

**The Investigation on the Impact of Societal Structure on Violation
of the Rights of Women and Children in Limpopo:
Church and African Tradition Perspective**

by

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my children, grandchildren, and future great-grandchildren, also to the Church and African traditional leaders.

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I appreciate the support of the participants, both the traditional leaders, the Church, organisations, leaders, and leagues. They sacrificed their valuable time to respond to the questionnaire and interviews.

COMMITMENT TO AVOID PLAGIARISM


Student number: 2697254

I hereby declare that this dissertation, which is based on my research on *The investigation on the impact of societal structure on violation of the rights of women and children in Limpopo: Church and African tradition perspective* is my own work and all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I have committed myself to avoid plagiarism on every level of my research and have fully cited, according to the APA 7th Referencing Style, every source that I used, including books, articles, internet sources, and images.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACC	All Africa Council of Churches
AIC	African Independent Churches
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CSR	Centre for Social Research
CARD	Churches and Relief Development
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CIRCO	Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians
DSSL	Department of Safety, Security and Liaison
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ELCSA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa
EPCSA	Evangelical Presbyterian Church in South Africa
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FCS	Family Violence, Child Protection, and Sexual Offences
FBO	Faith-Based Organisation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IHE	Institution of Higher Education
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISPCAN	International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IPI	Institute for Policy Interaction
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude, and Perceptions
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OVC	Orphan and Vulnerable Children
SACC	South African Council of Churches
SADC	Southern Africa Development Committee
SAPS	South African Police Service

SAPSNS	South African Police Service National Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls
WCC	World Council of Churches
WERC	Women's Education and Research Centre
WHO	World Health Organisation
WVA	Violence against Women
ZCC	Zion Christian Church (MORIA)

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ABSTRACT

African traditions have a significant impact on the societal structures, the Churches, and schools. The secular government also contributed to the increase of gender-based violence since the corrective measures were insufficient to curb the challenges. The purpose of this study is to create an awareness among the Churches, traditional leaders, and other structures who are concerned about the welfare of women and children, clearly indicating that violence is neither God's purpose of creation nor the purpose of the African tradition. Furthermore, the researcher intended to provoke the faith communities to re-look and re-examine their teachings of the Bible with a new perspective that will promote the rights of women and children. By means of interviews and questionnaires, the researcher examined human experiences provided by the participants and added these to a literature review.

KEYWORDS

Societal structures, women's rights, children's rights, Church, African tradition, rights violation, biblical theology.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research study was born during my involvement and experience in Church and society as a female minister of the Word and Sacraments in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Limpopo and an educator for the past 37 years – being a Mopedi woman and South African at the same time, where human rights and dignity are constitutional matters. Being a Mopedi woman with a Christian background and African culture did not make this study easy. During the researcher's social, cultural, and political life in a democratic South Africa, she has realised that there are challenges to gender-based violence (GBV) that are encouraged by Christian teachings and African practices in South Africa in general and Limpopo as the centre of investigation.

In this research study, the focus was on the Church's role in the promotion of human dignity and human rights against GBV encouraged by Christian teachings and African practices, more specifically the role played by African traditions in the violation of women's and children's rights, the engagement of the Church in the violation of human rights, and the role of faith leaders in the transformation of negative Christian teachings about the dignity of both women and children as images of God. Feminism, Liberation theology, and African theology will be the point of departure to propose a solution to the violation of women's and children's rights in the Limpopo Province. The I will use a qualitative research method to conduct this study. The background of the study will map the geographical and academic context of the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The phenomenon of GBV is globally pervasive. Hence, one in three women in the world experiences GBV during their lifetime (Klugman, 2017, p. 1). This problem is experienced everywhere in South Africa: In homes, hospitals, prisons, and even in Churches (Mogale, Burns, & Richter, 2012). The secular government also contributed to the increase of GBV since corrective measures are insufficient to curb the challenge.

People of all classes and all ethnicities in all nations suffer violence inflicted on them by others for reasons based on gender violence. Gender violence happens in both private and public sectors. It is interconnected to manifestations of GBV around the world. The management of World Vision Australia (UN Women, 1995, p. 136) is one body who conducted the work of addressing violence against women and girls. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is also involved in addressing both victims and perpetrators (ELCA, 2015). Research has indicated that approximately one in four women reports sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Religion for Peace raises an awareness that every woman and child is entitled to full protection under the law (Singh, Singh, Lancioni, Singh, Winton, & Adkins, 2010). A mapping of faith-based responses to violence against women and girls in the Asian-Pacific region is reported by Kaybryn and Nidadavolu (2012).

Africa is vexed by upsurging issues such as femicide, sexism, and domestic violence as a result of the cultural stereotypes that specifically perturb black women. In most African societies, the cultural interaction status and role of women are sought to be comprehended (Montle, 2021, p. 234). The fundamental assumptions of women in African societies were and are still underpinned by stereotypical notions, especially cultural stereotypes, which assert gratuitous societal roles that often marginalise women. Passion killings in Botswana were reported to be increasing and 700 female rape cases were reported in the first five months of 2017 (Bothoko, 2018). Selected Northern Sotho proverbs coupled with data collected from critical essays, articles, and books are used to marginalise women (Montle, 2021). This study examines the intervention process and strategies used to address the plight of abused women and children in Limpopo with special attention to the Capricorn district (DSSL Research Report on KAP 2015).

The challenges faced by women and children in Limpopo motivated the undertaking of this study to respond to these challenges. Limpopo Province comprises ethnic groups in the form of the Northern-Sotho, Venda, and Tsonga people, rooted in their African traditions and culture.

The African traditions significantly impact the societal structures, Churches, and schools. This research emphasised the contribution of these societal structures in addressing these challenges, particularly the part of the Church and traditional structures. The researcher investigated how the Church and African traditions within the Limpopo Province contributed to the violation of the rights of women and children within the societal structures. I employed an arch method to investigate these negative contributions to violating the rights of women and children.

This research study explored the intervention process and strategies used to address the plight of abused women and children in Limpopo, with particular attention to the Capricorn district. Limpopo is one of the nine provinces of South Africa, which is predominantly rural with very few cities and towns. This province is situated in the northern part of South Africa, bordered by Botswana, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. The river that borders Zimbabwe and South Africa is called the Limpopo River – the province was named after this river. As Limpopo is a predominantly rural area, traditional leaders and chiefs are the main stakeholders within the province's governance. As a result, the traditional leaders and chiefs influence the people's lives in this province. The House of Traditional Leaders was established to advise the government on customs, traditions, cultures, and developmental initiatives that affect rural communities (Limpopo Houses of Traditional Leaders Act 5 of 2005 – Laws.Africa, 2006). This rural and traditional settings have a significant contribution to the people's lives, including women and children.

The centre for the most prominent African Initiated Church, Zion Christian Church (ZCC) in Southern Africa, is located in Limpopo in Moria. Rafapa (2011) indicates that the birth of ZCC in 1910 has impacted the lives of many people interested in spiritual and material resources in times of identity crises. Although the ecclesiological system of ZCC is episcopal and the position of the Bishop is hereditary, for now, the Bishop line of males and the Church itself is male-dominated in the ranks of Pastors. On the other hand, the females in ZCC are very obedient and submissive to the Church males. The South African census of 1996 indicates that ZCC has close to 3.87 million members, while the 2001 census specifies that the numbers have increased to 4.97 million members. Two South African newspapers have verified these ZCC statistics, and they

have found that the membership of ZCC might range between 8 and 10 million in total (Difela Tsa Sione, n.d.). The system and influence of this Church in Limpopo might impact or contribute to GBV or the violation of women's and children's rights.

Other traditional Churches in Limpopo are the AGS Moeder Gemeente, AGS Oos, Agape Gemeente, Assembly of God, Baptist Church Beth-el, Catholic Cathedral, Christian Community Church, Emmanuel Tabernacle, Gereformeerde Kerk, Gereformeerde Kerk Noord, Gereformeerde Kerk Suid, Gideons in South Africa, Lede in Christus Gemeente, Lutheran Church, Methodist Church, NG Bendorpark , NG Moeder Gemeente, NG Noord, NG Oos, Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk, Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk Welgelegen, Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk Noord, Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk Oos, Nuwe Apostoliese Kerk, Presbyterian Church, and Volle Evangelie Kerk van God. Nowadays, there are other types of Churches which are charismatic. The following are the motivations that have compelled me to undertake this research study.

1.3 MOTIVATION TO UNDERTAKE THIS RESEARCH STUDY

My curiosity and interest in women's and children's rights in the Limpopo Province have encouraged her to read newspapers, listen to the radio, and watch television on GBV. Reading and listening to the news have instilled the courage to undertake this research study. It was vital to undertake this study because the impact of GBV reported in the media was threatening the entire community. For example, the South African Police Service National Statistics (SAPSNS) reported that in 2009 and 2010, there were 197,877 crimes against women in South Africa (Mhango, 2012, p. 1). This created an awareness among the Churches, traditional leaders, and other structures concerned about the welfare of women and children, well knowing that violence was not God's purpose with his creation.

Furthermore, I intended to provoke the faith communities to re-look and re-examine their teachings of the Bible with a new perspective that will promote the rights of women and children. Limpopo Province consists of many faith and traditional leaders who might play a negative or positive role in the promotion of women's and children's rights and dignity. The above composition of faith and traditional leaders has given the me hope that this study can contribute positively to the promotion of human rights and

dignity. The background and the motivation to undertake this study originate from a particular problem that will be crafted in the next section.

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT

The violation of women's and children's rights violate the image of God. Kobia (2018, p. 12) and Masango (2018, p. 63) indicate that the power of human dignity and the right to life in fullness is a gift of God and requires humans' most profound appreciation, respect, and defence against any threat. This is because human beings derive their origin from God (image of God). Masango (2018, p. 66) states:

South Africans lost their concept of life with dignity, connected to Ubuntu during apartheid times when they fought for their liberation. During those days, the life and dignity of humanity lost their meaning – especially the concept of the image and the likeness of God, which kept them from respecting each other. In the new democracy, with an emphasis on human dignity and human rights, the community is trying to recover old concepts that kept villagers and people respecting each other.

The focus on human dignity has given me the reason to re-evaluate and re-examine the concept of the image of God within the faith community (Church) and the African tradition setting. This re-evaluation and re-examination will focus on women's and children's rights which are contested by GBV and children's rights violation in the democratic South Africa in general and Limpopo Province in particular.

GBV is a global phenomenon. Hence, one in three women in the world has experienced GBV during their lifetime (Klugman, 2017, p. 1). It is recorded through television, radio, and social media that South Africa suffers from the highest violation of women's and children's rights in the world. This violence is experienced everywhere in South Africa: In homes, hospitals, prisons, and even Churches (Mogale et al., 2012).

GBV affects people of all races, classes, and ethnicities. What makes it worse is that most of the perpetrators are still on the loose. Most of them belong to the same com-

munity, religious organisation, and cultural background as their victims. Victims are tortured both mentally and physically. The force behind this study is that women are not heard but only seen carrying placards year in and year out, protesting against rape, kidnapping, and murder (Mogale et al., 2012).

The secular government also contributes to the increase of GBV since corrective measures are insufficient to curb the challenge. The President of South Africa instructed the Minister of Justice to amend the judgement sentences of 28 January 2022. However, the courts and Police Services still do not take more severe measures against perpetrators of this violence. The SAPSNS reported in 2009 and 2010 that there were 197,877 cases of serious crime committed against women (Mhango, 2012, p. 1). Hence, this study examined the intervention process and strategies used to address the plight of abused women and children in Limpopo, with particular attention to the Capricorn district (DSSL Research Report on KAP 2015). The main research statement is subdivided into two sub-problems as detailed below.

1.4.1 The Role of African Tradition and Culture in Violation of Women's and Children's Rights

Mbiti (1969, p. 100) indicates that African people's lives revolve around and in the community. This community is built for the living and the dead, and those born in the future. Any African tradition that does not respect this notion of the community does not belong to the community. Women and children are also part of this community. In that sense, African tradition ought to respect those women and children who are part of the community and should be protected by the community. Arguing along the lines of Mbiti (1969, p. 100), women and children in the African tradition have the same rights as men and elders because they are equally integral parts of the community. Mbiti (1969, p. 108) adds:

Physical birth is not enough: the child must go through rites of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated into the entire society. The rites continue throughout the physical life of the person, during which the individual passes from one stage of corporate existence to another. The final stage is reached when he dies,

and even then, he is ritually incorporated into the wider family of the dead and the living.

The African developmental stages of a child indicate that the child has equal rights to any other human being within the community and these need to be respected. The violation of the rights of a child is a violation of the community's rights because there is no individual in the African tradition. When a child suffers a breach of rights, they do not suffer alone, but the corporate rights of the community are violated as well. This notion is rooted in the African philosophy of corporate suffering or corporate joy (Mbiti, 1969, p. 108).

Contrary to the African tradition that needs to respect human dignity, the tradition participated in the vandalisation of the image of God. Traditional cultural practices replicate the values and beliefs of the community or society. Some are good as they can establish the behaviour of society (Ntuli, 2019). Examples of behaviour that are not acceptable are child-marriage, genital mutilation, polygamy, extra-marital affairs, widow inheritance, and the battering of women. In addition, the education of girls is mostly not a priority. The Bill of Rights sections 30 and 31 needs to be facilitated through dialogue with leaders and the community. The strategies for the elimination of these harmful practices should be in place (Hingston & Asneline, 2019, pp. 51–62).

Phiri (2003), quoting the report of the Gender and Human Rights Commission on virginity testing, indicates that virginity testing was one of the abuses of children's and women's rights because the girl was forced by their parents to do virginity testing against her will. The other side of the coin was genital mutilation, equating to virginity testing. Both virginity testing and genital mutilation violate children's and women's rights.

According to Phiri (2003), the other point of argument is the venue for testing, which is mostly an open piece of ground and this adds to the dehumanisation of the girls. The girls have to take off their clothes in public, which is not easy for Africans, being people

who are influenced by the Western culture. At the same time, when the ritual is performed, African indigenous people do not regard it as a violation of the girls' rights to take off all their clothes.

Tlhagale (2004, p. 44), in an argument about inculturation, brings African culture into the Church, stating:

Feelings of envy and jealousy, strong disagreement and cutthroat competition need not all be blamed on individuals whom the community regards sinister and evil. Traditionally, witches were regarded and continue to be regarded as the embodiment of evil. They are a convenient scapegoat for the problems of the community. They are an irrational explanation of the ills of the community.

Furthermore, the documents of Tlhagale (e.g., Tlhagale 2004) have assisted me in formulating her recommendation to address the evil intention of the so-called witches in Limpopo Province. They are violating their rights by indicating that faith and education act as catalysts of change within the African culture by purifying it, promoting personal responsibility, and awakening individual consciences. Finally, Tlhagale (2004) provides some solutions as to how African challenges in this research could be addressed in the early 21st century. I will determine how they can be managed in future.

The role played by the African traditions and culture in Limpopo in the violation of women's and children's rights being the image of God are reported by the Commission on Witchcraft and Ritual Murder (Report of Witchcraft and Ritual Murder, 2012, p. 4). Culture and traditions pose harmful practices against women and children in the African context in Limpopo (Montle, 2021). For example, children are forced to enter marriage contracts against the Constitution of South Africa and the Bill of Rights (Hingston & Asneline, 2019). In addition, some rituals and practices are very oppressive and violate women's rights, such as mourning, widow's inheritance, and female genital mutilation (Menoe, 2012, 1–14). The ideal situation is protecting women and children against violence and the violation of their rights. Safety in all places in the country is a desired goal. Therefore, the Church should be a safe space to protect women's and children's rights.

1.4.2 The Role of the Church in Violating Women's and Children's Rights

Forster, Gerle, and Gunner (2019, p. 18) postulate that the connection between religious freedom and the safeguarding of human rights is complicated in South Africa. I intended to explore how difficult it sometimes is to seek help at the Church to protect the rights of women and children. The role of the Church in interpreting Christian traditions and the Scriptures regarding women and children can be misleading, ending up in the violation of women's and children's rights in South Africa in general and Limpopo as the centre of investigation. Forster et al. (2019, p. 19) remind the public about the Church's task as they derive it from the message to the people of South Africa published in 1968 (Wits Historical Papers) that the Church's mission is to display the power of God at work, changing hostility into love for the neighbour. Furthermore, it expresses the reconciliatory work of Christ here and now.

