitals and referral hospitals. There are four major referral hospitals: two of these are in Harare and the other two are in Bulawayo. These four are also teaching hospitals and are attached to the University of Zimbabwe's School of Medicine. All the big cities have provincial hospitals which serve as referral centres for the provinces. There are also mission hospitals. Mission hospitals are better equipped because of the donations from overseas and NGOs. They also have a good compliment of missionary doctors, nurses and other medical specialists who serve there.

Primary health care facilities and village clinics are served by nurses and are complimented by community health workers. The Ministry of Information (1998:13) states that this setup helps to control diseases such as cholera, bilharzia and malaria. However, this system has also been affected negatively by the economic meltdown. Many medical personnel have left the country for better paying positions elsewhere. This has left many hospitals with skeletal staff. The US Information Centre (2010:4) states that even in cases where there is enough staff, inadequate medication plagues most government hospitals. Rural communities are usually hit hardest because the people are generally poor and have no alternative health care options.

There are also private hospitals for those who can afford them. These are not government funded and usually charge fees beyond what the average citizen can afford. They however, ease the burden on the government service which is already overstretched.

Those who believe in the African traditional beliefs continue to enjoy the more affordable services provided by traditional healers and herbalists. Patel and Winston (1995:1) state that whilst medical services are consulted eight times more than traditional ones, those who seek their services seem to get a lot of

satisfaction from them. They further point out that traditional medicine appear to be equally effective for non-specific physical problems. This gives satisfaction to those who think that their illnesses are of a spiritual nature. However, there are people who consult traditional healers for physical illnesses and still claim to get complete treatment from them.

3.8 EDUCATION

Soon after independence in the early eighties, Zimbabwe invested heavily in the education of its citizens. The US Information Centre (2010:3) states that the literacy rate is at 89 per cent. Prior to 2000 it was recorded by the UNDP (1997:47) as having been at ninety-one per cent. Even at eighty-nine per cent, literacy rate is still one of the highest in the developing world. Education in Zimbabwe was free from 1980 up to 1987, when user fees were introduced.

There are four types of schools in Zimbabwe (US Information Centre 2010:3). These are government schools, church-run schools, council schools and private schools. All of them are government-aided in one way or the other.

Primary education lasts seven years and most children start school at the age of six. After primary education children must enrol for secondary school which is either four or six years depending on one's performance. After form four there are many options for those who decide not to proceed to form six. They can enrol at teacher's colleges, nursing schools, technical colleges or commercial colleges. Those who proceed to form six can join the Universities in the country.

3.9 HIV AND AIDS

The government of Zimbabwe was very slow to respond to the issue of HIV and AIDS. The National AIDS Council (NAC 2004:2) states that the first case of HIV was recorded in 1985. The government started increasing efforts to tackle the HIV pandemic in the nineties. There was a concerted effort from various stakeholders such as social groupings and NGOs to assist the government in fighting the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe is amongst the countries with the worst HIV infection rates in the world. The NAC (2004:2) states that in 2003 approximately twenty-four per cent of the population aged between fifteen and forty-nine was HIV positive. This is a cause for concern considering that this is the most economically productive age group. The Central Statistical Office (2003:67) expressed the view that the situation was a tragedy because it had wiped out most of the gains of this generation.

The consequences of HIV and AIDS have been devastating to all the sectors of the economy reeling under its effects. In farming communities, the labour force has been greatly compromised, putting food security at risk. The NAC (2004:36) states that both the Ministries of Health and Ministry of Education are under so much pressure on how to deal with HIV and AIDS. The Ministry of Health cannot cope with the large numbers of HIV and AIDS patients in their care. Whilst on the other end, many children of school going age who are orphaned have to drop out of school because of lack of resources.

3.9.1 Prevention

Many prevention measures have been put in place. The NAC with the help of NGOs and development partners, have set up many voluntary counselling and testing centres. The service is free and many people are encouraged to go there for testing because there is now treatment for HIV. The distribution of anti-retroviral is still minimal. The Global Fund is providing a significant amount of the money to acquire anti-retroviral drugs. The Ministry of Education (2002:13) points out that NGOs such as Medicine Sans Frontiers have also put their own distribution centres especially in large informal areas such as Epworth.

About thirty per cent of babies born to HIV parents have a chance of being positive as well. The NAC (2004:56) states that Nevirapine which reduces the transmission from parent to child is also being adopted so that children born to HIV positive parents are free of the virus. This is a positive move though this drug is not yet readily available to all mothers who would greatly benefit from its use.

AIDS education is also mandatory in all primary and secondary schools. The motto for AIDS education is “catch them whilst young” (Ministry of Education 2002:2). The Ministry of Education hopes that by teaching children about HIV and AIDS at this early age they are empowering them and hopefully saving many lives. They also hope this will remove the stigma that is highly associated with HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe.

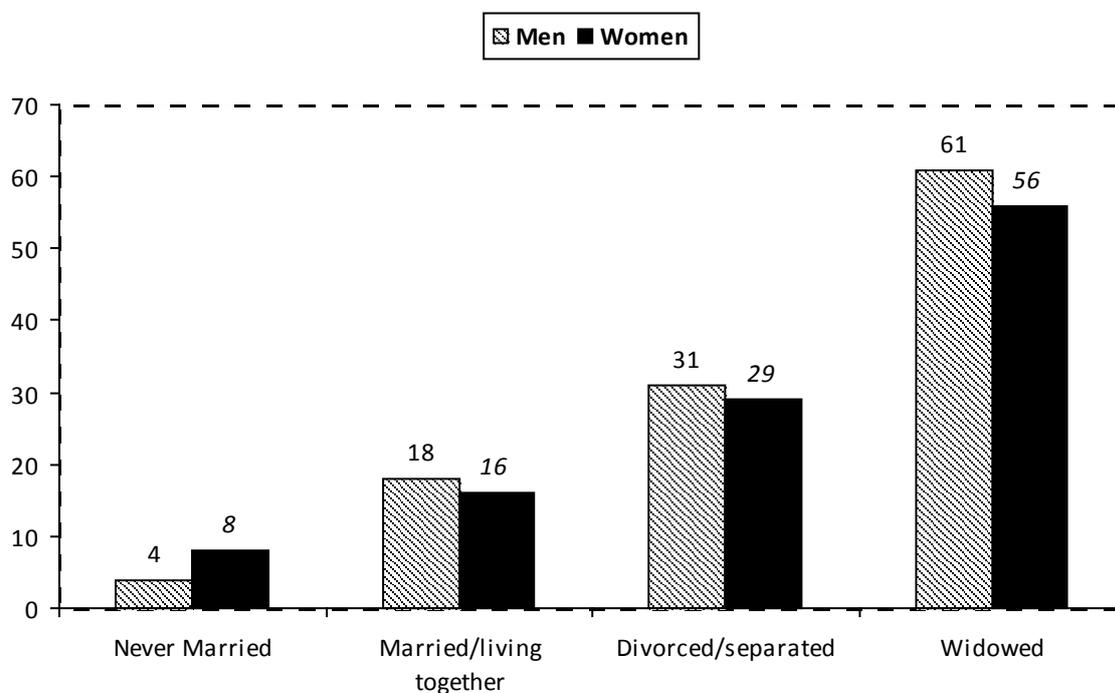
3.10.2 Gender inequalities

There are gender inequalities in HIV and AIDS prevalence in Zimbabwe. The NAC (2004:51) states that women are disproportionately affected by the HIV and AIDS epidemic. According to the Central Statistics Office (2003:30) women are 1.35 times more likely to be infected by HIV than men. According to the ZDHS of 2010 to 2011 (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency & ICF International 2012:15), 15% of Zimbabwean adults are HIV-positive, with the prevalence of HIV for the 15- to 49-year age groups being 18% for women and 12% for men. As shown in Figure 3.1, the HIV-prevalence rate is higher amongst widows and those who are divorced or separated. The relatively higher prevalence rates among women are related to greater testing coverage among women than men (80% of women tested versus 69% of men), and the greater biological vulnerability of women for infection. Nevertheless it has been reported that Zimbabwe has achieved one of the sharpest declines in HIV prevalence in Southern Africa, from 27% in 1997 to just over 14% in 2010. In addition, Zimbabwe has expanded its coverage of antiretroviral treatment among adults from 15% in 2007 to close to 80% in 2011, implying that by 2011, nearly half a million Zimbabweans were receiving HIV treatment and care (UNAIDS 2012).

Some of the reasons why women are disproportionately more vulnerable to HIV than men are that:

- Gender-specific social mores encourage women to be obedient and submissive to men. Married women are expected to never refuse sex to their husbands regardless of whether he has other partners or if he is willing to use protection. This puts women in a much compromised position (NAC 2004:51).

FIGURE 3.1: COMPARISON HIV PREVALENCE RATES AMONGST ADULTS AGED 15- TO 49-YEARS BY MARITAL STATUS AND GENDER, ZIMBABWE 2011



SOURCE: (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency & ICF International 2012:15)

- Women’s biological make-up makes them more prone to HIV infections than men.
- Sexual violence exposes women to the possibility of HIV-infection. Sexual violence is the consequence of gender power imbalances.
- A traditional practice such as “*chiramu*” – culturally-licensed sexual teasing between a young girl and her older sister’s husband, implies that unmarried women may be exposed to the risk of sexually-transmitted diseases within their families. (Figure 3.1 shows that the proportion of HIV-positive women in the never-married category among women is double that among unmarried men).