However, the Church frequently chooses to be silent, in fact supporting the violation of women's and children's rights. Many a time faith communities and their leaders know what is happening within their communities but prefer to keep quiet. Faith leaders and Church structures can play a vital role in empowering women and children through Christian traditions and informing African practices easily in their context (SADC, 2018, pp. 19–26; ELCA, 2015, pp. 1–3). Tlhagale (2004) strengthens the former argument by introducing enculturation as the solution to both African and the Gospel cultures. He argues that faith can be at home in African culture and open its new home to new challenges. Christian faith, because it possesses its own life and norms, will transform the host culture to become part of that culture without conforming to that culture. It should be the lever that frees the African culture from self-imprisonment and the limitations inherent in the African ideology. The very same African culture has the same influence as the biblical teaching of the Church due to scanty theological education.

Most people deeply rooted in the African tradition and culture belong to the African Independent Churches, led by Pastors and Bishops who have not received or have limited theological training. Oduyoye (2004) indicates that the Bible schools play a significant role in training Church leaders in Africa. These schools are rooted in Christian fundamentalism, which originate from America. They provide limited knowledge of the

Bible without the context of the texts and the biblical language to interpret for themselves. She adds:

Of course, those who are literate also read the Bible in the many translations that are now available. Reading and interpreting the Bible, with human experience as the main commentary, is the most available means of shaping one's theology to cope with the normal and extraordinary contingencies of the life on this continent (Oduyoye, 2004, p. 7).

The argument is that the limited knowledge of biblical studies as the basis for theology, with its literal reading of the Bible, might contribute to the misinterpretation of faith leaders and faith communities to respect women's and children's rights. This is because the literal reading of the Bible as the information document for Christian theology is used without the current context of women and children. Hence, Oduyoye (2004) argues that feminists must re-read the Bible with different glasses to redefine Christian anthropology regarding the existence of women. They call for a fresh interpretation of what it means to be "created in the image and likeness of God" and re-read the Bible to unveil the sexism and gender politics played in the biblical roots of Christianity (Oduyoye, 2004). The re-reading and re-interpretation of the need to empower faith leaders and traditional leaders assist in the promotion of women's and children's rights and dignity.

The traditional and faith leaders ought to provide a safe space for women and children in Churches and villages in Limpopo against GBV, sexual assaults, emotional abuse of the rights of women and children, kidnapping, rape, and murder (Ntuli, 2019; Maiden, 2019, pp. 1–24). Furthermore, Mhango (2012, p. 3) states that in Limpopo Province, there are many cases of rape, battering, hijacking, and other forms of abuse reported by the media. Therefore, the Church needs to advocate a redefinition of Christian anthropology that regards the existence of women and children as created in the image of God that will empower faith and traditional leaders to change the situation of women and children.

1.4.3 Faith Leaders and Transformation of Christian Teachings

The patriarchal approach of the Bible and other scriptures should be transformed to suit or address the lives of women and children. Teachings on polygamy, religious rites for women, impurities, leadership in the Church, attire for women, and many others should be approached with care and positive teaching to avoid the violation of women's and children's rights in the Church families. A typical example is how men use Paul's letters to oppress women. Added to these are the way rape cases were dealt with in the Old Testament, the decisions taken about children and women as mere properties and not human beings with a total capacity to think and reason out in their contexts. The following are examples:

- A lack of sympathy given to Tamar. She lived as a lonely woman in Absalom's house, being raped by Amnon, her brother (2 Sa 13). Absalom avenged this by organising to kill Amnon.
- King David's lust for a beautiful woman, Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. He slept with her and later arranged for Uriah's death (2 Sa 11:14–17). God was not pleased with this action and eventually the child of David and Bathsheba died.
- An attempted gang rape: Lot gave his two virgin daughters to Sodom men who wanted sex with the two angels at his home (Gn 19). The angels bolted the door and blinded the men of Sodom so they could not find the doorway.
- Shechem, the prince and son of Hamor the Hivite raped Dinah. The fathers had a meeting to discuss giving Dinah to Shechem as a wife (Gn 34). The full brothers of Dinah, Simeon and Levi, avenged by killing all the Hivite men and carried off all their wealth, their women, and their children. They took for loot whatever was in the houses.

The Word of God should be taught to change and build up responsible Christians. The members of the faith community should understand the implications of following Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the people of God. The teachings should root out the present indications that show signs of spiritual barrenness and decay, as stated by Daliwanga Mbana (2021, pp. 18–80). Pastors should live as required. Faith leaders should live according to their responsibility as written in 1 Timothy 3:1–12. They should avoid falling prey to sexual misconduct (Latini, 2011, p. 25).

Teachings of the Word of God should reach most of the members of the Churches in Limpopo. The biblical teachings on wives and husbands must be on an equal basis: Wives and husbands have authority over each other's bodies (1 Cor 7:4). He who loves his wife loves himself. He should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband (Eph 5:28, 33). The basis of the texts mentioned above emphasises the equality of husbands and wives. Respect is the character of love, and love is the exposition of respect. Therefore, the one who loves does not harm the one who is loved and the one who respects does not provoke the one who is respected.

Faith communities in Limpopo should learn from the strategies of other countries, such as the USA. The ELCA Church there has different therapies implemented to help the perpetrators and victims (Van Dyk, 2000, pp. 4–5). Faith communities need to facilitate dialogue to disrupt campus rape at institutions of higher education (IHEs) (Palm, 2018). The problem experienced by different universities globally cannot be eliminated by dialogue, but there is a need for action by the organisations (Young, 2017, pp. 1–15). The weakness of the leaders who use some cultural values and beliefs held by community members to abuse their powers against women when it suits them is a problem that needs the expertise of faith communities (Hingston & Asneline, 2019).

In light of the above mentioned, the main problem statement is: *The Church ought to promote human dignity as this dignity originates from God*. Instead, in many cases it enables the violation of women's and children's rights within the traditional African context. The following research questions originate from this main problem statement.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question is derived from the research problem statement and the sub-questions are related to the research aims. The main research question is: *How can faith communities (the Church) promote women's and children's rights against GBV in Limpopo?* The following sub-questions have been developed to support the main question:

- What role do faith communities, leaders, and traditional leaders play in violating women's and children's rights?

- What impact do harmful biblical interpretations and teachings have on protecting women's rights and children?
- What role can faith communities, leaders, and traditional leaders play in correcting the wrongs of the past to promote women's and children's rights?
- What strategies can faith communities and traditional leaders use to curb violations against women's and children's rights?

1.6 RESEARCH AIMS

The research aims derive from the research problem statement in assisting me to formulate her research study accordingly. These aims have directed me to respond to the research questions in the entire research study. The coherence of this study rests on the problem statement, research questions, and research aims as formulated below.

The research aims are grounded in the problem statement and research questions, and are as follows:

Aim 1: To illustrate from the literature how faith communities, faith leaders, and traditional leaders contribute to the violation of women's and children's rights.

Aim 2: To demonstrate how biblical interpretations lead to the violation of women's and children's rights.

Aim 3: To demonstrate that faith communities, leaders, and traditional leaders can correct their past wrongs to curb violence against women's and children's rights.

Aim 4: To propose what strategies faith communities, leaders, and traditional leaders can use to curb violence against women and children.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research only focused on Capricorn district as part of the Limpopo Province, as the province as a whole is too big. The research was also hampered by the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The province comprises five districts: Capricorn, Mopani, Sekhukhune, Vhembe, and Waterberg. This province is predominately rural. In this sense, poverty and unemployment are inevitable. However, as mentioned above, traditional practices are respected and observed in rural and semi-rural areas.

1.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework is the foundation on which all knowledge is constructed in a research study. I used the existing approaches relevant to the topic and assisted in answering the research question. I also developed new approaches and integrated them with previous researchers' methods. The conceptual framework may be used if no theory or various theories are used to answer the research question comprehensively. The theoretical framework for this research study falls within the framework of the creation, the *imago Dei* (*image of God*), the fall (evil-vandalisation of the image of God), and soteriology (restoration of the image of God). This theoretical framework is being handled within feminism. The Bosadi theory of Masenya from Limpopo assisted me in addressing the problem at hand (Masenya, 1966).

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Psychologists, theologians, sociologists, anthropologists, and many more have studied the issue of human rights and dignity. I cannot afford to avoid methodological research designs put in place by these experts because they are collaborative in this study. The present study bases itself on the insights developed by the disciplines mentioned above. Therefore, this study intended to move further and investigate the post-apartheid era with more religious and social vigour.

According to the available information, the research methods employed in any research study use either both or one of the following methods: The qualitative or the quantitative research methods. In this research study, I used the qualitative research method.

1.9.1 Qualitative Research Method

In this research study, the qualitative research method was used. The qualitative research method consists of a literature study, interviews, observation, and document analysis. I mainly employed a literature study, observation, document analysis, and informal interviews. According to Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, and Davidson (2002, p. 717), the qualitative research method describes and explains experience, behaviours, interactions, and social context without using numbers to qualify the findings. Further-

more, this qualitative research method engages participants' viewpoints because participants are champions in their experiential worlds and can share and describe their feelings and experiences.

Holloway (2005, pp. 4–5) indicate that with the qualitative research method, the person is the centre of the study, and the whole person is involved in comprehending human experiences, focusing on specific concepts. Such a setting includes the socio-political cultural context of language, ethnicity, religiosity, and other aspects of personal and group identity shared by the individuals concerned. Based on the definition provided above, I have chosen to employ a qualitative research method to investigate the violence against women's and children's rights in Limpopo. The qualitative research method consists of a literature study, interviews, document analysis, and observation.

1.9.2 Observation

As the primary source of investigation, observed where the participants partake in possible processes. Observation is the process of monitoring, closely observing, and gathering information using subjective methodologies. It does not involve numbers. The following may be used: Ethnography and participant observation, using stratified sampling. Due to the COVID-19 rules, other technical tools were used to observe, such as soft teams, e-mails, telephones, and WhatsApp. The targeted participants had no problem with this technical tool because it has a long history of communicating with faith leaders and communities.

1.9.3 Data Collection

I am the leading person in data collection. COVID-19 has complicated the way of life for everybody, which impacted data collection. COVID-19 made some methods of collecting data complicated to be used. Under normal circumstances, data can be collected through a semi-structured questionnaire. The advantage is that extensive coverage of the selected population can be realised with little time or cost in a quantitative research method. This method of data collection was the safest during COVID-19. Face-to-face interviews would be good to collect qualitative data from participants' viewpoints. Some institutions would even seek permission to have face-to-face interviews with victims and even perpetrators. However, in this case, the virtual interview

was used (Microsoft Teams/Zoom), together with document analysis, observation, and literature study.

1.9.4 Data Analysis

Several tools can be used for data analysis. It also depends on how the data are collected. In this study, qualitative research was used. Therefore, only tools for the qualitative research study were used. The goal of qualitative data analysis is to extract meaning from observations made by me. Fossey et al. (2002, p. 728) define data analysis as a process that reviews, synthesises, and interprets data to describe and explain the phenomena or social worlds being studied in a research study. After collecting data, I analysed the information collected to evaluate if the research aims were achieved or not.

1.9.5 Qualitative Verification

After assembling the raw data, screening needs to ensure a true reflection and quality of the information gathered. De Vos, Strydom, Fouché, and Delport (2005, pp. 345–346) provide the following criteria against which the trustworthiness of a project can be evaluated: Credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

1.9.6 Quantitative Research Method

The quantitative research method concerns numbers and the numbers will determine the tendencies around the research questions. In the qualitative design, a questionnaire was used to collect data from the participants. It is the cheaper method to collect data. Based on the challenges of COVID-19, quantitative design was more viable to justify the claims from the literature study and semi-structured interviews.

1.9.7 Questionnaire

In the mixed research design, four types of methods were utilised to collect data from participants, namely, individual, structured interviews; a structured postal questionnaire; a group completion of individual questionnaires; and a telephone survey. The researcher, while busy with the literature study has become aware that there is a strong focus on the idea of empirical investigation as basic experimental research in which primary information is being collected utilising a questionnaire as the main research

tool for the collection of the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). The questionnaire was developed by means of gathering information through theoretical reflection on the literature investigating the impact of the societal structure on the violation of the rights of women and children in Limpopo and the role of the Church and traditional leaders.

1.10 LITERATURE REVIEW

I intended to establish what was investigated on the selected topic. The strengths and weaknesses of the previous research were analysed and evaluated. This will assist future researchers in understanding what needs to be developed further. This involved finding relevant publications and analysing them. A discussion of methodological issues and suggestions for further research was taken into consideration. The topic's keywords were defined and abbreviations compiled to guide readers to follow what I was investigating. The theoretical and conceptual framework must be clear for readers.

It is essential to build on existing knowledge. A literature review is a way of collecting and synthesising previous research. It is a firm foundation for advancing knowledge and developing theory, as stated by Hannah Snyder (2019). A literature review is a search and evaluation of information available about previous experience published on a research topic. It is an objective, critical summary of published research literature relevant to the topic under investigation. It surveys books, journals, and other scholarly articles about the area of research. Aveyard refers to it as a comprehensive study and interpretation of literature that addresses a specific topic (Aveyard, 2014, pp. 68–187).

The literature review aims to convey what knowledge and ideas have been established on a topic. Strengths and weaknesses are identified. It also helps me to identify a set of valuable articles and books, thereby improving the critical thinking of the researcher. Finally, it helps the researcher to discover what is known and not known, areas of controversy, and questions that need further research (Taylor, 2016, pp. 144–161).

The literature review aims to understand the existing research and debates relevant to a particular topic. It determines what exists in the scholarly literature and identifies possible gaps that need further research. It presents the kinds of research methodologies

and tools that have been used in other studies, which may guide the design of the proposed study (Brink, Van der Walt, & Van Rensburg, 2018, p. 58).

The researcher intended to critically investigate the impact of societal structures on the violation of the rights of women and children in the Limpopo Province, especially in the Capricorn district. The Church and African traditional perspective would also be investigated. This was done through the discussion and exposition of the following main ideas:

- The role played by the African tradition and culture in violating the rights of women and children in Limpopo Province.
- The role of the Church in interpreting the Christian traditions and Scripture.
- Strategies that faith communities and traditional African leaders can use to curb violations against women's and children's rights.
- The role to be played by faith communities, faith leaders, and traditional leaders to correct the wrongs of the past.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical consideration is compulsory in research. The researcher had to respect the participants' rights, privacy, and welfare. Furthermore, the researcher had to protect the God-given dignity of all participants (Bailey, 2018, pp. 24–26, 29–30). The sections below indicate the guidance that is essential in qualitative interviewing and observation.

1.11.1 Informed Consent

The researcher had to ensure that informed consent was granted by the participants in this research project. Participants had to be informed right at the beginning of the study in the consent letter that this research project is conducted for the sole purpose of academic study, while no remuneration would be received from the researcher (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 349; McMillan & Schumacher, 2013, p. 396). This informed consent encouraged free choice to participate in the study. The researcher had to give each prospective participant a description of all the features of the research study that might reasonably influence their willingness to participate before they participate in this study. The researcher had to consider the ethical concerns of the partici-

pants when a moral practice was operated. All participants were voluntary. The participants had to be informed about the purpose and procedures of the investigation. The following were adhered to: “The researcher will not ask questions about personal information against the participants’ wishes. The interview practice should be pleasing to participants. The researcher should obtain permission to use, interpret and analyse the collected data and publish it” (Mason, 2017, pp. 94–95).

1.11.2 Confidentiality and Anonymity

In this research project, the researcher had to respect the participants’ right to privacy and confidentiality (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, pp. 176–181; McMillan & Schumacher, 2013, p. 396; Cohen et al., 2007, pp. 14–15). This implies that the researcher could not report in such a way that readers could find out how participants have responded or behaved. The researcher had to keep the nature and quality of the participants’ performance strictly confidential. If any person’s behaviour is described in depth in the report, the researcher must provide a pseudonym to assure anonymity.

The emphasis on the need for confidentiality of participants’ identities and the essence of anonymity was that information provided by participants should in no way be revealed to the public (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 500). The researcher had to ensure that no information would disclose anonymity and confidentiality. She therefore had to provide participants who intended to participate in this study with full assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. Other than identifying factors such as gender, race, and general location of the participants, personally identifiable information could not be divulged. Personal information could not be divulged without the participants’ permission. Instead, an agreement had to be established when using the data collected from participants (Patten & Newhart, 2017, p. 36–37).

1.11.3 Voluntary Participation and the Right to Withdrawal

All participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study in advance and given an option to discontinue their participation for any reason whatsoever, at any time during the process. The participants were informed that they have the right to decline and withdraw, even after they have agreed to participate (Mathipa & Gumbo, 2015, p. 92).

1.12 CONSEQUENCES AND BENEFICENCE

The researcher had to discuss the possible harm and benefits expected from the participants' participation in the research. The participants were addressed about the objectives of the investigation, research question, and aims. Should the study be successful, the faith community, faith leaders, and traditional leaders would benefit from it.

1.13 DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

The researcher was responsible for communicating the investigation results to all stakeholders, including the people, faith community, faith leaders, traditional leaders, and even the government structures such as the departments of Health and Social Development and South African Police Service (SAPS).

1.14 INTENDED RESEARCH LAYOUT OF THE STUDY

The researcher has laid out her chapters in this research study according to the research format of five chapters as indicated below.

Chapter 1: Introduction and orientation of the study

This chapter begins with the global and national context that influenced this study. Thereafter, it narrows the focus to the Limpopo context and status. Included in the introduction and background are the problem statement, the research questions, the research aims and objectives, the rationale for carrying out this research, and the limitations of the study. The summary of the intended layout of the research is also featured in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter focuses on what has been investigated on the selected topic. It involves finding relevant publications and analysing them. It focuses on a search and evaluation of available information about previous experience published on the research topic. It is an objective, critical summary of published research literature relevant to the topic under investigation. The research focuses on Limpopo Province, especially the Capricorn district. The study focuses on the Church and African tradition perspective.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

This chapter details the research design and research methods that were used when carrying out the study. It further details the use of the qualitative research process, data collection, and ethical considerations, and how validity and reliability will be achieved.

Chapter 4: Research data presentation, analysis, and interpretation

This chapter concentrates on the research findings that emerge from the interviews, observations, documentary sources, and surveys. These findings are presented, discussed, compared, and constructed within the existing relevant literature.

Chapter 5: Summary, findings, and recommendations

The focus of this chapter is to present conclusions, a summary of the key findings, and limitations, and will evaluate whether the main research questions have been answered and whether the research aim has been achieved. Recommendations will be drawn and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

1.15 SUMMARY

Christ's manifesto cannot be ignored in these situations where women and children are violated. The Church must set the people of God free from all sorts of oppression and violence as it is the mission of God through Jesus Christ (Lk 4:18). The great challenge after reviewing the previously researched literature is: How do faith leaders ensure that their preaching of the Word of God becomes the actual vehicle of transformation, new life, loving one another, and loving your neighbour and the whole of creation? How do faith leaders in Limpopo ensure that the fulfilment or implementation of the Great Commission congruent with the Great Commandment are implemented to ensure that there is peace among the people of God? The researcher deems fit to examine, explore, and propose the introduction of an ideal model of transformation perspective.

The faith leaders need to consider the impact of adverse violent conditions on women and children in the Limpopo Province. The significant gap of research is that little has been written about the research problem. Faith communities are not doing enough to teach their members about the studied problem. Faith leaders do not teach about morals, as most leaders have fallen prey to sexual abuse of faith members, especially girls.

The Department of Justice is aggravating this practice by using humiliating questions that traumatise the victims, and they lose cases against them. This is the primary cause of the increasing rape, kidnapping, and killings of women and children in South Africa. Another problem is how to involve the perpetrators in dialogue towards the solution of this researched problem. Further research is still needed towards finding strategies for solving this problem.

CHAPTER 2

THE IMPACT OF THE CHURCH AND TRADITIONAL PRACTICES ON VIOLENCE AGAINST THE DIGNITY AND RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will define and clarify the concepts that are important for the research topic as it is summarised in the problem statement: The Church ought to promote human dignity as this dignity originates from God. However, at this stage, it mostly enables the violation of women's and children's rights within the traditional African context. The previous existing knowledge will be reviewed to find out how much is known about the topic of the impact of the Church on the violence of women and the dignity and rights of children in Africa in general and Limpopo in particular. The following keywords were used to find relevant sources: Church; women's dignity; women's rights; children; African tradition; and traditional leaders.

The researcher intended to critically investigate the impact of societal structures on the violation of the rights of women and children in Limpopo Province, especially in the Capricorn district. The research will focus on the Church and the African traditional perspective. The traditional and cultural practices will be the first point to discuss as stereotypes from traditional and cultural practices are reflecting in the Church context.

2.2 DEFINITION AND CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The researcher defined the concepts that are key to this research study to provide a better understanding of what she means by certain concepts like Church; traditional practice; culture; human rights, and human dignity within the perspective of this research and discipline. The researcher will focus on Lutheran and Reformed definitions of the Church as she is a Lutheran by confession and has an interest in Reformed theology.

2.2.1 Definition and Clarification of the Church

The researcher has consulted different sources to find the definition of the Church that can fit the aim of this research study. She started with Luther and Calvin. Calvin, one

of the Reformers, holds that the Church as an organisation requires the marks to identify the Church as a true Church (Zickler, 2017). Calvin agrees with Luther in his approach to the marks of the true Church, namely the proclamation of the Word and the proper administration of the sacraments (Zickler, 2017). However, he puts more emphasis than Luther on correct faith and an upright Christian life (Kärkkäinen 2002, p. 50). Calvin goes a step further and includes a third mark which is the exercising of discipline. The true Church is a Church that preaches the Word of God to address contemporary challenges through sermons, serving the communities by means of diaconal services (Zickler, 2017). The proclamation of the Word of God needs to be interpreted through an understanding of the text within its initial context, as well as the context of the receiver of the message.

The true Church will always take care of the Africanism of the people to whom the message is preached, which can be done through an inculturation of the African practices that are disturbing as it is captured in the problem statement. The true Church is the Church that proclaims the message of liberation and reconciliation of humanity as the image of God. In such a Church women and children will be treated with dignity as the image of God.

The Church administrates the holy Sacraments as the Word of God in symbols. As such the Church baptism acts as the Word of God in the symbol of water. At the baptism human beings are invited and included into the community of believers and entered into covenant with God, therefore human beings are included in the community as the image of God with dignity. With the sharing of the elements of the Eucharist in the congregation, the Church learns how to share responsibility towards protecting the rights of women and children among the members of the congregation. Bender (2005, p. 73) narrates it as follows:

The church should be the true church, and this should be reflected in the church's visible life, though the church possesses no means to purge and exclude all hypocrites from its midst. Barth contends that should the church attempt to undertake such a purification, which only God can perform, honesty would necessitate that

no one would be allowed to remain in the church and the visible church would be lost.

Pitikoe (2016, p. 19) indicates that the proponents of the Church as a servant believe that it is inadequate for the Church to merely proclaim its faith in Christ and to hope that those who hear that message will confess their faith in God. The Church should rather ensure that it becomes exemplary in servant-funded activities, by being an organisation that takes care of its members' and non-member's spiritual, social, cultural, economic, and political desires without fear or favour. Furthermore, the believers and the non-believers in the community should take note that the Church is not influenced by the outside world, and thus, the Church would recognise its subjects. The implication is that the Church cannot approach the community from a point of authority and revelation, but must rather act with sympathy, compassion, and concern, just as Jesus himself did (Pitikoe, 2016, p. 19). The Church that is portrayed by Pitikoe (2016) is the Church that the researcher regards as the solution to the challenge of women's and children's rights that should be considered by all the Churches in Limpopo.

The Church as a community of believers needs to have morals to proclaim the Word of God to its people. In light of this, Hauerwas (2012) defines the Church as a community of character that should not contain a social ethics, but ought to be a social ethics. The ethics must therefore not be contained in the Church but the Church ought to be that ethics. The Church ought to be a pattern-setter for moral conduct. As mentioned above, the Church ought to preach the message of reconciliation. Here it is contended that the Church ought to be a reconciled community, it ought to illustrate to the world what reconciliation means in its actual form. According to Pitikoe (2016), the new covenant with God and fellow Christians, as expressed in the Eucharist, must set a pattern for the entire society. The Church ought to illustrate the peace and love of God's act of reconciliation on the cross.

When the Church becomes the pawn of politics or secular ideologies, as it happened in the past during the Apartheid era and other political theologies, it fails to demonstrate true reconciliation. It then becomes an image of a broken society rather than an image

of God's reconciled community (Pitikoe, 2016). The Church needs to be a pattern-setter to the secular world to address the social ills and injustices experienced by human beings, rather than becoming part of the problem by supporting such social ills through their interpretation of Scriptures, thereby ignoring the context of human beings.

The Church is a community of equal people created in the image of God where their rights and dignity emanate from. It therefore bridges all social barriers and divisions and focuses on the rights of the women and children in its congregations. In his reaction against the Apartheid theology in South Africa, this basic character of the Church is defined by Bosch (1991, p. 172) as an alternative community: The Church needs to act as an alternative community for women and children in the patriarchal traditional communities. As an alternative community, the Church acts as a moral agent, in other words, as a community that can and should operate as an example of the fruit of transformation and reconciliation of the cross. The alternative community ought to be a transformative community to convert harmful traditional and cultural practices performed on women and children.

2.2.2 Definition and Clarification of Tradition and Culture

Culture can be defined from different angles – sociologically, psychologically, anthropologically, and philosophically. As the problem statement of this study is about women and children in society, the researcher has chosen to define culture from the perspective of social psychology because the behaviour of the patriarchal society determines the oppression and exploitation of women and children. Baumeister (2018, p. 38) indicate that it is not easy to define the term “culture.” They indicate that one book listed 164 definitions of culture. Baumeister (2018, p. 38) then provide an etymological definition for culture, referring to farming and agriculture. They also refer to musical and artistic achievements such as paintings and symphonies, which were later used by social scientists to refer to a large group of people – including people sharing language, values, food preferences, and style of government, places, and a shared sense of connection to artistic and historical achievements. In light of these, they define culture as an advanced way of being social or living together. According to them, culture consists of shared ideas and a social system; culture is the praxis of information and meaning (Baumeister 2018, pp. 38–40). Baumeister(2018, p. 41) then add:

Culture is an information-based system, involving both shared understanding and praxis that enables groups of people to live together in an organised fashion and to get what they need. Culture can have a significant influence even on basic human needs, such as food and sex.

The definitions provided above by social psychologists do not allow negative practices to be regarded as part of culture like abuse of women's and children's rights as it is mentioned in the problem statement. In most cases, culture as an information-based system ought to be an enabler – and not a disabler – in the lives of women and children. The human rights and dignity of women and children ought to be derived from their cultural contexts.

2.2.3 Definition and Clarification of Human Rights and Dignity

The United Nations (UN), in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN, 1966), established sets of rights to counter the vandalisation of the image of God in the world. These documents proclaim and agree that every human being is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status. In light of these, one must define what human rights are from a political, social, and theological perspective, in order to assist in addressing the problem at hand in this research study. Vorster (2012, p. 3 of 8) argues from the Church Fathers' perspective:

The human person's most basic property is the right to dignity. Christian ethicists have, at least since the time of Ambrose of Milan, grounded their understanding of human dignity in the biblical concept of the *imago Dei*, a concept which indicates the basic unity of humankind. According to this view, human dignity entails that human beings are entitled to be treated as worthy of respect and concern because they stand in a special relationship with God.

Vorster's argument indicates that human rights and dignity emanate from the origin of humankind and that being the image of God deserves respect and concern. The rights of a human are grounded in their being created in the likeness of God. This image of

God includes children and women who need to be treated with respect and concern, which is the focus of this research study. It is therefore important to define what a human being is, specifically when referring to children and women.

2.2.4 Definition and Clarification of Women and Children

The definition of a woman as a human being has been clouded by many contextual factors dominated by the patriarchal mentality of inequality. In most cases the definition of a woman is socially constructed to fit the context of the person who defines a woman. Stoljar (1995, p. 262) argues:

In the history of philosophy, about the nature attributed to women has been assumed to be inferior to the nature attributed to men; women have been characterized variously as passive, irrational, emotional, by nature bearers and caretakers of children, and so on. In response to this assumption, feminists have developed the position that the attribution of inferior qualities to women is the result of misguided social and cultural conceptions of women. In broad terms, the naturalizing argument proposes a “socially constructed” account of gender, in which the qualities constituting womanness are no longer understood as natural, and in that sense fixed, but rather as open to social reform.

It is therefore not the inferior attributes of a woman that define a woman, but the dignity she possesses as the image of God with full and equal rights to men in society. The divine character that a woman has as the image of God gives her a better womanness before God and other creatures including men. In this definition, women are classified as equal to men in all contexts, including all races and cultural contexts. Certain women may, however, want to be defined by the male society, while others will refuse to be defined that way.

Women in some parts of the African context accept the inferior treatment that they receive from the patriarchal society and regard these practices as normal and cultural. This behaviour prompted the researcher to challenge the normalities of negative practices that affect the human dignity and rights of women in South Africa in general and Limpopo in particular. Stoljar further postulates that women are not the same by using

her argument which she calls the diversity argument that emphasises the uniqueness of women in different contexts. She argues:

[T]he two forms of essentialism – i.e., as a claim about a universal “woman” and as a claim about the essential properties of an individual – should be kept distinct. Rejecting the “essentialist” claim of universal womanness does not imply that particular women do not have a particular womanness which is essential to their identity; and neither does rejecting the claim that individual women have essential properties, as some postmodernists do, imply that there is no universal womanness (Stoljar 1995, p. 263).

Children are defined by the UN Universal Declaration as people who are under 18 years unless a country chooses to define it otherwise. Every individual under 18 years has specific rights as proclaimed by the UN (1990). The Convention on the Rights of Children (UN, 1990) declares the following about children:

- Children are entitled to special care and assistance.
- Families as the basic unit of society and the natural environment for children’s development should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance to protect and assist children.
- Children must have a full and harmonious development of their personality and should develop in an atmosphere of happiness, love, and understanding.
- The child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society, in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality, and solidarity.

This Declaration on Children’s Rights ought to find its origin in the theological basis that women and children are the image of God that is where their dignity is based. According to this Declaration, children cannot be treated outside its principles and their divine creation in the image of God. Hence, the researcher is pursuing this study to illustrate that children and women are above cultural and traditional practices.

2.3 TRADITIONAL AND CULTURAL PRACTICES VIOLATING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Based on African theology and philosophy, as indicated in the problem statement, African people are living as a community, bonded by traditional and cultural beliefs, norms, and standards. Within the African philosophy there is no single individual, as an individual is an individual because of the community – hence traditional and cultural practices are binding to all members of the community. Traditional and cultural practices replicate the values and beliefs of the community or society. Some are good as they build up the behaviour of society (Ntuli, 2019). Contrary to these, negative values and beliefs can break the society. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Children (UN, 1948), some behaviours are not acceptable in any community, locally and globally, for example child marriage, genital mutilation, circumcision of women, widowhood, and widow inheritance. In the African context, this is supplemented by African proverbs that disrespect the status of women in society. *Mosadi ke tshwene o lewa mabogo* meaning that all is needed from a woman is labour; *Lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi* – meaning that once married, a woman must never think of divorce or going back home.

2.3.1 Traditional Practice of Child Marriages and Virginitly Testing

Mare (2021) strongly rejects the Church practice and encouragement of child marriages, which he believes is against the rights of children in Zimbabwe in particular and elsewhere. Hence the researcher is looking at this concept from the South African context within the Limpopo Province, which borders with Zimbabwe. The researcher has observed the practice while she was ministering in the Lutheran Church and as an educator that has prompted her to undergo intensive literature study on the practice in South Africa in general and Limpopo in particular.

Child marriage is practised by certain people groups in Africa. Mare (2021) indicates that Johanne Marange Apostolic Church (JMAC) does practise this kind of marriage and encourages multi-partner marriage which seems unfair to both women and children. JMAC also exists in South Africa which means that its influence has spread over the South African border. Mare (2021, p. 20) postulates:

The Constitution applies to every citizen universally. JMAC members are first and foremost citizens, therefore, are obligated to follow the secular laws. However, the Zimbabwean case is somehow different, JMAC seem to enjoy state protection and privileges resulting in state condoning JMAC practices, rituals and teachings that violate the rights of women and children. Since independence in 1980 to date, the government of Zimbabwe has yet to establish a commission of inquiry into alleged abuses of women and children in JMAC. Each year when the JMAC congregate at their annual Passover ceremonies child marriages and virginity testing are rampant and the academic fraternity, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) have on numerous occasions raised a red flag.