- Another traditional practice called “*kugara nhaka*” or widow inheritance can also expose women to HIV-infection. (Figure 3.1 shows high proportions of HIV-infection among the widowed group).
- The task of care-giving for people infected with HIV or living with AIDS often fall to women. Many of these women cannot afford protective items such as gloves or sterile equipment and are therefore at risk of infection themselves (Grant & Parpart 2010).

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlined the geographic location and demography of Zimbabwe. Issues of traditions which included inheritance, land tenure, marriage, religion, health, education economy and HIV and AIDS were discussed. The next chapter focuses on the Johane Marange Church.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE JOHANE MARANGE APOSTOLIC FAITH CHURCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter a background history to the founding the JMC is given and certain church traditions are discussed. In particular, customs and beliefs concerning marriage, education, health care and employment are considered.

4.2 HISTORY OF JOHANE MARANGE

According to Reese (1979:1) Johane Marange was born in 1912 in the eastern part of Zimbabwe, in the Marange area. His actual name was Muchabaya Momberume. Glazier (2001:24) points out that his father was a Mozambican immigrant who was a member of the royal Sithole lineage. His mother was the daughter of a Shona chief, Marange. Both Reese (1979:1) and Farhadian (2007:2) point out that Marange was from a prominent Methodist family. Bourdillon (1987:345) further alleges that Johane attended four years of schooling at the Methodist mission. Jules-Rosette (1987:128) claims that church records reveal that Marange was baptised a Methodist under the name Roston at a local mission. However, Glazier (2001:24) records that Marange's sons disagree with this assertion. They dispute the American Methodist missionaries who claim that he was baptised in their church.

Jules-Rosette (1987:3), Reese (1979:1) and Farhadian (2007:2) record that in 1932 Marange had deep religious experiences. These led him to assume the role of modern day John the Baptist and to establish a church. Jules-Rosette (1987:128) points out that at an early age, he claimed to have been visited by the Holy Spirit and would hear strange voices and see visions. The hearing of voices and seeing of visions is found in both Christian and African religions. Both religions identify with seeing of visions, although for African religion these are from ancestors and in Christianity they are directly from God. Jules-Rosette (1987:128) notes that Marange's turning point came when he heard a 'heavenly'

voice which told him that he was 'John the Baptist, an apostle'. This voice told him to, 'go to every country and preach and convert people.' Thus, he began his ministry. He preached repentance and encouraged baptism of all recruits in rivers which he referred to as 'Jordan's'. He became an itinerant evangelist who roamed as far as the DRC, Kenya, Tanzania, and most of central and southern Africa.

Wherever he established a church, he would baptise people before moving on. Reese (1979:2) noted that in the 1970s, JMC was one of the largest AICs in Zimbabwe. It had more than 500 000 adherents in the region and vied with the Zion church of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church for affiliates in Zimbabwe.

Marange had so many visions during his early years when he was establishing his church, that he wrote a book about it. Jules-Rosetta (1987:39) points out that Marange recorded his visions in a book 'Humbowo Hutsva HweVaPositori' (New Witness of the Apostles). Bourdillon (1987:346) stresses that in this book, Marange claims to have received a full charter for his church with all its rules and practices through the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The apostles in the JMC use this book as a moral and spiritual guide. Though they still use the Bible for their sermons, this book plays a special role in church traditions. Most members of the JMC have this book and are constantly referring to it.

Marange carefully selected the top leadership of the church. The church consisted of a hierarchy leadership of 12 members based in Zimbabwe. He usually handpicked them and in most cases they were close members of his family. Jules-Rosette (1987:39) states that Marange retained control of his large ministry by ordaining leaders at the annual Pendi (Passover ceremony). Jules-Rosette further suggests that JMC members living outside Zimbabwe sought his approval for leaderships in their countries. In this way he kept his church closely knit and he was in control.

Marange's missionary work spanned over 30 years. He died in 1963 and his sons took over the running of the church. Recent publications by Anderson (2001 4) estimate that there is about a million Marange adherents the world over.

4.3 PRACTICES IN THE FAITH

Not all AICs in Zimbabwe hold similar views regarding the position of women in the church hierarchy and in society (Mapuranga 2013). AICs share some traditions as far as church attire, dietary prescriptions and the practice of open-air church services are concerned. However, there are differences in some of practices such as observance of Sabbath days and beliefs regarding education and health. Thus, although some AICs might not approve of Western medical care, a sizeable number of modern medical practitioners are members of AICs.

The JMC incorporates both Christian biblical teachings and traditional practices in their daily lives. Reese (1979:3) notes that the church is an extension of African traditional religion and Christian doctrines. Influences from African traditional practices such as polygamy and inheritance of wives are acceptable in the JMC. They however, totally reject some of traditions as evil. Anderson (2001:13) in this regard observes that the JMC believes that the world is a spiritual battleground sprinkled with demons and witches, thus disease is thought to have spiritual causes and cures.

The JMC is closely knit and secretive. Reese (1979:2) points out that the members are suspicious of outsiders. It is quite easy to join the JMC, but leaving the church is a difficult matter as defectors are regarded as beset with evil spirits. This implies that membership of the JMC often becomes a lifetime commitment. Children born in the church are raised there and will be expected to pass church traditions to generations to come. Bourdillon (1987:348) stresses that when an apostle dies, church members take the responsibility for burial. They arrange all the funeral activities and sometimes they do not even consult or involve the relatives if they are not from the church. Bourdillon further alleges that the corpse is buried in the proximity of the graves of other apostles. Shona tradition usually requires that a person must be buried amongst his/her own people.

4.3.1 Church services

Church services are usually conducted on a Saturday. Farhadian (2007:50) states that worship is done outside, usually under the shade of a tree, and lasts from mid-morning till late afternoon. The choice of a venue for a service is not spiritually-led. Instead church elders look for central places with shade and mark the perimeter of their chosen site of worship with stones. Farhadian (2007:50) notes that such places of worship become holy through frequent use. In urban areas, such sites eventually become prohibited for use by other Apostolic Faith churches.

Apostles in the JMC have rules which they must abide by when they are attending church services. Any place of worship is considered holy ground. Farhadian (2007:53) states that shoes are removed when standing on holy ground. This rule applies even within worship in the home. It also applies to visitors. The rule is that when one is praying one is in the presence of God, hence no shoes should be worn.

Apostles in the JMC do not dance during service, but sing in harmony. At such services, it is not uncommon to have people speak in tongues. They will then interpret what the Holy Spirit would have led them to say.

The content of the services varies depending on the issues to be preached. According to Farhadian (2007:60) they can talk about immediate political themes and social issues recurring. Themes such as testimonies of healing and on-going spiritual warfare against evil forces are quite common at gatherings. Normal everyday issues are also talked about during the services. People are encouraged to live “clean lives”, which is interpreted to mean that they should not commit adultery or prostitution, must shun witchcraft and avoid general bad behaviour.

Church members are encouraged to confess their sins. Farhadian (2007:48) stresses that through the act of confession, people reveal what is not right in their lives and they improve themselves through the inner cleansing provided by the

act of confession. These confessions can be done to church elders (prophets) in private or during the service depending on the gravity of the sin. Failure to confess can result in God unleashing His wrath on the offender. This can manifest in bareness, miscarriage, failure to deliver a baby normally, illness and a host of other misfortunes to one's life.

Apostles in the JMC have different ranks of male leadership. Women's participation in church leadership is not allowed. In fact, Mapuranga (2013: 5) notes: *"the subordination of women has been vivified by the church at large as normal and women are taught to be subordinate both in the church and at home. Consequently, there is no leadership space for women since they are not considered as participants in the leadership hierarchies as well as preaching."* There are no separate women's organisations in the JMC that can facilitate female leadership. However, Chitando (2003:4) notes that JMCs have female prophets who are also renowned healers. These prophets have the gift of seeing visions and healing the sick. They also participate during church services when it is time for healing sessions; however, it is men who are dominant during most of these services. Farhadian (2007:50) states that women are resigned to singing during services.

Faith-healing happens at the end of each church service (Bourdillon 1987:351). The healing sessions are carried out by prophets or healers. Bourdillon further stresses that exorcism of evil spirits are also carried out. No medicine is given in all these exercises. The Holy Spirit as well as the faith of both the prophet/healer and the afflicted is at work. However, Bourdillon (1987:352) claims that continual attendance at church service helps those who do not belong to the church who would have been healed to remain free of their former afflictions. This is normally the case with such afflictions as avenging spirits.

Besides the normal services, apostles also have special events. Farhadian (2007:66) states that they include baptism, ceremonies to remove evil from people's homes and Pentecost (Paseka/Pendi). Pentecost is the biggest event for the JMC. This is celebrated in July and they celebrate it by eating unleavened bread and home-made wine. They have large gatherings in Marange during this

celebration. Church members come from as far as Kenya, South Africa, Namibia and the DRC for this event.

Church services during Pentecost are more or less the same as their weekly services. However, the major difference is that, during Pentecost, church leaders get to address people. Bourdillon (1987:350) states that this is a long event lasting for more than a week. There are also sessions where evil spirits are exorcized, people confess their sins and when great prophets and healers take time to consult those who may have illnesses local prophets will have failed to cure. Bourdillon (1987:349) goes on to say that senior members of the church and dignitaries are also called to judge cases which the local elders will have failed to resolve. These may be marital issues, accusations of witchcraft and a host of other social problems that may unsettle people in their everyday life.

The last day of this ceremony is the climax of the event. This is the day they share communion. Bourdillon (1987:350) claims that the unleavened bread and juice is prepared by virgins who will have been selected earlier on by church elders with the help of older women. Those who will receive this communion will start by confessing their sins. After the confessions, they will also take part in the foot washing ceremony then they will file past the communion table (Bourdillon 1987:350). This is the last activity before they go back to their homes

4.3.2 Diet

Anderson (2001:13) notes that AICs tend to adhere to the dietary prescriptions of the Christian Old Testament in which the consumption of the meat from birds, rabbits, pigs and catfish are prohibited. In addition, drinking beer and using tobacco is prohibited. JMC members are allowed to drink soft drinks or Mahewu (a maize-meal beverage in which they use yeast for fermentation).

4.3.3 Church attire

Reese (1979:3) asserts that in the JMC women must wear long white dresses and white headscarves when attending church service. Men must shave their

heads and keep a long beard at all times. Farhadian (2007:54) states that bishops have distinctive staves as emblems of spiritual power. Bourdillon (1987:348) points out that a badge which indicates the person's office is part of their church attire. Bishops are allowed to wear plain clothes when not attending to church services as long as they do not wear clothing in red or black.

Farhadian (2007:53) observes that church attire symbolises cleansing as white garments symbolises a retreat from the world to enter an alternative space of purity and holiness.

4.4 BELIEFS IN THE JMC COMPOUNDING THE MARGINALITY OF WOMEN

Certain beliefs in the JMC compound the marginality of women, such as beliefs regarding marriage, women's education, women's employment and health care. Each of these is discussed in greater detail below.

4.4.1 Beliefs regarding marriage, virginity and family planning

Polygyny is common in the JMC and regarded as acceptable because pre-marital and extra-marital sexual activity among men as well as women is discouraged. Anderson (2001:13) notes that a man may marry as many wives as he wishes, but in most cases the young girls have no say over who they will marry. Arranged marriages remain in place in the JMC, and a girl cannot refuse the arrangement. If she does so, her family will disown her. Anderson (2001:3) attributes this to the strict rules girls have to abide by if they do not wish to face the wrath of God. In most cases in the JMC, these girls will be between the ages of 10 to 16 years. However, it must also be noted that not all marriages are arranged. Although polygyny is allowed, there are also families within this church who choose to have monogamous relationships.

Virginity tests for girls are the norm in the JMC. Gregson, Zhuwau, Anderson and Chandiwana (1999:189) observe: *"in cases where young women are suspected of having had pre-marital sex, older women are appointed to carry out physical*

checks to establish whether this is so. Where serious sins have been committed, elders may impose penalties, such as confiscation of the characteristic white or multi-coloured robes worn at church services or withdrawal of church support in the event of sickness”. The Girl Child Network (2004: 23) alleges that in some cases those who fail the test are subjected to rape and insults from other members of the faith. Failing a virginity test is humiliating and forces young girls into marriages where they will continue to be stigmatised by others (Girl Child Network 2004: 23).

Divorce is not permitted at all within the JMC. In the event of divorce, parents are not encouraged to take their daughters back. Jules-Rosett (1987:40) states that JMC apostles believe that marriage is for life. Whatever problems one might face should not lead to a divorce. However, should a divorce occur, the woman will only be allowed to take any possessions or children with her as these are regarded as her husband's property.

Marriage to a non-believer is not discouraged, provided that the non-believer wants to convert to be a member of the JMC before the marriage ceremony. If an unbeliever marries within the church and refuses to convert, the marriage is not considered binding and divorce is allowed in such a case. Parents are blamed if their children choose to marry outside the church. Chipungudzanye (2003:5) states that it may be the reason why the apostles do not want their children to attain higher education. They also fear that they may end up finding suitors outside their church.

In the case of death of the husband, his wives are inherited by family members. Jules-Rosette (1987:38) states that these can either be the deceased's younger or elder brothers. Even cousins can also inherit deceased relative's wives. Women are not given the option of remaining single if they want to remain in the family. All women who have not yet reached menopause must not be single.

Regarding family planning, Gregson *et al* (1999: 188 & 189) observe that in the JMC *“leaders teach faith-healing and regard sickness itself and use of medical services (traditional or modern) as signs of weakness of faith. Non-natural*

methods of family planning - i.e. methods other than withdrawal and periodic abstinence - are considered to be medicines in this context...The teachings and controls on use of medicines and contraceptives are most strictly applied in the Marange Apostolic church, which is more prominent in the Honde Valley, where religious differentials in birth rates and death rates have been most pronounced."

An early age at marriage for women, coupled with low use of modern contraception and the avoidance of divorce all combine to set social roles for women that stress their roles as wives and mothers of relatively high numbers of children.

4.4.2 Beliefs regarding women's educational attainment

In the JMC, the girl child may go to school, but just up to primary level. Chipungudzanye (2003 5) states that the JMC refuses to let their young women attain higher education. Early marriage prohibits these young women's further participation in education beyond the primary level. This, in turn, influences their ability to participate in a modern labour force. Machingura (2011:196) observes: *"The last statistics from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture district office reveal that out of the 10 000 girls who enrolled in Form One in the Marange district where the Johane Marange sect is dominant, only about a third completed Form Four in 2003; with the highest probability that, those who dropped out became wives"*.

4.4.3 Beliefs regarding women's participation in waged labour

The 2010-2011 ZDHS found that 44% of married women aged 15- to 49-years were employed, compared with 85% of married men (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency & ICF International 2012). The JMC teaches that women may engage in income-generating projects such as basketry, making soft furnishings or cross-border trading. They are allowed to work, but the church encourages self-employment in cottage-type industries as opposed to waged labour outside the home. Anderson (2001:13) says that husbands have absolute control over the household, and therefore holds decision-making power over the women's

labour force activities and access to financial resources. As for men in the JMC, they have free choice on whether to work and the type of employed they are involved in.

4.4.4 Beliefs pertaining to health and illness

Anderson (2001: 14) states that diseases are viewed by the JMC as having spiritual causes and cures. Chipungudzanye (2003: 5) adds that JMC members refuse to use modern medicine. Prophets and those with the gift of healing provide medical care for church members. Farhadian (2007:63) states that, as in most AICs, the JMC has made faith healing a marker of their identity. It is not uncommon for people to blame witchcraft for their illness or misfortune. According to Farhadian (2007:65) witchcraft detecting and eradication remains an important part of the healing process.

It has already been pointed out that the JMC prohibits the use of modern methods of family planning. As far as women's reproductive health is concerned, childbirth is handled only by traditional birth attendants within the church. Complications in childbirth are regarded as a pointer to sin. Confessions are believed to help in the safe delivery of babies; otherwise both mother and child will be at risk of losing their lives.

These beliefs also affect morbidity and mortality of children, In 2009 when there was an outbreak of measles in the Marange area, Mr Claudios Charakupa, a herd man and a member of the JMC preached that child deaths due to measles was an occurrence related to sinners not confession their sin (ZBC News 2010). Thus, JMC members are not allowed to immunise their children.

4.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave a history of the founding member of the JMC. It also outlined the church practices and traditions. Issues of marriage, education, employment and health were discussed. The next chapter will present the research methodology.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the research methodology used in carrying out this study. Due to the nature of the enquiry, the researcher decided that a qualitative approach was most suitable to explore the perceptions of people in the chosen research site of the link between religion and the feminization of poverty. Babbie and Mouton (2002:263) suggest that qualitative research methods are the most appropriate when one wants to have in-depth understanding of a given social phenomenon.

In the first part of the chapter the researcher discusses qualitative research in general, and then the chosen research design in greater detail.

5.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Babbie and Mouton (2002:646) define qualitative research as a non-numerical examination and patterns or relationships. Bogdan and Taylor (1996: 28) say that qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting. Qualitative research attempts to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Silent voices and behavioural patterns are also given centre stage in qualitative research.

Key (1997: 3) lists the following as the major strengths and weakness of qualitative research: In terms of strengths, qualitative research enables the researcher to gather in-depth, comprehensive information to enable him or her to gain a wide understanding of the entire situation. In terms of its weaknesses, qualitative approaches demands different checks on researcher-induced bias, is limited in scope due to the demand for comprehensive data-gathering and is

labour intensive and time consuming. Wolcott (1990: 123) adds that although qualitative approaches may be criticised as being subjective, the researcher must build in checks and balances to ensure rigour.

Qualitative research methods are mainly reliant on the expertise of the researcher in order to achieve their purpose. In line with this, Merriam (1998: 18) says that the qualitative researcher should:

- Be a good listener
- Record all observations and conversations accurately
- Analyse all data fairly
- Attempt to achieve balance between his/her emic and etic roles.