In the Zimbabwean context, according to Mare (2021), this is the practice of JMAC, while in some parts of South Africa in general and Limpopo Province these marriages are arranged by families. Nour (2009, p. 51) contends:

Most of these marriages are arranged by parents, and girls rarely meet their future husbands before the wedding. The girls know that after the wedding they will move to their husband's household, become the responsibility of their in-laws, and might not see their own family or friends for some time.

These are the arrangements of parents for reasons known to the family and not to the public domain. Sometimes it is preferred by relatives to avoid divorce cases that are experienced nowadays or to avoid the blood lineage of the family. Others go beyond their cultural context and economic reasons to get the family out of poverty. In some cultures, it is arranged according to class – rich and poor parents. Some communities still allow these marriages by abduction (*ukuthwala*), child marriage, and virginity testing (Chabaya, Rembe, & Wadesango, 2009). As Mare (2021) indicates, in the Zimbabwean context the constitution of the country and the universal human rights do not allow these practices. The same law is applicable in South Africa where there are legislation and policies that are put in place to condemn these harmful traditional-cultural practices which violate the rights of women and children, especially young girls.

These marriages are not only an ethical challenge, but it impacts many aspects of life and health – psychological, social, and educational. Those who enter into these marriages are entering into many life risks that have a longstanding impact on their lives. Nour (2009, pp. 51–52) argues from the side of the health perspective and human rights:

Marriages in which a child under the age of 18 years is involved occur worldwide but are mainly seen in South Asia, Africa, and Latin America. A human rights violation, child marriage directly impacts girls' education, health, psychological well-being, and the health of their offspring. It increases the risk of depression, sexually transmitted infection, cervical cancer, malaria, obstetric fistulas, and maternal mortality. Their offspring are at an increased risk for premature birth and, subsequently, neonatal or infant death. The tradition, driven by poverty, is perpetuated to ensure girls' financial futures and to reinforce social ties. One of the most effective methods of reducing child marriage and its health consequences is mandating that girls stay in school.

Nour (2009) highlights another pushing factor to child marriage, in addition to religious and cultural factors, which is poverty. He suggests that education is the key solution to this ill practice, that girls should stay in school, and through education girls must be empowered to resist these malpractices on a Christian and political basis.

In countries where poverty, unemployment, and inequality are at a higher rate, these marriages are common because of the pushing factors in the economy: Poverty reduction through dowry, since the young girls bring more dowry than the older ones. Inequality in the social context also forces parents to marry their children early to a particular class in society to have social ties with families of high status to boast of their family status. By means of these marriages, the family also attempts to prevent HIV, unintended pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases (Nour, 2009). All these “good intentions” measured above contradict the human rights of children and women in society, as these marriages bring the opposite results to the livelihood of children and their offsprings.

Nour (2009) cites several consequences of child marriages over against the advantages the families are citing in favour of these marriages. The consequences are:

- Isolation and depression.
- Risk of sexually transmitted infection and cervical cancer.
- Risks during pregnancy.
- Risks during labour and delivery.
- Risks for infants.

These consequences need to be addressed in every community by leaders such as traditional leaders and faith leaders. The child is the project of the entire community. Nour (2009, p. 52) provides some points that can assist in curbing this challenge in contemporary society:

Child marriage truncates girls' childhood, stops their education, and impacts their health and the health of their infants. Governmental and nongovernmental policies aimed at educating the community, raising awareness, engaging local and religious leaders, involving parents, and empowering girls through education and employment can help stop child marriage. Programs that have shown success are those that give families financial incentives to keep their daughters in school, those that feed children during school hours so parents do not have to bear that responsibility, and those that promise employment once girls have completed their schooling.

These programmes indicated in this quotation are the South African social development programmes that need to be clarified to the girl child and their children and can assist in curbing this practice in Limpopo through awareness from the community, NGOs, and Faith-Based Organisations. Mbiti (1969, p. 134) postulates that marriage is not child's play. There are a series of rites that the girl child needs to undergo to be prepared for marriage. This process takes the childhood out of the girl and installs womanhood in her so that she can be married. In this sense, child marriage in the African context should not be permitted. In the same breath, some challenges are facing African people on marriage, being challenged by womanists, feminists, and theologians in various disciplines of theology. The next challenge that will be addressed is

the commercialising of marriage through high costs of bride price (*lobola*), which exerts pressure on the very same women on birthing and polygamy.

2.3.2 *Lobola* Usage in Africa and its Misuse by Capitalistic African Context

In the previous discussion on child marriage, the issue of economic factors as pushing factors was discussed, where dowry is paid to uplift the economic status of the girl's family. Likewise, the issue of *lobola* serves the same purpose. This section starts with a discussion on bride price known as *lobola* or *magadi* in Sepedi. In this section, the discussion will first refer to the positive African practices of marriage and then to the commercialisation of marriages in the capitalistic world.

According to Mbiti (1969, p. 133), marriage in the African context is a complex activity that includes economic, social, and religious elements that are intertwined and cannot be separated from one another. For the purpose of this research study, the emphasis will be on the economic and social aspects of the bride price (*lobola*). Taringa and Museka (2021, p. 16) postulate: "Although having a long tradition, of late there have been critical voices questioning the relevance of *lobola* in contemporary times. This happens amid many other voices that vehemently continue to support the practice."

This study agrees with these voices that question the *lobola* tradition, as the researcher does not support *lobola* based on its misuse. Mbiti (1969) will be the point of reference to this issue, as he has done intensive research on the African philosophy and theology on marriage in Africa. Mbiti (1969, p. 138) indicates that bride price and marriage gifts are meant to establish a good and lasting relationship and fellowship between two families that are entering into a marriage contract. Furthermore, he states that marriage is not the business of the couple but of the family and community "till death do us part." Mbiti (1969, p. 138) states:

As the rule this request is accepted, and then the two sides fix the amount of presents to be given to the girl's family, which is about three to four cows (or equivalent in money). Traditional beer is drunk, and the boy's parents are accompanied back to their home. As soon as they agree a present has been given, the date for the marriage is fixed. This is not a dramatic rite, but it is full of meaning.

Beer is the symbol of friendship, communion, oneness and acceptability; and it is used by many African societies in ceremonies, festivals and covenant/making.

Taringa and Museka (2021, p. 16) concur with Mbiti (1969) in these words:

Prior to the European occupation, typical marriage payments were limited to between four and five head of cattle. This was supplemented by other gifts such as hoes, blankets and baskets of grain...Although *roora*-related material gifts allowed petty accumulation of wealth, they were largely symbolic. The aforementioned material goods, in particular cattle, were/are indispensable in any *roora* ritual because they were/are ritually linked to the ancestral spirits of the traditional African clan.

The bride price is for the building of communion between the two families that will sustain the marriage till death separates the couple. The process involves the ancestors in the process of marriage. The three or four cows are to appreciate the parents of the girl for raising the girl for the boy's parents. The second indication is that these gifts given to the girl's family are the remembrance of their daughter who is married somewhere in the world. Mbiti (1969, p. 138) refers to the meaning of the token of relationship in the marriage process as follows:

- Cows act as a sign of appreciation and thanksgiving to the girl's parents for raising the girl for the boy's parents.
- Traditional beer is given to the girl's parents by the boy's parents as a sign of their friendly attitude, willingness to establish fellowship with the girl's family, and their readiness to form a marriage covenant.
- Coffee berries act as a sign of fertility, productivity, and fruitfulness.
- The lit pipe is the sign of acceptability, sharing something together – breathing in unity the breath of life.

The marriage process includes *lobola* and marriage gifts from the boy's family as explained above. These gifts are for building a good relationship between the couple and the couple's families. As stated, the marriage arrangement is the exchange of gifts as a sign of building the relationship and covenanting together in this marriage. The gifts

from the boy's family are the replacement and remembrance to the family that the girl has left, but she is still alive and that she is a valuable person. Mbiti (1969, p. 140) narrates:

This marriage gift is important institution in African societies. It is a token of gratitude on the part of the bridegroom's people to those of the bride, for their care over her and for allowing her to become his wife. At her home the gift "replaces" her, reminding the family that she will leave or has left and yet she is not dead. She is a valuable person not only to her family but to her husband's people. At marriage, she is not stolen but is given away under mutual agreement between the two families.

According to Mbiti (1969), the gifts lift the value attached to the bride both as a person (image of God with human rights and dignity) and as a wife, not as a commodity to be bought and sold to other families. The marriage gift legalises the bride's value and the marriage contract. In the marriage process the gift is a concrete sign of the marriage's covenant and security, and under no circumstances it is a form of payment. The girl's family has the responsibility to respond to the boy's family by gifts – it might be small, but they have significance to the union (Mbiti, 1969, p. 140). However, in Limpopo the practice of *lobola* has become an economic transaction without looking into the African philosophy that a woman is a valuable person.

Taringa and Museka (2021, p. 16) list the following as challenges to the African practice of *lobola*: The migrant labour system, Western occupation, and the introduction of cash to the African practices that are economicalised. This practice has been attached to colonisation and the de-Africanisation of the African practices. Taringa and Museka (2021, p. 16) argue:

The modern-day cash-based Zimbabwe economy entails high demand for money and other trendy material objects, such as satellite dishes, cars, cell phones, furniture and huge amounts of groceries in presentday *roora* practices. Given that *roora* has become an expensive enterprise...*roora* is tantamount to the buying

and selling of women. Wives at the marketplace: Commercialisation of lobola and commodification of women's bodies in Zimbabwe.

The same mind-set exists in Limpopo as the centre of investigation for this research. In this post-colonial era, women are regarded as property in African marriages, and are therefore a form of ownership. A woman is regarded as a commodity because of the *lobola* that is paid. It is regarded as a favour to be chosen among so many women. Thus, women must be tolerant and obedient all the time. It is no longer regarded as the exchange of nuptial gifts between the two families. In the event of the dissolution of some marriages, the gifts must be returned. If the wife dies, the sister of the deceased must replace her without any gifts given again – this dehumanises a woman even further. The gifts are also given to the father and not the wife.

The in-laws have control over the wife (Oduyoye, 2004). According to Mbiti (1969), the marriage process is sometimes longer than expected. In Botswana it stretches from *lobola* negotiations to the birth of the grandchildren. On that note, this leads to the birth of children in marriages.

2.3.3 The Notion of the Birth of Children in African Marriages

In the negotiation of *lobola*, the significance of the token is to celebrate the productivity (procreation) of the wife right at the beginning of the process of marriage. It is the expectation that the wife will increase the number of family members that will increase the number of the community. According to Setiloane (1976, p. 34), children are the gift of ancestors, while Christians believe that children are a gift from God. Setiloane (1976) believes that the failure to give birth is attributed to the disfavour of the ancestors, while the Jewish tradition in the Old Testament regards the failure to give birth as a curse of God. Therefore, birth in the African tradition is regarded as an important occasion in life. Hence all the rituals and traditions in Africa force married women to have children against all odds, and to have as many children as possible to give the family an opportunity for their names to continue through the children names.

When a child is born, the mother is not allowed to give the baby a name but the father-in-law. Some communities will name all the first children after the in-laws so that the

woman must keep on making children in the hope that she will be given a chance to name her parents. This is the culture that is still existing in the Limpopo Province.

According to Mbiti (1969, p. 110), a pregnant woman is treated very special because she is carrying a new member of the community who is going to increase the number of the community. Setiloane (1976) indicates that children increase the number of the community. In the current economic era, women are not treated that way anymore, under the influence of a Western economic-driven society. Mbiti (1969, pp. 111–112) lists the do's and don'ts during pregnancy:

- Sexual intercourse during pregnancy is forbidden.
- Certain food is forbidden during pregnancy because it may interfere with the healthy growth of the foetus.
- A pregnant woman must eat a special kind of earth found on anthills or trees.
- Pregnant women must not work or use tools.

The concern raised by the researcher is that these practices in an economic-driven society seem to be oppressive for married women. During pregnancy, the woman is forbidden to eat certain food such as eggs to avoid difficulty in giving birth. Marriage is only fully recognised after a child is born. The gender of a child is also important as boys are the heirs (Mbiti, 1969; Setiloane, 1976). These beliefs cause stress to pregnant women and might affect the life of the mother and the child, while traditionally it was made to protect the life of the mother and the child (Mbiti, 1969, p. 112). Children in African marriages bring joy because it is a sign that the ancestors are with the family. Infertility brings hard feelings, hence polygamy or arranged sexual intercourse take place due to the infertility. In the next section, the researcher will discuss polygamy as a punishment or oppressive factor, or as the solution to infertility.

2.3.4 The Notion of Polygamy within the African Marriage

It is stated in the previous section that children are the pride of the father and bring glory to the family. The community who has many children has the strongest possible manifestation of “immortality.” The father is greater and well known through his many children who will also increase, thus “the more we are, the bigger I am” (Mbiti, 1969, p. 142). Polygamy in Africa constitutes many reasons to enter into this agreement. It is

not solely meant for recreation (sexual satisfaction) or procreation (birth of children). It is a marriage that is recognised in the South African Constitution with certain conditions that align with the Bill of Rights. Advocates of polygamy cite many reasons to enter into such an agreement, but the researcher's concern is the misuse of this agreement in a contemporary society. Mbiti (1969, p. 142) claims:

Polygamy also raises the social status of the family concerned. It is instilled in the minds of African people that a big family earns its head great respect in the eyes of the community. Often it is the rich families that are made up of polygamous marriages. If the first wife has no children or only daughters, it follows almost without exception that her husband will add another wife, partly to remedy the immediate concern of childlessness, and partly to remove the shame and anxiety of apparent unproductivity.

Mbiti (1969) addresses the African concern that marriage is recognised only after the birth of the first child, and this boy child is vital to raising his father's name after the death of his father. As this is important in marriage, childlessness and a lack of a boy child is the reason for polygamy. Mbiti also cites the dignity of the first wife within the African society because a childless family or a family with only daughters is a shame to both the wife and the husband. Mbiti used the term "remedy:" Polygamy is therefore used as a remedy, not for recreation or sexual satisfaction. In the above citation, he has mentioned that polygamy was meant for economic reasons. Additionally, Mbiti (1969, pp. 142–143) mentions the pros of a polygamous marriage:

- To prevent childlessness in the family.
- To prevent a daughter family without a boy child.
- It is for the economic provision of these wives.
- A polygamous marriage is meant for sufficient care-giving to the family.
- Polygamous marriages prevent unfaithfulness and prostitution.

However, a polygamous marriage does not exist without challenges, just like other marriages. Mbiti therefore also lists the challenges:

- There are quarrels and fights among the wives and children.
- Sometimes the husband neglects his other wives because he favours one wife.

- Sometimes there is inadequate support for the children's education unless the husband is comparatively wealthy.
- There could also be a lack of clothes and food for the children unless the husband is comparatively wealthy.
- There is also a challenge of discipline when the family is larger than average (Mbiti, 1969, pp. 143–144).

African men always used anything, even biological facts such as lactation, menstruation, and menopause as a reason for polygamy. In the event of menopause, an older woman would tell her husband that it is time for him to get ready for a new wife. It is also believed that having sexual intercourse is taboo as the stomach would grow bigger and the seminal fluid would flow out and create an unpleasant odour (Kyomo & Selvan, 2004, pp. 34–35). Sexual intercourse is forbidden for three years during lactation.

Women and many children are regarded as a source of labour in polygamous marriages. A sonless marriage is not tolerated as *vanhwana I tihuku to khomela vayeni in* (Tsonga: *Girls are chickens for visitors*) girls are not in the family to stay like boys. Ill health conditions of the wife are also a good reason for a man to get another wife who would be a caretaker of the family. This is unconscionable as the man would be devoting time to the new wife. Single women will also be getting a chance at marriage as single life is not accepted in African culture. They would rather be one of several wives and stay there even in life-threatening situations (Nkomazana, 2006). In all the beauty that a polygamous marriage has, the rights and dignity of the wife are neglected. When the husband chooses a second wife, he should bring or introduce the second wife for the first wife's permission, which is a formality in the African context, but this does not happen. She also does not have the right to choose how many children she wants to have before she permits the husband to marry another woman.

2.3.5 Genital Mutilation, Clitoridectomy, and Circumcision of Women

With reference to *lobola*, marriage and the birth of children are important institutions within the African community, therefore necessary preparations are needed, but these preparations should not dehumanise women. Genital mutilation and clitoridectomy practices are common in Central and Northern Africa (Mbiti, 1969, pp. 126–127). Many

African theologians wrote about this in their research papers and contributed to the Circle of Concerned Women Theologians (n.d.). Some of the rituals such as clitoridectomy have a permanent negative effect on the women who go through it (Okemwa, 1996, p. 177). This act, being more than 600 years old, damages women physically, emotionally, as well as psychologically. During this ritual, they are mobilised to advertise themselves to older men to marry them and to give them children. This practice is common in some communities in the rural areas of Limpopo. When a girl starts to menstruate (*go binela kgopa*), the ritual is performed and the girl is taught how to be sexually active. (The researcher had to find out during interviews if this is still practised in Limpopo.)

Menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation are dehumanising taboos associated with the practice which gives men the reason to commit adultery, polygamy, and public extramarital affairs. Clitoridectomy is a painful process. According to Njoroge (2000, pp. 24–25), it is an operation which removes the clitoris, the labia minora, and the surrounding tissues. Women are forced to undergo this horrible practice to avoid being regarded as slaves, harbouring evil spirits. This brainwashes women into a submissiveness with culture. Women's bodies are prepared for exploitation by men. It is done differently in some areas, where only marks on the thigh are made by using a razor and fire.

During this process, the elderly women do a vaginal check-up to check for virginity. After this ceremony, a young woman will be married or wear a certain type of clothing indicating that she has already been chosen for marriage or that *lobola* has already been paid to her parents or money has been given to her parents. These are the violations of the human rights of children and women that need to be addressed by the Churches and social development at the grassroots beyond the policies. These arrangements are done in the communities where Churches exist to address these challenges, but they do not address them as they should teach the traditional leaders the importance of respecting the image of God in women and children. The Church will instead administrate discipline which does not change the behaviour of the community. Otherwise the community where these arrangements are practised will distance itself from the mainline Church in favour of indigenous churches. The Bill of Rights sections

30 and 31 need to be facilitated through dialogue with leaders and the community. The strategies towards eliminating these harmful practices should be in place (Hingston & Asneline, 2019). The Churches need to play a role in facilitating these rights in collaboration with the relevant governmental departments.

2.3.6 The Notion of Widowhood and Inheritance in Light of Human Rights

Widows go through a lot of additional and unnecessary suffering. The deceased's relatives attribute responsibility of the husband's death to the woman. They demand all important documents to go and claim the money and property of the deceased. According to Kabonde, sometimes the widow is even beaten and forced to marry the half-brother or cousin of the deceased. The son automatically assumes the role of his dead father. After the burial, the widow is dressed in a black head-dress and dress, which she is not supposed to change until the ritual of purification takes place (Kabonde, 1996, pp. 196–199). The black attire is common in the Limpopo Province although the young generation gradually defies this habit (North-Sotho: *go roula*).

Widowhood is often a complicated experience because of various beliefs and traditions within different communities. Widowhood and mourning in the Botswana context seem to be influenced by culture which contributes to stress. The wearing of mourning clothes, suspension from attending gatherings, visiting other households, and other social activities isolate the widow due to the belief that she may contaminate other people with bad luck. This causes bad mental health and a lack of support.

Facilitation of the development of support mechanisms is necessary (Monyedi, Koen, & Greeff, 2009). Widowhood ought to evoke sympathy, empathy, and support from others and not deprivation, helplessness, and hopelessness brought about by harmful cultural practices (Durojaye, 2013, p. 177).

These practices include dehumanising rites, all in the name of customs and tradition. These include the denial of inheritance rights, marriage to the late husband's brother, being thrown out of the widow's home, or confinement for mourning in a tiny outdoor hut for 30 days. The married daughters are compelled to shave the widow's head in a public area. The widow has to shave her hair, drink from the water used in bathing the

deceased spouse, sit and sleep on the floor, is not allowed to eat and drink until the husband is buried, and has to sleep in the same room as the husband's corpse during the mourning period. Widows are subjected to sexual intercourse with strangers as part of cleansing (Nyangweso, 2017; Baloyi, 2013; Salumba-Kapuma, 2018). Sometimes they are handed over to the so-called professional village cleanser for sexual cleansing. This dehumanises and subjects widows to subordination and oppression. Widows must remain indoors and are forbidden to bathe and plait their hair. The widow is advised not to sleep during the day and advised to swear at the husband's corpse. In South Africa, it is discovered that widows wear mourning clothes of different colours depending on their customs, family traditions, and Churches.

When a husband passes away, his wife is suspected as the cause of his death. This leads to these horrible rituals: First, the widow is taken to the river where she must squeeze an egg between her thighs and jump over a fire, and eat and drink from a specific plate and cup for 12 months. She must kneel for everybody with her face down and never shout and use her hand to discipline children as this might bring bad luck to her children. Sometimes she has to put out a burning fire using her urine and thereafter her vulva is cut with a razor to get rid of her husband's blood outside her body. Finally, the traditional healer will conduct the final cleansing by putting rituals in water to drink and bath, then cleanse the house (Ndlovu, 2016). According to Makgahlela and Sodi (2016, p. 542), in Limpopo, among the Sotho people, it is believed that if a man has sex with a widow, he will suffer what the Sotho people call *makgoma* (constipation, bulging stomach, swollen lower limbs, feeling cold in the spine and feeling as if one's blood is hot, as well as a loss of appetite and weight, vomiting, and diarrhoea).

2.3.7 African Women and the Language of Proverbs

The proverbs that are used against women in terms of gender socialisation have several negative consequences. The language of proverbs promotes inequality between women and men, a dependency of women on men, and control of women by men including their bodies. Some proverbs can be used to pronounce some practical truth based on experience and observations. Some proverbs dehumanise people and those that assert the dignity of all human beings. Some Sotho proverbs in the Limpopo Province have the implication that women cannot lead and that women are subordinate to

men. Many married women are killed by their intimate partners because of the language of proverbs. Some women die silently due to listening to proverbs, while others are ill-treated by their in-laws. Members of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (n.d.) mention some of the proverbs that have already led to the dehumanisation of women and give men superiority over women. The researcher will cite a few proverbs that are commonly used in the Limpopo Province and their negative impact on social behaviour:

- The Mammy stereotypical image – *mosadi ke tshwene o lewa mabogo*. This indicates that a woman is only accepted by her household if she has dedication and do the cleaning, cooking, and babysitting (Verluys, 2014, p. 10).
- Resistance of female leadership – *tša etwa pele ke tshadi di wela ka leopeng (a herd that is led by a cow will fall into a cave)*. Men led by women will therefore be in trouble (Rakoma, 1971).
- Male promiscuity – *monna ke kobo re a apolelana (a man is a blanket we share)*. This gives a man the freedom to be shared by many different women. This ultimately spreads lethal diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Masenya, 1996, p. 125).
- Domestic violence and intimate partner killings – *lebitla la mosadi ke bogadi (a woman's grave is at her in-laws)*. This is true, no matter what sufferings she has experienced in her marriage including all sorts of unfair ill-treatments. There is no turning back, divorce, or going back to her parents. Women experience physical, sexual, and emotional abuse in their marriages. This may even result in intimate partner killings.
- Associations of a woman with an animal that uses its sexual anatomy to lure and catch its prey – *mosadi ke kgano, o gola ka fase (a woman is a woman, she grows on the ground)*. This contributes to kidnapping, rape, and murder on the campuses of IHEs in our country. Police reports in Limpopo have reported several cases concerning kidnapping in schools, rape in universities, as well as murder. These will be discussed below.

2.4 KIDNAPPING, RAPE, AND MURDER OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is one of the countries where the lives of women are not taken seriously according to the evidence that will be cited in this section from media reports and academic sources. The media report several cases of strange and known perpetrators. The following will act as examples of what happened in South Africa in general and the Limpopo Province specifically:

- Boitumelo Masekolong in the Serageng village, Nebo: A 34-year-old man, Charles Moswathupha, raped her. He also killed the three-year-old Samson Sit-hole on 6 December 2018 at Koteng squatter camp in Marble Hall (DSD, 2019).
- The body of an eight-year-old Limpopo girl was found in bushes in a village near Tzaneen, brutally murdered and possibly raped. She was Mabareki California Molamudi, in Grade 1 at Totwana Primary School in Xipungu Village. She was kidnapped by an unknown who was later arrested by a traditional healer at *Acornhoek* in Mpumalanga (SAPS, 2020).
- A 19-year-old man, Dimakatso Mochemi, raped a 14-year-old girl in 2019 and maintained consensual intercourse. He also stabbed to death the 18-year-old Thoriso Kgomo in Seshego (SABC Digital News, 2021).
- A 33-year-old Mankweng resident raped his 12-year-old niece outside Polokwane at their home near Nobody village on 1 February 2019 (Shange, 2020).
- A 30-year-old woman from Limpopo killed a baby after giving birth in a local mall bathroom (Ngcobo, 2021).
- 38-year-old Samuel Kgatle hanged himself after he allegedly hanged his two children who visited him at Ngaleng Village outside Mankweng in Limpopo. The children were five-year-old Mary and eight-year-old Anna (Mabuza, 2019).
- A man ran a rampage and kidnapped three women in separate incidents killing two of them at ga-Matsea next to the University of Limpopo. A 16-year-old girl escaped with injuries and was sent to the hospital for treatment (SAPA).
- A 50-year-old woman was found killed in the bathroom, and another woman was found dead in the bushes after a gunshot. The suspect was killed in the bathroom (SAPA).

2.4.1 Kidnapping, Rape, and Murder of Young Women in Limpopo

As many scholars are concerned about GBV and femicide in South Africa in general, the researcher focused on Limpopo Province with special reference to kidnapping, rape, and the murder of young women. Claassens (2019) and Van der Westhuizen (2019) use Old Testament texts to illustrate that GBV (rape) is a longstanding notion that needs to be relooked through different lenses to protect women in contemporary society and the Church. Claassens (2019, p. 14) states:

Read through the lens of feminist critical and postcolonial biblical interpretation, this quite a minor story of the daughters of King Zedekiah who had been taken hostage by the renegade leader Ishmael and passed along like pawns from one group of leaders to the next draw our attention to the myriad of ways in which women in particular are vulnerable, especially in the context of war and forced migration.

The lenses that Claassens employs to deal with GBV and femicide in the Old Testament textual analysis are a feminist critical reading of the text and the context and she concludes that women are vulnerable in the context of war and migration. It is the same concern of the researcher in this research study that women and children are vulnerable in violence based on poverty, unemployment, and inequality in South Africa in general and Limpopo in particular. The victims of this violence are women and children who are kidnapped, raped, and murdered. Van der Westhuizen (2019, p. 25) confirms that rape is a serious criminal offence committed in South Africa as a leading African country, adding:

Africa's girl children are suffering under the continual and relentless scourge of rape and sexual assault. Not only are young women being raped in alarmingly great numbers, but fear of being "raped" a second time, but the criminal justice system is responsible for the fact that only an estimated one in 20 rape cases is reported with very few reported cases ending in conviction. One of the reasons for this pandemic which not only violates our young girls but also keeps other women in a state of fear is the prevalence of a long tradition of rape myths that have permeated the legal system as well as society.

As Van der Westhuizen narrates, the rape cases reported are estimates, not actual cases. Table 1 below supplies the records from the media about the reported cases, while many are not reported and therefore do not form part of the indicated cases in Limpopo.

VICTIM	PERPETRATOR	PLACE	YEAR/DATE	REPORTER	SOURCE
Boitumelo Masekolong six years old	C. Moswathupha	Serageng village	6 December 2018	Polokwane High Court	Court papers
Mary five years old; Anna eight years old	Samuel Kgatle 38 years old	Ngaleng village	23 June 2018	Limpopo report Police	SABC News
12-year-old niece	33 year-old-man	Nobody village	1 February 2019	SAPA	The Voice of Tembisa
Three women	A man who ran a rampage	Ga-Matsea	12 May 2018	SAPA	OPERA News
Thoriso Kgomo 18 years old	Dimakatso Mochemi 19 years old	Seshego	2019	Polokwane High Court – Judge Makgoba, Ephraim	SABC News

Table 1: Summary of kidnapping, rape, and murder incidents between 2015 and 2022

Both the scholars cited above and Table 1 illustrate that there is already work done to showcase the seriousness of the kidnapping, rape, and murder of young women in Limpopo. The next section contains a discussion on intimate partner violence against women.

2.4.2 Intimate Partner Violence against Women in Limpopo

Intimate partner violence is common in the Limpopo Province. It takes the form of sexual, physical, and emotional violence. There is a high incidence of culpable homicide in the district due to abusive partners killing their wives and themselves. Some men cannot accept democratic decision-making, equal rights, and responsibilities and freedom from coercion and violence. They do not even acknowledge that dialogue could make a relationship work (Latini, 2011, p. 21). Most of the female victims are heartlessly attached and raped before being murdered (SAPS, 2017). Bodies of victims are disposed of in bushy areas and shallow graves, and burned beyond recognition. It has been found that stress, loss of income, and isolation exacerbate the risk of violence for

women. This was also reported during the COVID-19 lockdown. The following cases were reported: After court protection in 2018, Gloria Sekome was killed by former partner Danboy Nkuna (Mlangeni, 2020). She was one of the three women murdered by their partners, according to a local media report. Mashego's former partner poured petrol on the floor of the room where their children were sleeping and lit a match. The five-year-old Tokelo died in hospital, and the father was given bail of R50.

The 52-year-old Lucas Phasha, a former attorney, is on trial for killing his four children at ga-Phasha village. The children were Katlego (nine years old), Joyce (seven years old), Tshepo (five years old), and Adel (three years old). Three were hacked with an axe, while the youngest one's head was crushed with a huge stone. His wife is Sylvia (Ramoethwala 2021a).

The 36-year-old Lesiba Kekana killed his four children and tried to commit suicide. The children were Bokang Kekana (13 years old), Keneilwe Kekana (10 years old), Thlologelo Kekana (six years old), and Lekgoledi Kekana (four years old). He did this by slitting their throats. This happened in Zebediela. Judge Joseph Raulinga sentenced him to 52 years imprisonment at the High Court in Polokwane (Ndlovu, 2016).

A 26-year-old man was arrested for the murder of a woman found in an abandoned Seshego shack. He is also linked to cases of rape and murder committed in Seshego and Mankweng. Xilumane killed the mother of his son on 17 January 2020 at Mankweng (Chabalala, 2020).

A 33-year-old man was found hanging from a tree after killing his wife and son who was two years old in Mankweng. His 20-year-old girlfriend and her two-year-old son were found in a pool of blood and had step wounds on their bodies (African News Agency, 2018). A 51-year-old man shot his wife and son in the casualty ward of St Rita's Hospital in Limpopo, Riverside, near Jane Furse (Pijoos, 2020). The 34-year-old Josiah Lebogo shot and killed his girlfriend, Tshepo Rakoma, who was 32 years old (Sadike, 2021).

A 25-year-old boyfriend was arrested for killing intern doctor, Sibongile Nkwashu. On the evening of 19 January 2020, her body was found in her room at Mankweng Hospital, Polokwane in Limpopo (Staff Reporter, 2020). A man shot himself after he shot his 38-year-old partner and his partner's 27-year-old visiting niece, and then he attempted to murder his 16-year-old daughter. This took place at Malungane village near Namakgale outside Phalaborwa. The daughter was injured, raped, and shot (Sibuyi, 2020). The body of Kgothatso Pula, 27, was found buried in January 2020. She was buried in a shallow grave in the backyard of her boyfriend's family premises at Moletji, ga-Setati. The 30-year-old Estof Thoriso Mphela is facing charges of kidnapping and murder (News Team, 2020).

2.4.3 Intimate Partners Violence

Table 2 below illustrates the intimate partners' violence against women in Limpopo:

VICTIMS	PERPETRATORS	PLACE	YEAR/DATE	REPORTER	SOURCE
Gloria Sekome, Tokelo five years old	Danboy Nkuna (poured petrol on the floor)		2018	Joan Van Dyk	News24
Katlego nine years, Joyce seven years, Tshepo five years, Adel three years.	Lucas Phasha 52 years (father axed and crushed his youngest)	Ga-Phasha village	2019	Polokwane High Court	
Bokang 13 years, Keneilwe 10 year, Thlogelo six years, Lekgoledi four years.	Lesiba Kekana 36 year, killed his children by slitting their throats	Zebediela	17 September 2015	Magatle Magistrate Court – Sandile Ndlovu	Sowetan News 2016
26-years-old woman		Seshego	19 January 2017	Col Moatshe	News24 Review
Sibongile Nkwashu	25-years-old boyfriend	Mankweng Hospital	19 January 2020	Jeanette Chabalala	News24

VICTIMS	PERPETRATORS	PLACE	YEAR/DATE	REPORTER	SOURCE
Kgothatso Pula 27 years old	Estof Thoriso Mphela 30 years (killed and buried his girlfriend in the backyard)	Moletji ga-Setati	January 2020		The Citizen
Tshepo Rakoma 32 years	Josias Lebogo 34 years	Polokwane	May 2021		SABC News
Wife shot	51-year-old man	St Rita's Hospital, Riverside	21 January 2020	Nebo Magistrate	Citizen 2020

Table 2: Summary of intimate partner violence incidents between 2015 and 2022

The list above illustrates that people are in general not very safe in South Africa and more specifically in Limpopo. The term “intimate partner” suggests a close person to someone, who will protect and safeguard the other. Unfortunately, the cases above illustrate the opposite. It is illustrated above that there is a tendency for many intimate partners to be dangerous. Additionally, institutions of learning like schools, colleges, and universities would seem to be safe spaces for women and children, but to the contrary. In the next section, there will be a discussion on IHE case studies on rape.