5.3 THE CHOSEN RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to uncover perceptions regarding the link between religion and the feminization of poverty, primary and secondary data sources were engaged. Primary data sources comprised of interviews (both focus group interviews and face-to-face interviews with selected key informants) with the JMC church members and notes gained from participant observation. Secondary data sources included published and unpublished literature, and the media.

5.3.1 Sampling

Alasuutari (1995:16) defines a sample as a part of statistical practice concerned with the selection of individuals intended to yield some knowledge about the topic under investigation. To find the population for this study to draw a sample presented several challenges. Firstly, although the Seke area has the largest number of AICs in an urban area, including Masowe, Marange, Mwazha, Mugodhi, Chaza and the JMC, the largest concentration of JMC members tends to reside in the Marange area (in the Manicaland province, east of Zimbabwe). The church in Seke did not keep a register of members' residential addresses to enable a sampling frame from which to select research participants. Secondly,

the JMC is a closed community, unwilling to openly share information about the whereabouts and characteristics of its members with an outsider.

Within the Seke Community, the researcher came into contact with many families dotted around the area that belonged to the JMC. In the absence of a sampling frame, the researcher had to rely on referral or snowball sampling to generate a list of possible research participants. By starting with one family, then asking for referrals to others, the researcher eventually compiled a list of fifty-seven possible research participants. Of these fifty-seven church members, forty-seven agreed to participate in focus group discussions and a further ten people were selected for face-to-face interviews. Babbie and Mouton (2002: 543) argue that 25 is a reasonable sample size for a qualitative study.

Babbie and Mouton (2002: 647) define snowball sampling as “*a non-probability sampling method often employed in field research. Each person interviewed may be asked to suggest additional people for interviewing.*” Snowball or referral sampling was thus used to compile a sampling frame. To select the ten key informants for face-to-face interviews, the researcher employed purposeful sampling. Patton and Cochran (2002:9) explain that purposive sampling implies that participants are selected because they are likely to generate useful data for the study. Thus the key informants were purposefully selected from the list of potential participants to include church leaders.

To set up the focus groups, the researcher used the list to select the participants according to certain criteria, such as gender and age groups (teenagers, aged 13 to 18 years of age; young adults, aged 19 to 35 years of age and older adults aged 36 years and older).

5.3.2 Data collection methods

The researcher used participant observation, focus group discussions and key informant interviews to collect primary data. These three data collection methods are discussed in detail below.

5.3.2.1 Participant observation

The researcher used participant observation during church services. The researcher dressed as a member of the church, and was introduced as a visitor. The church leadership did not object to the researcher's presence at their place of worship. The church services were held on Saturday afternoons, so it was convenient for the researcher to travel from her place of residence to Seke.

The purpose of the observation was to gathering data on the focus of and theme of the service and to observe the role of women during the service. Creswell (1994: 151) stresses that when one uses participant observation, attention must be paid to issues of location, time duration and setting of the activity being observed. The researcher was able to observe the choice of the gathering site and the themes and arrangement of the services. Six church services were observed. The observations were recorded as field notes.

5.3.2.2 Focus group discussions

Creswell (1994:42) suggests that focus group discussions are quick ways to gather rich, detailed data. Babbie and Mouton (2002:233) however, assert that focus group discussions yield data that are less detailed. This is so, because some people are unwilling to participate in groups. Six different focus group discussions were held and the researcher acted as the focus group moderator. The researcher wrote the responses down as notes. Table 5.1 shows the biographical details of the focus group participants.

TABLE 5.1: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS BY SEX AND AGE GROUP (N=47)

AGE GROUPS	MALE	FEMALE
Teenagers, 13 to 18 years of age	7	10
Young adults, 19 to 35 years of age	8	7
Older adults, aged 36 years and older	8	7
TOTAL	23	24

5.2.3.3 Face-to-face interviews with key informants

Church elders such as prophets, healers and baptists were selected as the key informants. Although women do not occupy leadership positions in the JMC, the researcher included senior women in the church in the selected key informants. Open-ended questions were asked. Babbie and Mouton (2002: 358) stress that it is easier to use interviews when collecting data especially from illiterate populations as they do not have to struggle to put their responses on paper. Bogdan and Taylor (1996: 30) suggest that face-to-face interviews are important as the researcher can pick up on non-verbal expressions such as joy, pain and discomfort.

Ten face-to-face interviews were undertaken with key informants. The researcher wanted to capture their views regarding church traditions and practices such as:

- Marriage
- HIV and AIDS
- Women's empowerment
- Education
- Polygamy
- Health (maternal and child mortality)

Of the ten participants, five were men and the other five were women.

5.3.3 Data-collection instruments

Interview schedules were the major data-collection tools for this study. Based on the literature review, the researcher developed 4 interview schedules, namely a schedule for adolescents, a schedule for young adults, a schedule for older adults and a schedule for the key informants. All questions were first formulated in English and then were then translated to Shona which is the vernacular language in the Seke area.

Most of the questions were open-ended except for a few which sought information on age, sex, marital status and level of education. The other questions aimed at eliciting perceptions of church traditions related to marriage, education, health care and family life.

All interview schedules were pre-tested in the Seke area. Ten JMC members were selected for pre-testing and the results used to improve the questions.

5.3.4 Data collection

The researcher carried out the research from the beginning of December 2010 and until early January 2011. It was the researcher's intention to spend a maximum six weeks in the field. This reduced transport costs because the researcher was commuting to Seke on a daily basis.

During the six weeks, six church services observations, six focus group discussions as well as ten interviews with church leaders were conducted.

5.4 ANALYSIS OF THE QUALITATIVE DATA

Data collected from focus groups discussions, observations and key informant interviews was written as notes. Where possible, with the permission of the respondents, a tape recorder was used. The written notes and the transcribed tapes were typed up as word-processed computer files. The researcher read the notes and set up a list of themes as codes.

The list of codes was used to mark data pertaining to particular themes and to group these together. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was employed so as to be able to deduce meaning and to ensure lived experiences of respondents were given a fair analysis.

5.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher adhered to the code of conduct for research ethics as set for the University of South Africa. This meant that the researcher obtained informed consent from the participants in the focus group and key informant interviews for their participation in the study. Participants were reassured that their true identities will not be revealed in the analysis of the data and that all information obtained in the study is regarded as confidential. The researcher did not mislead the respondents, or coerce them into participation. All respondents participated voluntarily. All data and notes pertaining to the study were only seen by the researcher and are kept locked away in her home.

5.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher discussed the research methodology by discussing general characteristics of qualitative research methods. The chosen research design with its concomitant sampling procedures, data-gathering methods and data-gathering tools were discussed. Lastly, issues of data analysis and ethical considerations were given.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents and analyses the research findings. The findings are derived from church participant observations, Focus Group discussions (FGD) with church members and key informant interviews with church elders and leaders. The researcher refers to the previous chapters for the purpose of comparison of the findings with literature. The findings are discussed in the form of themes. Tables with summarised interview questions and comments are in appendix 3 and 4.

6.2 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based in the review of literature, the researcher explored the following themes related to the feminization of poverty with the research participants:

- Curtailment of women's opportunities and the lack of women's decision-making power
- Women's inability to achieve life goals
- Women's domestic roles
- Women's access to maternal health care and information
- Women's roles in the JMC

These themes are discussed in terms of the perceptions of the research participants below.

6.2.1 Curtailment of women's opportunities and the lack of women's decision-making power

For women to have true decision-making power, they have to be able to choose amongst different alternatives open to them. Four aspects relating to women's decision-making powers in the community and in the household came to the fore

in the data-analysis, namely virginity testing, choice of a marital partner (which includes recruitment into a polygamous union), access to information and inheritance. These four subthemes are discussed in greater detail below.

6.2.1.1 *Virginity testing*

The research participants in the focus groups told the researcher that one of the JMC's most strongly observed traditions virginity testing for all young girls. These participants recounted how a failed test means that a girl also loses her liberty to choose a husband. It is church's rule that once a girl has lost her virginity she must be married immediately. In many such cases, the men who offer to marry such a girl are much older than her and even already married. Although there are young men who may choose to marry non-virgins, older, married men usually agree to marry such girls. These girls are further stigmatised in that they are not allowed to sit in the front row of services with other girls. Instead, they have to sit in the back row with the married and elderly women. Therefore a loss of virginity makes a girl an outcast, or in the words of some of the respondents, "*damaged goods*". Thus one of the ways in which the JMC denies women choice is through their punitive treatment of alleged unmarried non-virgins. Moreover women who are forced into marital unions due to failed virginity testing are denied choice of a marriage partner as well as the possibility for further education as a marriage signals the start of domestic servitude to a husband and possibly other wives. No such penalties are enforced for young men in terms of premarital sex.

6.2.1.2 *Choice of a marital partner and recruitment into a polygamous union*

Another example of perceived curtailment of women's choice came from the focus group discussants' responses about the JMC's tendency to encourage wives to recruit further wives for their husbands. A preacher said the following at a sermon which the researcher attended: "*Women must recruit more wives for their husbands*". This preacher pointed out that it was a directive from Mutumwa. From observations and interviews the researcher discovered that some of the girls who are recruited to become part of polygamous marriages were still at

school. Some of the research participants recounted how they themselves were subjected to this. Women who entered polygamous unions as secondary wives not only had to submit to their husbands, but also had respect and take orders from the senior wives. This practice makes women complicit in the subjugation of other women. Young women recruited into polygamous unions who are unable to complete further education face curtailed opportunities for labour force participation given the link between educational attainment and waged labour outside the home.

6.2.1.3 Access to information

Besides views on female virginity and arranged marriages, the researcher found that the JMC actively instils in women a view that their husbands were supreme rulers with absolute power in the household. When questioned about their perceptions of this, the women respondents gave answers such as, “*these are church rules*” or “*what can one do in these circumstances*”. The lack of decision-making power of women regarding virginity testing, marriage partners, entry into polygamous unions and household power was thus not questioned by the research participants.

Another dimension of decision-making curtailment for women relates to the way in which the JMC deals with access to information. The researcher discovered that information is censored by the JMC leadership before followers are allowed access to it. All the respondents recounted in the interviews how crucial information, such as health-related information or information pertaining to the empowerment of women, are first screened by Mutumwa or lesser church leaders before women may have access to it. When the researcher asked them why Mutumwa has to get the information first, their response was, “*it is church protocol*”. It is the church leadership who then decides if the other church members may have access to the information or not. They also stressed that, “*Mutumwa is a spirit-led person and cannot just change church rules*”.

Such censorship may mean that women are denied access to potentially life-changing opportunities because information is censored by men before the

women get to consider it. As the women may be exposed to information which the church cannot keep away from them (for example information in the mass media), their ability to act upon it without the church leadership's approval is restricted.

6.2.1.4 Inheritance

Both male and female respondents professed that, "*it is JMC tradition that widowed women of child-bearing age must be inherited by their husband's brothers or relatives.*" If widows are not willing to be inherited, they must go back to their parent's home. The church does not allow young widows to remain in their marital homes. Widows only stay in their marital homes as inherited wives or they go back to their parent's home. Should they decide to go, they leave behind their children. Children belong to their father's relatives. Women are not given the choice to continue with their lives independently after the death of their spouses. This makes it difficult for them economically as they must surrender all they had jointly worked for with their husbands should they refuse to be inherited. Whichever way they still lose control of their husband's assets as the inheriting male relative automatically takes charge.

As seen from the discussion above, curtailment of opportunities and choice stifles women's chances of emancipation from poverty. Setting rules for women's further education, gender-biased inheritance rules and forcing young girls into polygamous marriages are possible causes of the feminization of poverty.

6.2.2 Women's inability to achieve life goals

The interview data revealed that men – especially those with leadership positions in the JMC – hold strong reservations regarding the issue of women's empowerment. For example, one man from the older adult focus groups claimed: "*Women's empowerment destabilises families.*" Following from such views, the JMC upholds restrictive views on the educational attainment of women, their choice of jobs, women's ownership of property and resources and women's age at first marriage. These four sub-themes that contour women's restrictive abilities

to achieve life goals beyond the domestic roles prescribed by the JMC are discussed in greater detail below.

6.2.2.1 *The educational attainment of women and the choice of a job*

The interview data confirmed negative perceptions in the JMC regarding the educational attainment of young women. Most of the women and girls who took part in the interviews revealed that they completed only seven years of primary education.

From the information gathered during focus group discussions, young female respondents expressed their dreams of becoming teachers, dressmakers and secretaries. Although these choices signal aspirations to work in the formal sector, they are still female-oriented choices. At the same time, however, these women stated that their church does not encourage them to continue with their education beyond obtaining primary education. One teenage girl actually stated that church only wants the girls to be able to, “*read and count their money.*” The young female interviewees explained that they receive little encouragement from their parents and siblings to focus on their education. In one of the focus group discussions for older adult males, one of the respondents commented: “*Sending girls to school is not worth it as they tend to rebel against church rules.*” To clarify this, he recounted the story of a girl who disobeyed the church rules by deciding to continue with her schooling to eventually qualify as a medical doctor. The church and her family disowned her.

Curtailment of educational opportunities for women stifles their chances of broadening their choices in life. Tipp in (Sweetman 1998:65) argues that it should not only be the governments’ focus to enrol girls in school, but also to ensure that they stay at school and avoid early marriages. All of the female interviewees mentioned that the JMC encourages them to work for themselves, yet in order to find gainful employment; these women need education and skills development. As stated in Chapter 3, there are many technical and commercial colleges in Zimbabwe which train both O-level and A-level graduates. There is thus not a lack of institutions that would accept these women as students, instead they are

held back by the JMC's rules for women and by the men's perceptions of educated women.

Unlike men in the JMC, a woman's chances of any further education stop once she gets married. One teenage boy mentioned *"Us boys can marry and continue with our schooling."* The church's stance is that the woman's place is in the home and not at the workplace. Women who break through these traditional boundaries are ostracised, as one male respondent mentioned: *"Educated girls become 'men' and what man in his right mind would want to marry another man in a dress?"* The men in this focus group shared a common view that educated women are bossy and therefore poor choices for a marriage partner.

These church-endorsed views of women's education not only disadvantage women, but also their families. A mother with a low level of education cannot assist her children in their school work, is unable to secure a good-paying job or supplement her husband's income. This glaring inequality in educational opportunities between men and women was accepted by the research participants as normal and ordained by the JMC. It is the researcher's contention that the women's low educational attainment made it impossible for them to imagine a different future for themselves beyond the domestic servitude they experienced from a young age. Lack of education disempowers people. Sweetman (2005:14) argues that for there to be real choice, there must be alternatives. The women in the JMC are married at a young age, which means they are denied choices. After their marriage, the church further decides how they are to behave and how they are to live their lives.

The respondents pointed out that for most women the only way to earn money was by engaging in small-scale farming projects, dress-making or trading. However, with little or no education and limited access to information, the women find it hard to put their meagre resources to profit. The researcher was informed by the interviewees that the church prefers its members to be self-employed. This has the effect that most women remained in the rural areas and were too fearful of disobeying the church by seeking wage-earning opportunities in the urban and peri-urban areas.

6.2.2.2 Women's ownership of property and resources

The study revealed that in addition to curtailed educational opportunities, the women in the research site do not own much in terms of property. Most respondents said that women owned, *"their bedding, cooking utensil and their clothing."* That is the only household property they can claim as theirs. Even in cases of divorce they are only allowed to take their kitchen utensils, bedding and their clothes from their matrimonial home. However, one young woman claimed that, *"sometimes it is difficult to claim kitchen utensils in polygamous situations where the wives are sharing a kitchen."* The JMC forbids women to claim movable property such as furniture, goats and scotch carts.

The issue of property ownership is very clear. As mentioned earlier, the Shona tradition states that immovable property belongs to men. However, even if the law now states that women can own land, very few women know about it. The above findings show that women are denied access to resources, employment and land ownership. The fact that women are allowed to own very little property, almost insignificant in terms of economic value means they are always living on the verge of poverty.

6.2.2.3 Women's age at first marriage

In order to keep women subjugated to male breadwinners, the JMC enforces early age at marriage for women. Table 6.1 (below) shows that 12 of the 14 women (or half of the female focus group participants) in the study married when they were thirteen years old. Those who were under 18 years of age at marriage represented 63% of the female focus group participants. The mean age at marriage was 15,5 years.

TABLE 6.1: AGE AT FIRST MARRIAGE FOR FEMALE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS (N=24)

Number of women	Age at marriage
12	13 years
3	14 years
6	18 years
3	22 years
Mean age at first marriage	15,5 years

Early marriage and early motherhood curtails women’s educational opportunities. It was found that in the research sites, men continue their education when they marry, but a marriage signals the end of a woman’s education. One teenaged man in the focus group discussion said: *“The church allows boys to continue going to school when they are married.”*

Given the above scenario, the researcher came to the conclusion that the JMC has induced the inability to achieve goals and self-emancipation amongst its women followers. This is a possible cause of the feminization of poverty.

6.2.3 Women’s domestic roles

The number of children for the older adult focus groups was very high as shown in Table 6.2. On average, the respondents had more than 9 children.

TABLE 6.2 NUMBER OF LIVING CHILDREN, RESPONDENTS IN THE OLDER ADULT FOCUS GROUPS (N=15)

Number of living children	Frequency
11 or more	3
9-10 children	8
8 children	2
7 children	2
Mean number of living children	9,7 children

It should be noted that the researcher found that the male respondent with the highest number of children had 36 children from 7 wives and that the male respondent in the older adult focus groups with the least children reported 14

children from 2 wives. This implies a high care burden for each income-earning adult among the respondents. However, the male respondents regarded such large numbers of offspring as normal and desirable. They explained that resources such as food and clothing are distributed according to availability, as opposed to according to need. Although some wives try to supplement what their husbands' incomes by working themselves, it was found that the women earn very little by selling various wares at the local markets. Two women who were cross-border traders reported that they earned about \$250 per month. Such an income is clearly not adequate when having to sustain a large family.