2.4.4 Campus Rape Culture at Institutions of Higher Education

Little is known about sexual coercion behaviour at colleges and campuses across South Africa. Sexual violence against women is a severe public health issue that may result in unwanted pregnancies, complications resulting from the termination of pregnancies, transmitted infections, physical abuse by partners, substance abuse, and an array of emotional and psychological problems, resulting in a negative academic performance (Menoe, 2012). The gruesome killing of female students in IHEs requires a thorough interrogation of this barbaric behaviour and how to mitigate it (Ndlovu, Obadire, Nyalungu, & Mashifane, 2020, pp. 15118–15135). Limpopo is heavily affected, as reported by media, yet little information is found in books and journals. Sex crimes occurring both on campus and at off-campus residences have long been a

cause for concern. Ministers Naledi Pandor and Bheki Cele are aware of this phenomenon. The Minister of Police reported 380 cases at schools, universities, colleges, and day-care facilities between 2019 and 2020.

The 19-year-old Asithandile Zozo, a student at Cape Town, was murdered after organised GBV following the horrific killing of University of Cape Town student Uyinene Mrwetyana (Ngcukana, 2020). Uyinene Mrwetyana was kidnapped, raped, and murdered by SA Post Office employee Luyanda Botha who confessed to killing her in Claremont on 14 August 2019. Uyinene's murderer has been sentenced to three life terms in jail (Etheridge, 2019).

A final year Business Management student at Capricorn TVET, Precious Ramabulana, was stabbed 52 times, raped, and murdered inside her rented room at ga-Joel section in Mokomene, Botlokwa. Her confessed killer, Aubrey Manaka, 29 years old was handed two life sentences as reported by Brigadier Motlafela Mojapelo in December 2019 (Sadike, 2021).

In Mamabolo, a 39-years-old was sentenced for rape and robbery of off-campus students at the University of Limpopo. Female students aged 20 and 30 were terrorised at ga-Motholo village outside Mankweng. He was sentenced to life imprisonment for housebreaking and unlicensed possession of firearms. Jonathan Mathe, 19 years old and from Mankweng, was regarded as a threat to female students and was linked to 13 rape cases in less than two years at Turfloop.

Zacharia Selowa, 20 years old, of Mentz village in the Ga-Mamabolo area, was arrested on eight counts of rape. He would offer to carry luggage for students and, along the way, rape them (SAPA, 2013).

Nomafela, a 25-year-old, was arrested linked to two students' rapes through DNA tests. There were 13 rape victims at Turfloop who stayed outside the University's residents. The two female students at the University of Venda were raped by armed men at their off-campus residence in Thohoyandou, Limpopo. Both students were 23 years old (SAPS, 2017).

A 21-year-old Limpopo student is fighting for her life in hospital after being kidnapped, raped, stabbed, and left for dead in bushes. Police believe her ex-boyfriend and his friend were behind the gruesome attack on the Vhembe TVET College. She was in her rented room at Makwarela location, Thohoyandou. She was found at Mphaila village in the bushes. She was forced into the boot of their motor vehicle (Ramothwala, 2021b).

These perpetrators are all men, and although there could be several factors influencing them to do all these crimes, the encouragement by the mentioned proverbs could act as a determinator to do it. Unfortunately, this scenario continues in the Limpopo Province. The following table showcases the rape incidents on campuses in Limpopo.

2.4.5 Campus Rape Culture at Higher Education Institutions

VICTIMS	PERPETRATORS	PLACE	YEAR/DATE	REPORTER	SOURCE
23-year-old students of the University of Venda	Armed men	Thohoyandou off-campus residents	25 August 2020	Brigadier Motlafela Mojapelo	Times Live
20-year-old female student at the University of Limpopo	39-year-old man	Off-campus residents	2019/2020	Col Moatshe Ngoepe	
Asithandile Zozo 19 years old	Unknown	University of Cape Town	August 2019		BBC News24
Uyinene Mrwetyana	Luyanda Botha	SA Post Office Claremont	August 2019		BBC News24
A final year Business Management student	Aubrey Manaka 29 years old	TVET Capricorn Mokomene Botlokwa	December 2019	Brigadier Motlafela Mojapelo	
Students	Zacharia Selowa 22 years old	Mentz village	2019/2020	Constable Molepo Moses	
13 rape cases	Nomafela 25 years Old	2019/2020	2019/2020	SAPA	The Star
13 counts of rape cases	Jonathan Mathe 19 years old	Mankweng	2019/2020		

Table 3: Summary of campus rape culture at IHEs – incidents between 2015 and 2022

Table 3 above illustrates a few rape cases in the IHEs in the Limpopo Province. These illustrations are supported by Claassens (2019) and Van der Westhuizen (2019) when they cite that there are rape incidents ranging from primary schools to universities. This is a concern to be addressed by the Church and society.

2.5 THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS TOWARDS CURVING THE VIOLATION OF WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Maiden researched traditional leaders in Malawi. She indicates that it is possible to dialogue with these leaders and influence the protection of families from violence. Traditional leaders can be agents of cultural change in some countries and even influence politics and cultural reform (Maiden, 2019). In an African context, women and children are the most protected people because they increase the community. It is therefore the responsibility of traditional leaders to protect the community including women and children (Mbiti, 1969; Setiloane, 1969). The role of traditional leaders is vital.

Limpopo has many central faith communities of which a more significant part is rural with conventional leaders in charge. If they work together, it will be easy to deal with some perpetrators within their context. They will be able to address the impact of violence against women and children to most of their members. During gatherings at traditional courts, awareness can be created against rights violations of women and children.

2.6 THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH REGARDING THE VIOLATION OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Many Churches are colonial products, and coloniality emphasises the coloniser's dignity and rights. African converts were regarded as non-human in the eyes of many colonisers. Therefore the researcher cannot draw a clear line of division between them and missionaries. The Church has lagged in the emancipation of slaves, the oppressed, differently abled individuals, albinos, LGBTQIA+ people, and women in the Church. The Church is also lagging regarding GBV in terms of its fundamentalistic reading and teaching of the biblical text. The silence of Churches with regards to GBV is also very clear. The researcher will next investigate the literature on the meaning of *Missio Dei* amid the killings of women in Limpopo.

2.6.1 God's Mission with Humanity

God's mission with humanity is that men and women are the images of God. The Bible puts it clearly: "So God created in His image; God patterned them after himself; male and female he created them" (Gn 1:27). Human beings are the same according to Genesis 1:26, "Let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves" (Spiritual Renewal Bible). This is a theological challenge to find out what went wrong in the creation of God that men became the perpetrators of violence against women and children. In the beginning, "The LORD God said, 'It is not suitable for the man to be alone. Will make a helper suitable for him,' and this was done and for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (Gn 2:23–24, Student Bible). This is what God intended. The researcher investigated what went wrong with men to become the perpetrators of violence against women and children.

Diversity is evident in all aspects of society – the Church is one of them. Leaders from all walks of life, including political and traditional leaders, have to manage and work with this diversity in moving South Africa forward as a democratic country (Masango, 2018, p. 62). It is the responsibility of the Church Ministry to make people in the South African context to acknowledge that God made us diverse, as Masango wrote about his experience of chaplaincy in the South African Department of Correctional Services. It is advisable that everybody should have the responsibility to minister to the people of God to know that "if you are called to be a missionary in another culture you wouldn't just hop in a plan and get started, instead you would begin by learning about the culture and its worldview" (Hillage & Pollard, 1998).

Across the world gender inequality remains the norm, as women have continued to encounter discriminating practices because of religious and cultural practices. These have led the researcher to the discussion in the next sections as stated in the problem statement, research aims, and research question.

2.6.2 Gender and Biblical Knowledge

The Bible was received within African cultural beliefs, which are largely oral and diverse. In the memories of African people, the Bible is tied up with a colonial history as

attested by the popular oral story that holds “when the white man came to our land he had the Bible and we had the land” (Dube, 2016). Unless African Christianity fully investigates how gender affects its members and structures of the African Church, its core business of salvation, redemption, healing, and deliverance from negative powers will not be realised by all its members. It should be integral to the promotion of gender equality and liberation in general. The biblical translation was not an attempt to translate African oral cultures into written languages, but an active agenda that translated African ways of constructing and gendering the spiritual and social realm (androcentric structure). According to Masenya, the Holy Spirit in the mouths of many Pentecostal preachers is characterised as male. The Pentecostal biblical reading is a two-edged sword that underlies both the patriarchal normality of the Bible and the centrality of the Holy Spirit being poured out on all flesh (Dube, 2016).

Women evoke a biblical genealogy of women’s ancestors. St. John Apostolic Faith Mission Women serve as a good example: When everybody stands to preach, the order is, “I greet (you) Mother Mary Magdalene, Mother Mary, the Mother of Jesus, Mother Martha, the holy seats of Mother Mmanku and MmaAnderson, women who wear the belt of faith. The limited knowledge of biblical study as the basis for theology with its literal reading of the Bible might lead to misinterpretations by faith leaders and faith communities to respect women’s and children’s rights (Oduyoye, 2004). Bible schools which are rooted in Christian fundamentalism, provide limited knowledge of the Bible, without the context of the texts. Most people deeply rooted in African traditions and cultures belong to the African Independent Churches led by Pastors and Bishops who have not received or have limited theological training. The male-dominated leadership continues to remain unchallenged as the Bible is used to support and entrench the patriarchal system (Mudimeli, 2012).

2.6.3 The Role of the Church in Interpreting the Scripture and Christian Traditions

The history of the Church is based on a patriarchal system that is still influencing the leadership and the structures of the community and the families. The story of creation is understood through the eyes of a man and used to promote male-dominated leadership throughout the Old Testament and The New Testament. The Jewish tradition

influenced even the discipleship of Jesus Christ. His main (twelve) disciples were all men. The women theologians are struggling to dismantle this practice. The story of the creation is so complicated that it speaks of equality and inequality. The story in Genesis 1:27 where God created man in his image, takes a different shape in Genesis 2:21–24 and 3:1–20. Ultimately, the helper (a woman) was blamed for being disobedient towards the Creator.

The issue of impurity and cleansing mostly affect women. Adultery is emphasised in women. The Bible does not mention the female children except when the decision is taken about such an individual. This influences the Church to accept the leadership of men and polygamous marriages as well as cruel rituals performed on girls and women. Many female and even male theologians wrote about this injustice to women. The use of the Pauline letters is a very common practice against women in the Church. Patriarchal decisions against girls and women are recorded in the Bible.

The reading and interpretation of the biblical text need to transform to suit the context of the African people today. As the reading and interpretation have changed regarding oppressed people and freedom of women in Church and society, the reading of the texts needs to be read with the context and era in mind.

2.6.4 Single Women in the Church not Taken Seriously

There are different programmes for different ministries, but the Church tend to forget the single woman. Most of the time single women and their needs are not taken seriously by the Church (Mudimeli, 2012, p. 174). They are instead regarded as a threat by many male members of the Church. These women are associated with women who need men for sex and partnerships. Even the Pastors' wives feel threatened.

Some men are threatened by the economic independence of women. They think that these independent women are controlling and bossy. They are stigmatised by stating that they have fleshly desires, meaning that they cannot control themselves sexually. This is based on the teachings of the Pentecostal Church that marriage is a divine institution, which needs to be honoured by all (Mudimeli, 2012, p. 175). The teaching does not care how a person arrived at the state of singlehood. People still battle to

accept that a woman can choose to be single. They are called names that are morally not accepted. There are certain roles that the Church prohibits single women from holding. An example is that of a gathering consisting of couples. They are not considered good role models for young people.

Leadership and freedom of service of single women are compromised by the Church. The Vhusadzi approach (cf. Mudimeli, 2012) offers suggestions that single women should be viewed and valued as complete human beings irrespective of marriage or not.

2.6.5 The Independent Churches and Violation of the Rights of Children

Africa has a variety of independent churches. Many of them broke away from the mission Churches because of various reasons such as cultural and traditional practices. Some were trying to preserve the African roots that were regarded as pagan beliefs by the Western missionaries who established Churches in Africa, especially in Kenya and Malawi. The Independent Churches in Kenya have the potential to address the plight of children but they are faced with numerous challenges that affect their ability to protect the fundamental rights of children.

The fact that only a few individuals respond to a violation of children's fundamental human rights, acts as a key factor in hampering the proper response to the violation of children's rights with regard to poverty, inadequate education, and illiterate leaders. Warata (cited in Mudimeli, 2012, p. 195) states that "the church and its theology will stagnate and die if African Christians do not employ their energies to the task of the education of its leaders." The Pastors in rural and urban slums own the Church as personal property. Leadership and management challenges had prevented the Church from engaging in activities that protect the fundamental human rights of children. Literacy affects the interpretation of the Scripture and as such many actions are taken literally without understanding the real meaning of the biblical rights that appear to be embracing the relief approach rather than the human rights approach.

The Church should not concentrate on preaching without being engaged in ordinary human life. It is theologically asserted that children involved in child labour might be

robbed of their dignity as intended by God the Creator (Gondwe, 2012, p. 145). The role of the Church should be to restore the dignity of children by advocating their liberation in all situations. Children are forced into displeasing conditions by socio-economic problems. When campaigning against the core objections of protecting children, care should be taken not to create a backlash. For example, teaching children that they have rights without considering the context and what it means in practice can raise expectations that cannot be fulfilled. The reason for this is that parents and teachers may react negatively if they believe that their rights are eroded (Marshall, 2011).

The Church should be a haven, a place for the weak. However, Andile Tshuma reports that the Church is becoming a monster. Stories and reports expose how children are abused in some Churches. It is high time that more religious leaders stand up and take a stand against the multiple human rights abuses that are swept under the carpet and hidden behind the veil of doctrine and Church culture. Child marriages are rampant in Zimbabwe among indigenous apostolic Churches, mixing Christian beliefs with traditional cultures. The case of Memory Machaya, the 14-year-old girl who died due to childbirth complications, leaving behind a son, had attracted the international community's attention, with many organisations and individuals calling for action and justice. The Zimbabwe Christian Denominations had urged the Government to set up an inquiry into the abuse of women and girls in Churches to end the scourge (Tshuma, 2022).

2.7 FAITH LEADERS AND TRANSFORMATION OF CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS

The patriarchal approach of the Bible should be translated to the current situation to suit or address the lives of women and children. Teachings on polygamy, religious rites for women, impurities, leadership in the Church, attire for women, and many other teachings should be approached with our current situation in mind and with positive teaching to avoid the violation of the rights of women and children in the Church and families. A typical example is how men use Pauline letters to oppress women and children. The way rape cases were dealt with in the Old Testament, the decisions taken on behalf of children and women as mere properties and not human beings with a full capacity to think and reason within their specific contexts, are unacceptable nowadays, e.g., Dinah was not given a choice.

The Word of God should be taught to change and build up responsible Christians. The members of the faith community should understand the implications of following Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the people of God. The teachings should root out the present indications that show signs of spiritual barrenness and decay, as stated by Mbanu (2021). Pastors should live as required. Faith leaders should live according to their responsibility as recorded in 1 Timothy 3:1–12. They should avoid falling prey to sexual misconduct (Latini, 2011, p. 25).

Teachings of the Word of God should be able to reach all the members of the Churches in Limpopo. These biblical teachings should stress the equality of wives and husbands: Wives and husbands have authority over each other's bodies (1 Cor 7:4). He who loves his wife loves himself. Each man should love his wife as himself, and the wife should respect her husband (Eph 5:28, 33). The basis of the texts mentioned here emphasises the equality of husbands and wives. Respect is the character of love and love of the exposition of respect. Therefore, the one who loves does not harm the one who respects that person.