Women's marginalisation in income-earning and intrahousehold access to resources means that their chances for emancipation were stifled. Few women in the study possessed skills or educational levels that would enable them to break with poverty. Responses such as, "*What can one do?*" which some women respondents gave demonstrated a passive acceptance of this situation. In this regard Rakolojane (2002: iv) suggests that when a person is in a situation where there seems to be no solution to problems, that individual might develop a fear of change.

Most women who participated in the study told the researcher that their marriages were stressful because of lack of support from their husbands. Another commonly mentioned stress factor was being in a polygamous marriage. This was linked to the JMC's ban on birth control which meant that men had large families that they could not support financially. The male participants stressed that, "*birth control encourages promiscuity and the church does not allow the use of medicines.*" Both male and female interviewees confirmed that modern methods of contraception were not allowed by church. Although it seems obvious to an outsider that such views on family planning led to a high burden of dependents in a family, the interviewees refused to discuss the matter, suggesting that, "*some of the issues being asked are private family issues hence dealing with them in a public is difficult.*" Another respondent explained: "*A large family's poverty is only seen by outsiders – these families are satisfied with their lives.*"

This attitude of not questioning the church's teaching manifested in the interviews in a specific way. Whereas the men articulated the absoluteness of the church's teachings, women in the teenager and young adult focus groups often told the researcher to please refer certain questions to Mutumwa. For example when the women were asked to suggest specific ways to achieve women's empowerment, the answer would be: *"Those who wish to be helped must approach Mutumwa."* Responding to a question on what they thought should be done to eradicate the feminization of poverty, a woman healer responded that: *"We must ask Mutumwa for answers to such questions, He is the one who gets information from God."* It became clear that the JMC did not allow women to discuss such issues with one another or an outsider. It was also clear that the church leadership is powerful and respected by all church members.

The women in the older adult focus groups, however, articulated a different view of life. For example, when women in the teenaged focus groups were asked if there were church rules they would like to see changed, they could not mention anything substantial. In contrast, women in the older adult focus groups mentioned many church traditions and rules they would like to see changed, for example:

- allowing girls to go to continue with secondary and tertiary education
- banning child marriages
- preventing widow inheritance when the woman's husband has died due to HIV or AIDS
- prohibiting polygamy and
- addressing the strict rules that forbid modern medical treatment.

However since the church has no formal platform for women to express such views, these views are unlikely to ever result in action. In fact, the women were adamant that they only felt safe to air these opinions in the focus group, as they experienced how expressing such views may lead to a woman being labelled a "bad woman" who do not support her husband and obey church rules.

None of the male participants found these church rules oppressive. One of the men said, *“There is nothing wrong with our church rules. For the record, church rules are not man made. Mutumwa gets them from the Holy spirit.”* It means that this is not even a topic for discussion in the men’s forum.

6.2.4 Access to maternal health care services and information

All of the women who took part in the study perceived modern medical facilities such as hospitals and clinics as important life-saving health care services. However they all knew that their church forbids them to seek medical treatment at such facilities. One woman said: *“The church has its own ways of dealing with illnesses and would not accept traditional or western medicine.”* The JMC teaches that their prophets and healers can give adequate medical help to their followers. Another woman explained: *“There are people who default from church rules and seek treatment when they fall ill. Some of them re-join the church when they are healed.”* This view of the church was seen by the women participants as impacting on women’s health in particular as pre-natal health care services and difficult child-births affected many women in the study area. Women in the JMC are not permitted to seek information on maternal health care. The information imparted to women at modern maternal-and-child health care facilities were regarded as potentially undermining of the church’s teachings as women might learn that complications in pregnancy and child birth occur due to medical reasons as opposed to being the consequences of unconfessed sin.

Beyond reproductive, maternal and child health, another health concern was that of HIV and AIDS. Most of the respondents knew what HIV and AIDS are, yet most male participants denied its existence in their community. One man from the older adult focus group said: *“Mutumwa declared that no JMC member would get HIV.”* Many respondents stressed that their leader had told them that none of the faithful members of their church would ever become HIV-infected. It seems probable that any JMC member who might be diagnosed as HIV-positive would conceal it because of a fear of stigma. Furthermore women are at a disadvantage as they have to perform care-giving duties for sick family members and have very little knowledge of protection.

It became clear to the researcher that some of the people on the study site who were members of the JMC were also displaying illness. The potential to introduce HIV-infection into polygamous unions certainly existed as the church forces girls who fail virginity tests to married immediately, and most of the time into polygamous unions. Since HIV-testing is prohibited, none of the members in the polygamous unions know their HIV status.

Given the above discussion, it is quite clear that lack of access to maternal and child health and information props up the feminization of poverty in the study area. The Millennium Project (2006:1) stresses that people with low levels of education have poor health-seeking behaviour. The JMC members are not encouraged to seek medical treatment from hospitals. Most of them are not even aware of preventative measures which reduce their chances of acquiring life-threatening illnesses. They depend on their own healers and prophets to provide that care.

6.2.5 Women's role and position in the JMC

Women have very few roles allowed to them in the church life. According one key informant: *"Women can only be healers or prophets. They cannot read the Bible during church services."* Women may not hold positions in the church such as evangelists, secretaries, baptists or treasurers. Another man explained: *"Women are not allowed to address men in public places; hence they cannot lead the church congregation."* This means they participate less in their church life as compared to men. A woman commented: *"There are no female leadership positions in the church; however female healers and prophets command respect within the church, but they are not considered leaders."*

Women therefore have limited capacity to fully participate in community decision-making bodies along with men. For the JMC members it means that women cannot discuss church-related issues in the presence of men.

6.3 THE LINK BETWEEN RELIGION AND THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

As noted through observations and from data collected, there are elements of what development partners such as the UN and its various organs, as well the World Bank and scholars such as Chant (2005), Makaza-Mazingi (2008), BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies (2001) and Fukuda-Parr would call pointers to existence of the feminization of poverty in the JMC. Issues such as denial to let girls continue with education, denial to let church members seek medical attention, lack of choice and exclusion of women in community discussions are all dimensions of the feminization of poverty.

The data revealed that the family unit is well respected in this community. The researcher observed church leaders encouraging men to take care of their families. A man is not allowed to divorce his wife without informing church elders of his intentions. Browning and Browning (1991:1) prescribe that a solid family unit will eliminate the feminization of poverty. However it does not remove the fact that women suffer many disadvantages in the study area. It must be noted that when Browning and Browning (1991:2) discuss the three types of love which families must adopt, they caution that many fundamentalist Christian groups advocate for sacrificial love. They state that it is the type of love used to legitimise male authority, the traditional family and the submission of women.

Chant (2003:9) states that “*while some women faced with minimal support from male partners may be able to break away and set up their own households; others may not be in the position to do so and are rendered more vulnerable than ever to extremes of servitude and inequality*”. This seems to describe the situation faced by many women in the JMC. Women are excluded from many issues that concern them in their communities. The church leadership, who are men, assess whatever information women are exposed to. So in most cases women do not get the chance to choose for themselves if they wish to act on information.

Rules governing inheritance push women further into poverty. The women in the study found it hard to own land or immovable property. The church states that women own their clothes, blankets and cooking utensils only. It means that women work hard and have no claims to the fruits of their labour.

The most crucial key to the feminization of poverty in the study area is the denial of educational opportunities for women. According to the UN (2012:155) education, more than any other aspect of a woman's life determines what sort of player she will be on the world stage. If the education investment is sound, a woman can make a difference in her community. A higher level of education enables a woman to get a well-paying job and earn more money. It also means that she will not suffer exclusion (Sweetman 2005:2). Women with lower levels of education are less likely to seek medical help for themselves and their family members. Lack of education also means that women do not make an effort to escape their situation. This is the situation which the researcher found most JMC women in.

6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented and analysed the research findings from the data collected. The data was collected from church observations, focus group discussions and well as from interviews. Literature from the previous chapters was used when making comments. This helped to link the literature to the data collected.

The next chapter gives recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher investigated perceptions of the link between religion and the feminization of poverty in the JMC of Seke area. Five objectives informed the study, namely to:

1. uncover perceptions of the feminization of poverty and the factors that contribute to it
2. test perceptions regarding gender and the feminization of poverty in the context of Zimbabwean traditions
3. gain a better understanding of perceptions concerning the JMC
4. reveal perceptions of ways in which the JMC relates to issues of the feminization of poverty
5. make recommendations regarding the role that the church can play in dealing with the feminization of poverty

This investigation was undergirded by a framework of indicators of the feminization as provided by BRIDGE Institute of Development Studies (2001:7), the YMCA (2007:7), Makaza-Mazingi (2008:66) and Fukuda-Parr (1999:101) which include

- 1) Denial of women's opportunities for development
- 2) Women's inability to achieve life goals
- 3) Women's restricted access to maternal health care services and information
- 4) Women's restricted access to resources such as employment, civil participation and land ownership
- 5) Women's restricted educational attainment

In this concluding chapter, the researcher discusses the research results in terms of each of the first four stated goals of the study. Then, based on the findings, the fifth goal, namely recommendations stemming from the study are addressed.

7.2 OBJECTIVE ONE: UNCOVERING PERCEPTIONS OF THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY AND THE FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO IT

It has been argued in the literature review that the denial of opportunities for development stifles women's chances of emancipation. The study revealed that girls in the JMC are not allowed to continue with their education once they are married. Women are not allowed to choose their life partners once they lose their virginity as they are pushed into forced marriages. In addition, women may miss potentially life-changing opportunities because information is censored by men before they may have access to it. Widow inheritance is rife in the area. People in the JMC are denied access to modern medical care.

7.3 OBJECTIVE TWO: TESTING PERCEPTIONS REGARDING GENDER AND THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY IN THE CONTEXT OF ZIMBABWEAN TRADITIONS

One of the most prevailing perceptions uncovered in the study was that young women should not be allowed to pursue educational attainment beyond primary education. Such denial of educational attainment means that most the girls will not be able to achieve aspirations for employment in the modern formal economic sector. Moreover, the fact that girls are forced to marry in their teens means that they enter motherhood and domestic servitude to their husbands at a very young age. Women own only their bedding, clothes and kitchen utensils. Child-bearing at an early age in the absence of access to modern means of family planning, antenatal and birth care, exposes women to risks of poor health and high completed family sizes.

7.4 OBJECTIVE THREE: GAINING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING THE JMC

The normalisation of women's roles in domestic servitude was so pervasive in the JMC that responses such as "*What can one do?*" were often given to questions about the emancipation of women. This demonstrates that many respondents

have resigned themselves to their fate. Women participate little in their church life compared to men; hence their needs are not prioritised by the church. Women are not allowed to address church gatherings. This limits their chances to fully participate in community discussions. Lack of access to resources limits opportunities for women. With little or no education and limited access to information, women find it hard to put their meagre resources to profit. Restrictions to where they can and cannot work reduce their ability to participate in a modern formal economy.

7.5 OBJECTIVE FOUR: REVEALING PERCEPTIONS OF WAYS IN WHICH THE JMC RELATES TO ISSUES OF THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

The researcher asserts that a lack of access to maternal health care services and information promotes the feminisation of poverty in the study area. Women's vulnerability to HIV and AIDS has been discussed. It has been suggested in this study that women's biological make-up makes them more susceptible to infection and they are not allowed barrier methods of contraception which protect them against HIV-infection. In addition, women are the primary care-givers to family members who are ill due to HIV and/or AIDS, yet they lack knowledge on how to protect themselves against infection.

In the study area, the women have very little access to family planning information and are discouraged from using contraceptives, thus have large families who live in poverty. Poor health for women means that more time is spent away from productive activities.

Discouragement of female education is one of the key driving forces behind the feminization of poverty. Education for girls is believed to work against instituted church rules, yet there are quite a number of men who have been educated up to secondary school level or acquired professional skills like carpentry or metal work. By being denied secondary and tertiary education women fail to critically analyse their situation, thus do not make efforts towards their emancipation from poverty.

7.6 OBJECTIVE FIVE: MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE ROLE THAT THE CHURCH CAN PLAY IN DEALING WITH THE FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

In light of the findings summarised above a number of recommendations can be made. These, if appropriated, will no doubt help in improving and empowering the women and girls in the church.

7.6.1 Recommendations to the church

- The church should reconsider its stance on the educational attainment of women.
- Polygamy and large families should be discouraged.
- Church members should not encourage early marriage for their daughters.
- The introduction of modern health care promotion should be considered.
- The church can enter into a dialogue with other Apostolic and Zionist churches regarding perceptions of and attitudes towards HIV and AIDS. For example, Bishop Chitanda of the Johane Masowe Church has embraced the realities and exigencies of HIV and AIDS.
- The church should encourage women to take up leadership positions so that they are not excluded from decision-making.
- The church should encourage NGOs and other development partners to enter the community and assist in upliftment programmes targeting women and girls.

7.6.2 Recommendations for government

The government should:

- Further address the feminization of poverty by enforcing policies that encourage gender mainstreaming and discourage gender inequality and bias.
- Step-up its enforcement of immunisation of and medical care for children.

- Make education up to secondary level compulsory, and educate communities to register children for social welfare benefits through the Basic Education Assistance Module.
- Through the constitution unconditionally make marriage of girls below the age of 16 years illegal.
- Work in partnership with NGOs and development partners to come up with packages which can help alleviate poverty within this community.
- Encourage the JMC community to reconsider practices such as early age at marriage for women, denial of women's secondary and tertiary education and denial of access to modern health care services and information.

7.6.3 Recommendations for NGOs and development partners

Development partners and NGOs should:

- Embark on rigorous gender mainstreaming programmes directed at the JMC.
- Highlight the plight of girls and women in the church so as to encourage this community to change.
- Teach these communities that women's empowerment does not destabilise families, but improve their quality of life.

7.6.4 Recommendations for further research

As part of the recommendations, the following areas for further research are outstanding from the study, regarding:

1. How women's empowerment programmes can help alleviate the feminization of poverty in the JMC.
2. How churches can embrace efforts to alleviate the feminization of poverty especially within their precincts.
3. Case studies to show that women have the potential to work and access to credit and resources that will help them flourish in small-to-medium enterprises.

7.7 CONCLUSION

This study has met the objectives set for it. The findings underscore the fact that the attainment of MDGs 1, 3 and 5 which affect women is not on track in the study area. The JMC has not embraced women's rights as human rights. Children born to poor and illiterate parents are likely to face the same fate as that of their parents. The possibility to invest in women in the JMC is there, but perceptions and practices will have to change. Men control women's sexuality, fertility and access to information. On matters of health, church members have little access to information on HIV and AIDS.

Currently perceptions and practices in the JMC disallow those changes crucial to the empowerment of women. The prevailing perception is that the subjugation of women is normal and ensures a stable family life. Given the above, the government and development partners and NGOs stills have a lot work to do in order to eradicate the feminization of poverty in the JMC community.

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APPENDIX 1: LIST OF QUESTIONS FOR THE FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

Participants	Questions
Teenagers (aged 10-18 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How far they wish to go with their education. • Career prospects. • Whether they prefer arranged marriages or to choose their own spouse when the time to marry comes. • Their views on polygamy. • Age at which they wish to marry and why. • Whether they have information on HIV/AIDS. • Whether there are any traditions within their church they think should be done away with.
Young adults (women and men)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age at which they married. • Spouse's age. • Level of education. • Their views on polygamous marriage. • Occupation. • Whether it was an arranged marriage or choice. • Is it a polygamous union and do they discuss issues of HIV/AIDS. • What is considered as women's property? • Are they allowed to use modern medicine? • Do they have any say on the number of wives their husbands can marry? (women) • How are resources distributed in this union?
Older adults Men and women (45 yrs.+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their occupation. • Whether they are in a polygamous union. • Their level of education. • Number of children they have. • Views on child marriage. • Their views on HIV/AIDS • Whether they would want their daughters to have arranged marriages or to choose their own spouses. • Whether there are church traditions they do not agree with. • Whether they hold any leadership position within their church. • Is there any property which they can lay claim on within their union or everything belongs to their spouse

APPENDIX 2: TRANSLATED FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

2.1 FOR TEENAGERS

- 1) How far do you wish to go with your education? Munoshuvira kudzidza kusvikira pachinhanho chipi?
- 2) Do you have career prospects? Munotarisira kuzoita basa rei?
- 3) When the time comes for you to marry, would you want your marriage to be arranged or you want to make to own choices? Kana yasvika nguva yekuti muroore/ muroorwe munoda kuzvitsvagira mega here kana kuti munoda kuita zvokusarudzirwa murume?
- 4) At what age do you wish to marry? Nderipi zera ramunoda kuzoorwa/ kuroora masvika?
- 5) What are your views on polygamy? Barika munorionawo sei?
- 6) What do you understand about HIV/AIDS issues? Ndezvipi zvamunonzwisisa nezvechirwere chemukondombera?
- 7) Would you and your partner consider being tested before marriage? Mungada here kuenda nemudikani wenyu kundoongororwa hutachiona hwemukondombera musati mawanana?
- 8) Are there church traditions you think should be done away with? Pane mitemo yemusangano renyu yamunofunga kuti inofanirwa kuregedza kutevedzerwa here? Kana iripo ndeipi?

2.2 FOR YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN

- 1) What is your occupation? Munoita basa rei?
- 2) How did you come to be members of the church? Makapinda sei chitendero ichi?
- 3) At which age did you get married, and is the marriage registered? Makaroorwa / roorwa mava nemekore mangani, uye munonyoresa muchato wenyu kwamudzviti here?
- 4) Was it an arranged marriage? Makatsvaga mega mudiwa wenyu here, kana kuti makatsvagirwa?