Faith communities in Limpopo should learn from the strategies of faith communities in other countries, such as ELCA. They have different therapies implemented to help the perpetrators and victims (Van Dyk, 2000). Faith communities need to facilitate dialogue to disrupt campus rapes at IHEs (Palm, 2018). The challenges experienced by different universities globally cannot be eliminated by dialogue, as there is a need for action by the organisations (Young, 2017). The weakness of the leaders who use some cultural values and beliefs held by community members to abuse their powers against women when it suits them is a challenge that needs the expertise of faith communities (Hingston & Asneline, 2019).

2.8 CONCLUSION

The research has given more attention to the aims, the research question, and the problem statement with the selection of literature. Information was collected from experienced researchers, authors, and theologians. The role played by the Church and African traditional culture was analysed and evaluated. It is in this chapter where the researcher through literature revealed the problem investigated and some strategies

that certain structures used towards curbing the violation. It remains clear that much still needs to be done towards curbing the investigated problem. Both the religious and cultural discourses fed by the patriarchal nature of the Church and the sexist interpretation of the Bible have an impact on the lives of women thereby undermining their dignity, health, and development, especially in leadership positions in the Church. The exclusion of widows is respected by the members of the Church because they believe in respecting people's cultural and traditional orientations.

The investigation reveals the ways of the African culture, though the violation of the rights of women and children is a painful history in Africa. The research reveals a lot of suffering. Women and children are brutally killed, kidnapped, and raped. Sometimes this is done by their fathers and relatives. Murders by intimate partners are common. The Sotho proverb *polawa ke mong ga e na lebelo* means that it is not easy to escape murder planned by somebody known or trusted and respected. A lot of violence has been done in the name of proverbs, while the Bible is also used to support these actions. The leaders in the community and faith leaders are shattered by the daily reported violence against women and children in the Limpopo Province.

The next chapter will deal with these issues through data collection and findings. The Bill of Rights sections 30 and 31 needs to be facilitated through dialogue with leaders and the community. The strategies towards eliminating these harmful practices should be in place. The Churches need to play a role in facilitating these rights in collaboration with relevant governmental departments.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the research design and methods that were used when carrying out the study. It further details the use of the qualitative research process, data collection, and ethical considerations, as well as how validity and reliability will be achieved. The chapter provides a logical explanation of how research was carried out from the research paradigm through to the approach, design, population and sampling, instruments, data presentation, and data analysis.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research design was adopted as the appropriate approach to verify the investigation of the impact of social structures on the violation of the rights of women and children. The qualitative method consists of a literature study, interviews, observations, and document analysis. This research method is useful to assist the researcher in understanding meanings that people assign to social, religious, and traditional phenomena that led to the fundamental understanding of the complex breakdown of these issues.

The qualitative method describes and explains behaviours, interactions, and social conduct without using numbers. Participants' viewpoints were engaged because they were champions in their experiential worlds (Collins & Hussey, 2003). The qualitative approach selected aims to solicit comments and views from faith leaders, faith communities, traditional leaders, and communities from the Limpopo Province, especially the Capricorn district. Questionnaires and interviews were used for this study.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

Data for this study were generated qualitatively from a variety of sources and collected through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire (Appendix A) was structured to answer the aims of this research. Purposive sampling was used. The researcher set out to find people with the knowledge and experience required. The participants for

both the questionnaire and interview were South Africans. The research interviews and questionnaires were conducted in 2023.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

There are six qualitative designs: Phenomenological, ethnographic, grounded theory, historical, case study, and action research. Phenomenology examines human experiences through the descriptions provided by the people involved in the study (Donalek, 2004).

As indicated above, a qualitative research method was chosen for this study. Qualitative research is interactive face-to-face research, which requires relatively extensive time to systematically observe, interview, and record processes as they occur naturally (McMillan & Schumacher, 2013, p. 428; Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen, & Razavieh, 2006, p. 474). The researcher conducted informal interviews with respondents. Semi-structured questions were used. The researcher has set aside her beliefs and feelings to allow interviewees to express their experiences. The researcher did the interviews to find the meaning of the experience during data collection and analysis. Although the study deals with African tradition and culture, the researcher did not go and live with the people and become part of their culture. The study also involved grounded theory as the researcher used purposeful sampling. The research was historical as the events of the past affects the present. Primary and secondary sources were used throughout the literature review.

3.4.1 Population and Sampling

The primary sources of data collection for this study was from the Church and African traditional perspectives. Purposive sampling was used in selecting participants, and the researcher concentrated on small groups. Information-rich participants were identified and engaged. Non-probability sampling was used (Freedman, Pisani, & Purves, 2007). Participants, as summarised in Table 4 below, included the following: Church Council members, faith leaders, faith communities, African traditional leaders, and Church organisations, as well as the House of Traditional Affairs in Limpopo. Sample selections are detailed below.

Population Composition 1		
1.	Church community	Total
1.1.	Faith leaders	30
1.2.	Faith communities	50
1.3.	Church Councils – South African Council of Churches (SACC), Minister Fraternal	2
	Total survey sample	82

Table 4: Survey population 1 – Church community sample

Table 5 below indicates the participants in the research study in terms of the number of faith-based communities. It displays the quantity of the participants in this research study.

Population Composition 2		
2.	Traditional community	Total
2.1.	Congress of Traditional Leaders – COGHSTA	5
2.2.	Provincial House of Traditional Leaders – PHTL	5
2.3.	Women in the traditional leadership (by marriage or birth)	5
	Total survey sample	15

Table 5: Survey population 2 – traditional community sample

3.4.2 Interviews Using Semi-Structured Questions

Semi-structured interviews consisted of several key questions that helped the interviewee to respond in detail and freely. An interview schedule with a list of written and prepared questions was used. The same questions were used for all individuals, small focus groups, and questionnaires. The following tools were used: Telephone, e-mail, WhatsApp, and Microsoft Teams. Questions were recorded with permission where necessary. Questions were open-ended, which made the coding simple (Hofstee, Kiers, De Raad, Goldberg, & Ostendorf, 1997). An interview, according to Ary et al. (2006, p. 480), has the following advantages:

- It provides insight into participants' perspectives on the subject of study.
- It provides the meaning of events as they unfold for the people involved in the research study.
- It also provides in-depth information for the investigation.

One disadvantage of an interview as a data-gathering strategy is that interviewees may not be willing to share information or may even offer false information. An interview also requires a great deal of time to conduct and later to transcribe the audio or the notes (Ary et al., 2006, p. 480).

These questions need to respond to the research problem statement and research questions. They need to be justified by the literature review conducted in this research study.

3.4.3 Ethical Considerations

The researcher followed UNISA's Policy on Research Ethics 2013 (UNISA, 2013). The purpose of ethical consideration is to protect the researcher and the participants in the research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The researcher initially intended to do desktop research but found out that there is limited information that requests interviews. Hence informal interviews were conducted with caution where the researcher needed to minimise the risk. Informed consent and permission to participate in this research study were received by the researcher. The selected participants would not be more than 20, but representative. Participation would also be limited to 30 minutes.

3.4.3.1 Informed Consent

All participants were informed of the objectives of the research and the role they were expected to play in the research. Their commitment had to be from an informed position.

3.4.3.2 Honesty

The researcher had an obligation to be honest with the participants and disclose the purpose of the research.

3.4.3.3 *Privacy and Anonymity*

Privacy should always be guaranteed. No information about the participants should be disclosed without their consent.

3.4.3.4 *Rapport*

It was the responsibility of the researcher to develop a rapport with the participants so that they would feel free to volunteer and be assured of confidentiality. The researcher had to maintain her distance – no friendship and relationship could be developed.

3.4.3.5 *Debriefing*

The researcher had to go back and discuss the findings of the research with the participants. Any misconceptions and expectations had to be cleared.

3.4.4 Trustworthiness

3.4.4.1 *Credibility*

This implies that there should be confidence in the truth of the research findings. There should also be a surety that details were collected from the participants and verification was sought.

3.4.4.2 *Transferability*

A description had to be given that involved the research process, from the data collection and the context of the study to the production of the final report.

3.4.4.3 *Dependability*

Findings had to be thoroughly scrutinised by the researcher and the participants to make sure that they were correctly captured and that the interpreted data support it. There should be stability over time. All data should remain in a safe place for five years before being destroyed.

3.4.4.4 *Conformity*

The researcher needed to constantly check that the findings were based on the data collected and interpretations of the participants. Findings, interpretations, and recommendations needed to be supported by the data from the participants. Trustworthiness is equivalent to reliability and validity in quantitative research to audit rigour in research.

3.4.5 Qualitative Data Analysis and Coding

The researcher has used Tesch's eight steps of data analysis (Tesch, 1990, cited in Creswell, 2014). Data collected were organised and analysed by breaking it down into manageable units. It was then coded, searching for patterns, and had to make sense of the data in terms of the themes and categories. The researcher had to familiarise herself with the collected data by recording notes, reviewing documents, and listening repeatedly to the audiotapes. The completed transcription of all the recordings was read repeatedly, and notes were written in the margins. The process of making segments of text data with symbols and labels for assigning units to descriptive information was then completed. Specific topics that surfaced regularly were assigned a code to identify them easily. All topics with the same coding were then placed together. These steps were in line with Ncube's description, identifying the steps as transcribing, editing, segmenting data, and then categorising and coding them into themes (cf. Creswell, 2014, p. 125). The researcher took the following steps:

- Select a transcript and ask, "What is this about?" Her thoughts were then written in the margin.
- She then made a list of topics, identified and clustered similar topics in columns.
- The list of topics were applied to the data and abbreviated topics as codes, next to the appropriate segment of the text.
- Each topic was assigned an appropriate descriptive wording. Categories that related to each other were then categorised.
- The researcher decided on the abbreviations and alphabetised the codes.
- The data belonging to each category were assembled in one place.
- Thereafter the data were arranged in tables to show similarities, differences, and patterns.
- After the data were organised, an interpretation of the database was formed.

3.5 SUMMARY

In this chapter, a justification for the adoption of the selected methodology was provided. The qualitative research was explicitly stated and described, while its application was discussed. The chapter detailed the research design used to collect and analyse data to ensure the reliability and validity of data. Purposive sampling was adopted with a small manageable sample. The next chapter focuses on data analysis and presentation.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter details the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the research data collected from the research population identified for the study. Following the research methods detailed in Chapter 3, a qualitative research design was adopted as the appropriate approach to verify the investigation of the impact of social structures on the violation of the rights of women and children. The qualitative method consisted of a literature study (covered in Chapter 2), followed by data gathering and analysis in this chapter. This chapter details both the findings and interviews conducted during this study. These are presented as follows:

- Data gathering process.
- Data gathered.
- Data analysis.

4.2 DATA GATHERING PROCESS

The researcher used the following methods to gather data: Interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis. The interviews were done via telephone and WhatsApp after permission was obtained from the participants. Some of the contacts were provided by the Church leadership, the House of Traditional Affairs, and the Congress of Traditional Affairs. The participants had options to choose how to contribute towards the data gathering. The researcher, after a careful analysis of the expenditure, opted to supply questionnaires through e-mails and interviews through WhatsApp. The questions were the same in the questionnaires and interviews. The primary source of data collection for this study came from the Church and African traditional perspective. Section 3.4.1 explains how participants were selected through purposive sampling, according to Freedman et. al. (2007).

4.3 DATA GATHERED

Data gathered were anonymous as per UNISA's Policy on Research Ethics 2013 (UNISA, 2013). The data collected are summarised and categorised below.

4.3.1 Survey Population 1: Church Perspective

Population Composition 1			
1.	Church Community	Sent Out	Received
1.1	Faith leaders	30	13
1.2	Faith communities	50	41
1.3	Church Councils – South African Council of Churches (SACC) and Minister Fraternal and foundations	8	7
Total survey sample:		88	61

Table 6: Church community data collected

The data from the Church perspective were gathered by means of a combination of interviews and questionnaires e-mailed to the participants. The specific Church leaders, Church leagues, and Church organisations responded through e-mails, PDFs, and WhatsApp interviews. 22 of the participants were men and 15 were women, adding up to a total of 37. As defined in Chapter 3, faith leaders are Church ministers and those involved in the Church leadership. The faith communities are the different leagues in the Churches e.g., Youth Leagues, Women’s League, Men’s Leagues, and other members of the Church. The Church Councils are Church organisations, fraternal, and foundations focused on Churches in general.

4.3.2 Survey Population 2: Traditional Perspective

Population Composition 2			
2.	Traditional Community	Sent Out	Received
2.1	Congress of Traditional Leaders – COGHSTA	24	10
2.2	Provincial House of Traditional Leaders – PHTL	5	5
2.3	Women in the traditional leadership (by marriage or birth)	5	1
Total survey sample:		34	16

Table 7: Traditional community data collected

The data from the traditional perspective were gathered by means of a combination of interviews and questionnaires e-mailed to the participants. Five e-mails were received back, and the researcher had five interviews on WhatsApp. All the kings (Kgoshi/Kgoshigadi/Bommakgoshi) are members of the Congress of Traditional Leaders and from their lists, members are elected who form the Provincial House of Traditional

Leaders. Bommakgoshi are the wives of the kings, while a Kgoshigadi is the son of a king who is not yet crowned as king, due to age or other reasons known by the Royal kraal/Moshate.

The pseudonyms/codes are as follows: E-mail = MAS; WhatsApp interviews = BWM, MSI, LET, MPN, SOL, NDI, RAP, SEK, SET. There were four women and six men.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

This section details the analysis of the participants and their responses. Most of the participants were above the age of 56 and mostly with Master's degrees as the highest qualifications. The summary also indicates that most participants were men. The summary of data collection is illustrated in Figure 1 to 4 below.