- 5) Is their union polygamous? Pamakaroorwa pane vakadzi vangani?-Mune vakadzi vangani?
- 6) What are your views on polygamy? Barika munorionawo sei?
- 7) How does a husband distribute resources in polygamous marriages? Murume ane barika anochengeta sei mhuri yake?
- 8) Do you discuss HIV/AIDS issues within your families or as spouses? Munotaurawo here pamusoro pechirwere chemukondombera semhuri kana kuti murume nemudzimai?
- 9) Do you discuss on the number of wives a husband should marry? Munotaurawo here pamusoro pevakadzi vangaroorwe nemurume?
- 10)What is the role of women in the family? Madzimai ane chinzvimbo chipi mumhuri?
- 11)What is considered men's or women's property in their families? Ndeipi midziyo inonzi ndeyaamai kana yababa?
- 12)Are you allowed to seek treatment at hospitals, and should they get that treatment, what will be the reaction of the church elders? Munotenderwa here kuonekwa kuzvipatara? Chechi inoti kudini nekuonekwa muzvipatara?
- 13)What is the church's stance on divorce? Chitendero chenyu chinotii pamusoro pevange voda kurambana?
- 14)Who is responsible for making the church rules and for wavering them? Ndiyani anoisa mitemo yechechi uye kuigadzirisa?
- 15)Are there church practices you feel should be removed? Pane mitemo yesangano yamunofunga kuti inoda shanduko here, kana iripo ndeipi?

2.3 FOR THOSE AGED 45 YEARS AND OLDER

- 1) What is your occupation? Munoshanda kupi?
- 2) What is your level of education? Makadzidza kusvika padanho ripi?
- 3) What is your position in the church? Mune chinzvimbo chipi muchechi?
- 4) How did you come to be members of this church? Makapinda sei musangano iri?
- 5) How many children do you have? Mune vana vangani?

- 6) What are your views of educating girl children to higher levels? Munoona sei fundo yavasikana?
- 7) What are your views on child marriages? Munobvumirana here nokuroodzwa kwevana sikana vasati vabva zera?
- 8) Do members of your church practice arranged marriages of under-age girls? If so why? Musangano menyu munotevedza here tsika yekuroodzwa kwevasikana vasati vabva zera uye tsika iyi munoiitirei?
- 9) What is the church position on men and women who wish to seek employment outside the home? Sangano renyu rinobvumidza here kuti vatenderi vashande mabasa asiri emaoko?
- 10) How does the church handle issues of family planning, maternal health and immunization? Sangano rinobatsira sei vatenderi pane zvokuronga mhuri, zvirwere zvavakadzi pamwe nekudzivirira zvirwerezvinouraya pwere?
- 11) What are your views on HIV/AIDS, testing, treatment care giving etc.? Mune ruzivo pamusoro pechirwere chemukondombera, kuongorora hutachiona hwechirwere ichi uye kuchengetwa kwevarwere vanechirwere ichi?
- 12) Are there church traditions you think must change? Pane mitemo yesangano yamunofunga kuti inofanirwa kushanduka?
- 13) What are your views on feminization of poverty? Ndezvipi zvamunonzwisisa pamusoro pokuti tikaongorora misha mizhinji vanhukadzi vanowanikwa vachitambura kudarika vanhurume?
- 14) What is your church doing to help eradicate feminization of poverty? Sangano renyu rinoita zvipi kuti vanhukadzi vakwanise kubuda mudambudziko rekuva varombo?
- 15) How do you think the Government, NGOs and Development partners can help your church members on issues of feminization of poverty? Munofunga kuti hurumende uye masangano akazvimirira oga angakwanise kubatsirana nesangano renyu sei kuti dambudziko reurombo hwemadzimai ripedzwe?

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONS FOR THE KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

- 1) What is your position in the church? Munechinzvimbo chipi musangano?
- 2) How did you come to be a church member? Makapinda sei sengano iri?
- 3) Do you understand what women empowerment is? Ndezvipi zvamunonzwisisa pamusoro pekusimudzirwa kwehupenyu hwevanhukadzi?
- 4) Have you ever heard of feminization of poverty? Mukambonzwawo inonzi feminisation of poverty here (tikaongorora mumisha yakasiyana siyana, vanhukadzi vanowanika vachitambura kudarika vanhurume)?
- 5) Do you think women in your church are empowered? Sekuona kwenyu hupenyu hwevanhukadzi vemusangano renyu hurikusimudzirwa here?
- 6) Are there any barriers to women empowerment and gender inequality in the church? Pane mitemo yamunofunga kuti inotadzisa kusimidzirwa kwehupenyu hwevanhukadzi here? Kana iripo ndiyani wamunofunga kuti angakwanisa kusunungura mitemo iyi?
- 7) What do you think should be done to eradicate feminization of poverty? Ndezipi zvamunofunga kuti zvinofanirwa kuti zviitwe kuti hupenyu hwevanhukadzi husimudzirwe?
- 8) What recommendations would you give to government ministries and organisations working with women on how to assist women in your church best? Ndezvipi zvamunofunga kuti hurumende uye masangano akazvimirira angaite kubatsira vanhukadzi emusangano renyu?

APPENDIX 4: SOME RESPONSES FOR ANALYSIS

Question	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Researcher's comments.
What is your position in the church?	Evangelist	Baptist	Secretary	Healer	Prophet	Men hold many positions in this church.
How did you come to be a member?	Birth	Birth	Birth	Birth	Birth	Most members of this church are born in this church and pass the church traditions to their children
Do you understand what women empowerment is about?	Yes, but it is not a good thing.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but I don't believe in it.	All the respondents said they knew about women empowerment though they were quick to dismiss it.
Have you ever heard of feminisation of poverty?	No	No	No	No	No	All the respondents admitted that they did not know feminisation of poverty so the researcher had to explain to them what it means.
Are there any barriers to women empowerment in your church?	No	No	No, our women have the freedom to work as much as they want to.	Only the lazy women put barriers for themselves.	We do not have barriers to women empowerment in our church.	All the participants were of the opinion that there are no barriers to women empowerment.
Do you think women in your church are empowered?	Yes they are. Senior women teach younger to work.	My wives are hard working. I chooses them carefully.	Yes they are empowered.	Yes they are empowered.	Only the lazy people talk about empowerment	From the responses it was difficult to come to a conclusion of whether they do understand

Question	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Researcher's comments.
						what empowerment is. They seemed to have the notion that empowerment means hard work
What do you think should be done to eradicate feminisation of poverty?	Women should work harder.	The older women should do more to train these young ones to work hard.	Some of us husbands are too lenient with our wives such that they expect to get everything without working	Feminisation of poverty is not found in our church because our women are hardworking	Hard work is the answer to feminisation of poverty	The respondents are of the opinion that feminisation comes as a result of laziness only.
What recommendations would you give to gvt ministries & organisations with women on how best to assist women in your church?	Our women do not need such help.	It is not necessary, but if you insist knowing the way forward, you should talk to Mutumwa	We do not accept strangers talking to our women.	You should talk to Mutumwa about those ideas	They must give that information to the man in the church, then we can help the women who have feminisation of poverty on our own	There were mixed opinions on the way forward. Approaching Mutumwa was the most popular. However the most interesting was from respondent 5. The response showed that women do not have the liberty to get information.

Question	Respondent 1	Respondent 2	Respondent 3	Respondent 4	Respondent 5	Researcher's comments.
What is your position in the church?	Healer	Healer	Healer	Prophet	Healer	Women are resigned to being either healers or prophets only. Even in these positions they are not allowed to

						address men.
How did you come to be a member?	Birth	Birth	Birth	Birth	Birth	Most women who are born in this church have no options of leaving the church. If they do so, their families will disown them.
Do you understand what women empowerment is about?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	All the respondents seemed to have an understanding of what women empowerment is.
Have you ever heard of feminisation of poverty?	No	No	No	No	No	All the respondents had never heard of feminisation of poverty. However after the researcher explained it meaning they seemed to agree that it is true.
Do you think women in your church are empowered?	Not really	There are things that they are not allowed to do by the church.	Some husbands are too restrictive on their wives; this makes it difficult for them to be empowered.	Not really. They need more help.	They are empowered to work within their communities	These women were able to acknowledge that women in their church are not empowered. However one prophet thinks that their community empowers women to survive within their community.
Are there any barriers to	I cannot comment on	Some women	Some of the	We cannot get better	As a prophet I	Some of the women had

women empowerment in your church?	those issues because I will upset Mutumwa.	are getting money to start chicken rearing projects; we do not know how to access it.	churches rules make it difficult for us to get loans which other women are getting form the Ministry of women affairs.	paying jobs because we are not qualified to work in big companies that pay well	cannot say that otherwise I will anger the spirit in me.	reservations and would not be drawn to comment whilst others remarked that there were barriers to women empowerment in the church.
What do you think should be done to eradicate feminisation of poverty?	We must ask Mutumwa for answers to such matters. He is the one who gets information from God.	If we could also get the loans to start our projects then our lives would be easier.	Mutumwa could be asked to prophesy on such issues. He usually gets answers from God.	If you talk to our husbands about such issues, they could talk to Mutumwa to find a solution.	The women must work hard and allow the Holy spirit to guide them so that they do not remain poor.	The answer to the issue lies in the church leader. It seems the women were afraid to give their views.
What recommendations would you give to Gvt ministries & organisations working with women on how best to help	Mutumwa would know what to say to the organisations.	The Gvt people must approach Mutumwa. He has the authority to deal with such issues.	Talking to church leaders might help.	I do not think our church has room to have such people talk to women.	They should talk to the church elders about their plans.	Most of the respondents felt that Mutumwa was the one who had the authority to talk to the Gvt and NGOs.