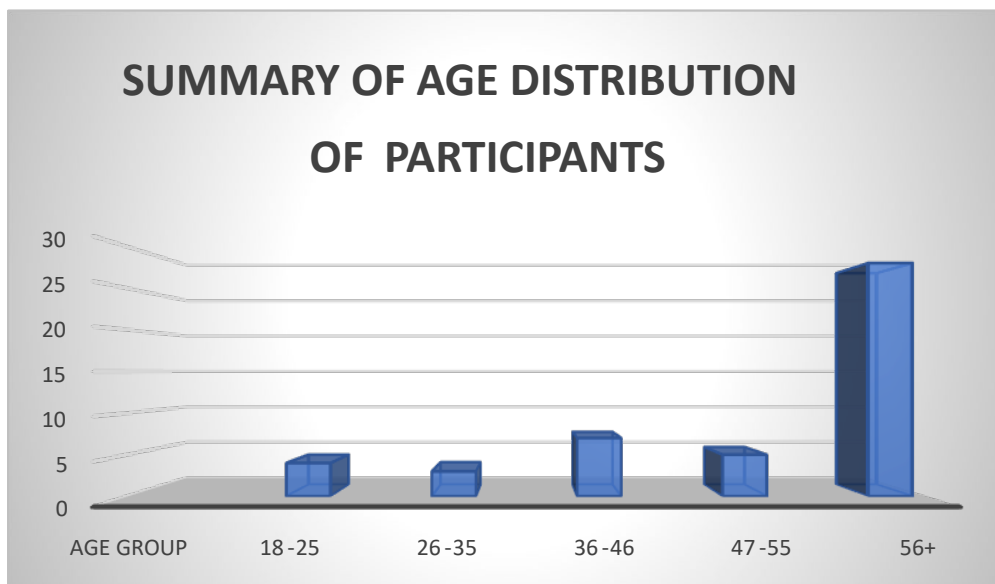


Figure 1: Summary of age distribution of participants

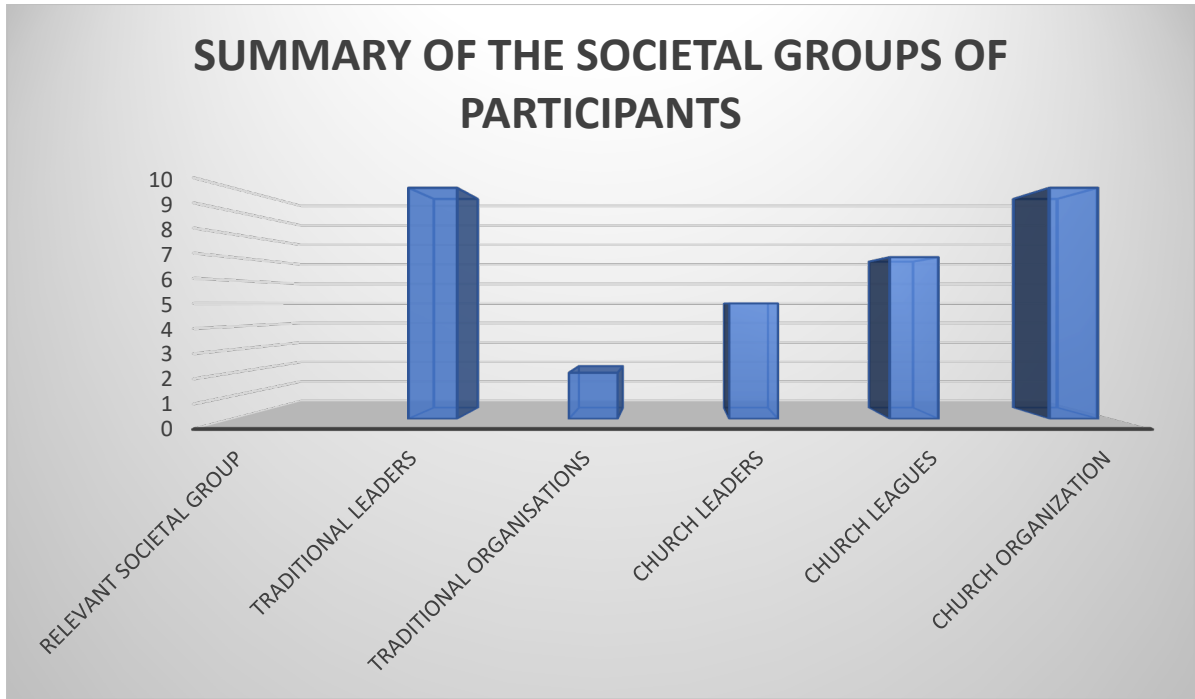


Figure 2: Summary of the societal groups of participants

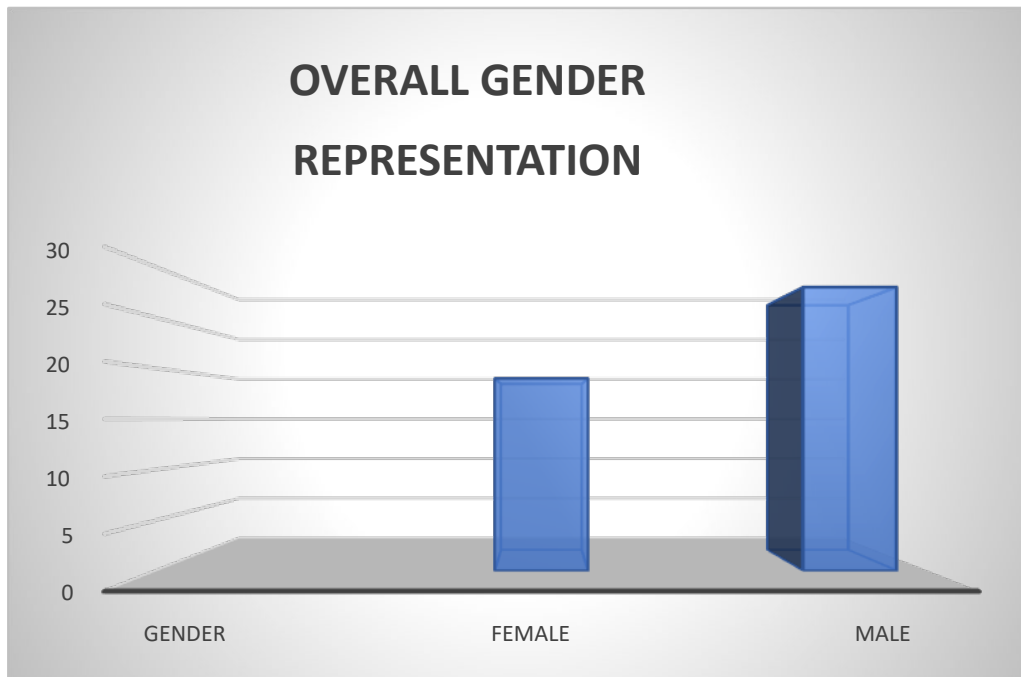


Figure 3: Overall gender representation

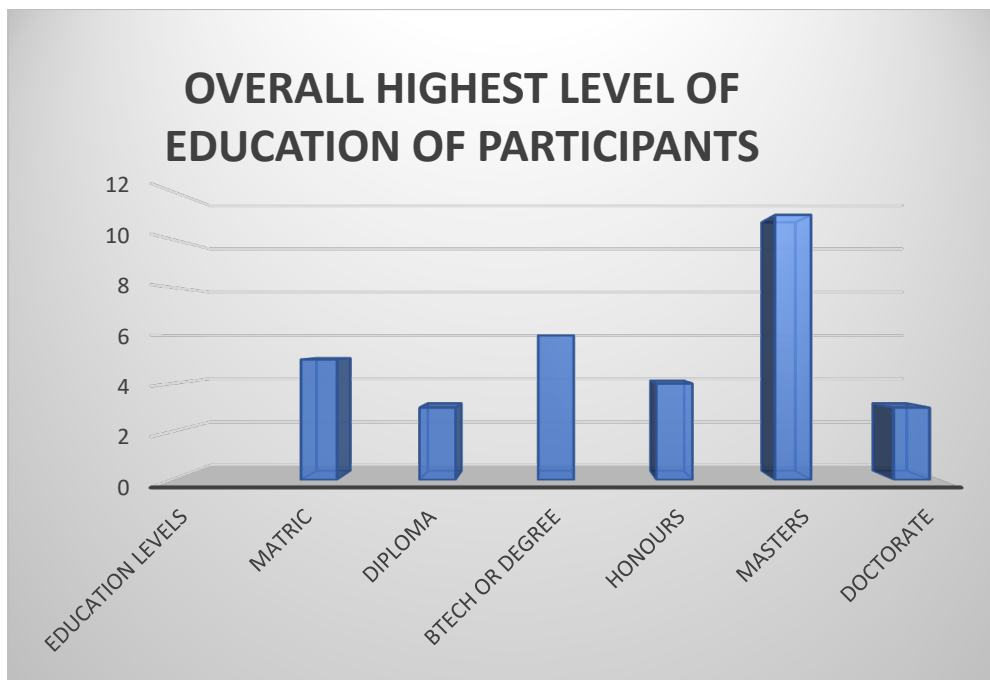


Figure 4: Overall highest level of education of participants

4.4.1 Survey Population 1: Church Perspective

The researcher read the received data collected repeatedly and identified common themes. Participants were given codes which were used to identify them when discussing themes. Themes from the Church perspective:

- African tradition and equality.
- Childless partners and child marriage.
- Fathers making decisions for their daughters.
- God's intention with humanity and men as perpetrators.
- Impurity and cleansing.
- Initiation schools.
- Interpretation of Scripture.
- Polygamous marriages and African proverbs.
- Widow inheritance and mourning period.
- Virginity testing and circumcision.
- Strategies to control and curve violence against women and children.

4.4.2 Survey Population 2: Traditional Perspective

The researcher read the received data collected repeatedly and identified common themes. Participants were given codes which were used to identify them when discussing themes. Themes from the African tradition perspective:

- African tradition and equality.
- Childless partners and child marriage.
- Fathers making decisions for their daughters.
- God's intention with humanity and men as perpetrators against women.
- Impurity and ritual purification.
- Initiation schools.
- Polygamous marriages and African proverbs.
- Widow inheritance and mourning period.
- Strategies to curb violation with the support of the society.

4.4.3 Secondary Data Collected

The participants contributed more information from various relevant sources which could assist the Church and the traditional leaders to run both sections with care and appropriate knowledge. Below is a list of topics with the contributors added to them:

- African traditional leaders and equality (TKLA), which guides the women and children with their functions and roles (cf. the Traditional and Khoi-San Leadership Act 3 of 2019 – South African Government, 2019): NET serving in COGHSTA.
- Fathers taking decisions for their daughters: Church and traditional leaders, specifically MTR, with reference to the Women Empowerment and Gender Equity Bill (RSA, 2013), the Children's Act 38 of 2005 (South African Government, 2005), and the Bill of Rights – Chapter 2 of the Constitution 1996 (Parliament of the RSA, 1996). This equips both leaders in the Church and African traditional leaders to provide protection and support to women and children, as well as making women and children aware of their rights in all spheres of life.
- Polygamous marriage: NET referred the researcher to the Department of Home Affairs to supply information about the conference held in Durban in June 2023 about the amendment of the Marriage Bill, and information was provided on the requirements of polygamous and monogamous marriages which should guide

both the Church and the African traditional leaders (The draft Marriage Bill – South African Government, 2023).

- ALP referred to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996, Section 9 (Parliament of the RSA, 1996), in view of the African tradition and equal rights. It entrenches the right to equality about the protection and benefits of the law. It guides all leaders of the society, ensuring them that all its members are given equal benefits and protection irrespective of gender, age, and so forth, conforming to the need to maintain human dignity to all lives within it.
- AND referred to the LWF Meeting 2023, empowering Churches and communities to engage in interreligious collaboration mapping resources and needs. This will specifically guide the Church Councils, foundations, and fraternal to lead different denominations to work together for the promotion of harmony as intended by God.
- MAD mentioned a document by Jeremy Punt in 1996 (Punt, 1996) that will guide the leaders of the Church with the interpretation of the Pauline Letters as it is the one theme that leads to misinterpretation of the Scripture among many leaders of the Churches. MAD also referred to the description of purification in the Jewish Encyclopedia (2021).
- Most of the participants referred to the Bible concerning impurity and cleansing, equality, fathers making decisions for their daughters, childless partners, interpretation, and polygamous marriages:
 - ✠ Impurity and cleansing: LAM, MAD, NDA, NYW, XOL, and CL20 (Lev 11–15:33; Nm 8:5–8; Jer 7:3–15; Rm 13:14; 1 Jn 1:7, 9; and 1 Tim 5).
 - ✠ Equality and men as perpetrators: HOL, ALP, NDI, MAS, CL20, and CL21 (Gn 1:27, 2:21–22; 1 Cor 14:34–35; Ps 146:3, 5, 6).
 - ✠ Fathers taking decision for their daughters: HOL (Eph 6:4; Mk 12:32).
 - ✠ Childless partners: HOL (Ps 127:3–5).
 - ✠ Interpretation: ALP, XOL, and CL20 (Gn 1:26–27, 2:22–28; Jl 2:23; 1 Cor 11:1–4).
 - ✠ Polygamous marriages: LAM, MOL, XOL, and SIK (1 Cor 7; 1 Tim 5; 1 Tim 1:1–15; 1 Cor 11:8–12, and 1 Tim 3:2).

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the data collected were presented and analysed. The diagram below summarises the data analysis and influence of the final research model, recommendations, and conclusion that will be presented in the chapter that follows.

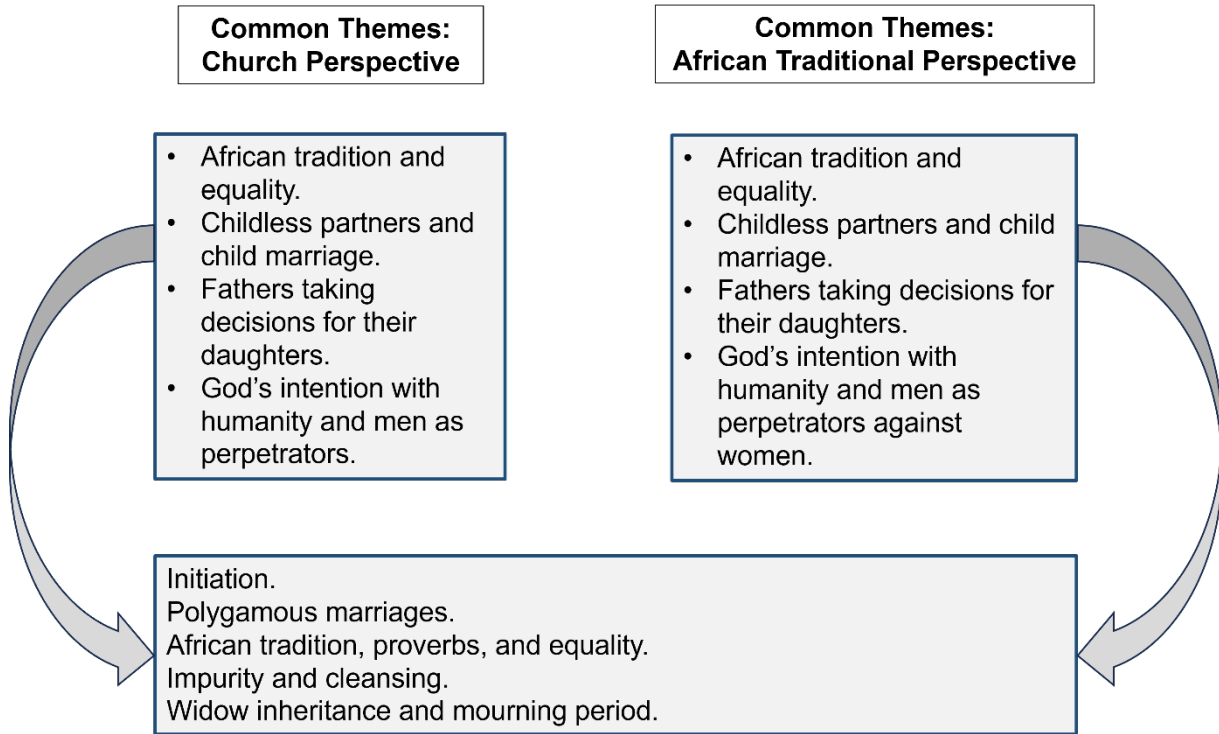


Figure 5: Summary of the data analysis and influence of the final research model

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present a summary of the research study as given in the previous chapters. It will present research findings based on the aims of the study. Recommendations on the findings based on the aims of the research study will be made as proposals for future research projects.

5.2 SUMMARY

The aims of the research study are very important as they lead to the findings based on them. The following aims were indicated:

Aim 1: *To illustrate from the literature how faith communities, faith leaders, and traditional leaders contribute to the violation of women's and children's rights.*

The researcher has illustrated how the African tradition operates in terms of the marriage of children, *lobola*, polygamy, and the initiation of girls. In the literature consulted it was clear that the African tradition respects women and children, hence it is mentioned by Setiloane and Mbiti that marriage is not child's play, therefore child marriages in the African context are not allowed. The challenge and change have come with colonialisation and capitalism where marriage was used to accumulate wealth (Taringa & Museka, 2021). *Lobola/Rooro* was never meant to be a price for a girl, but a token of appreciation and was never one-sided but two-sided – from both families.

It is indicated in Chapter 2 that childbirth is the pride of the African family and community. Having children in the African context was viewed as a gift from God and the ancestors (Mbiti, 1969; Setiloane, 1969). It was never regarded as a punishment or mistreatment of women where a small family would like to marry their daughter to a man of a larger family with more land. The researcher found this notion irrelevant because of the modern way of doing things and the modern economic system as well as the scientific way of labour that uses machines instead of human beings. The same argu-

ment about bigger families accumulating more assets applies to polygamy. The emphasis in this research was on the use of the African tradition to accumulate wealth unjustly like widow inheritance.

Aim 2: *To demonstrate how biblical interpretations lead to the violation of women's and children's rights.*

The researcher has demonstrated from the literature review how biblical texts were used without considering the context. This has caused Church and faith leaders to utilise practices of injustice against women and children. The selective reading and interpretation of the Scriptures misled the Church leaders on how to address GBV. Claassens (2019) justifies that Scriptures need to be read with different lenses to fit the context, hence she suggests the feminist critical and postcolonial biblical interpretation as the lenses to approach GBV.

Aim 3: *To demonstrate that faith communities, leaders, and traditional leaders can correct their past wrongs to curb violence against women's and children's rights.*

The researcher has demonstrated in her literature review how different sources discourage the misuse of the Scriptures to justify the oppression of women and children. The traditional classical sources like Mbiti and Setiloane suggest to faith communities and faith leaders to go back to the pre-colonial African practices to draw the tools to remedy the situation. They suggest that traditional practices need to be enculturated, and that Christian Churches should pick the best fitting practices and teach them within the Church. The Sunday schools, catechumen, and adult Christian education need to focus on these issues to make the communities aware of the misuse of African tradition in the abuse of women and children as the African tradition respects women and children as gifts of God and the ancestors.

Aim 4: *To propose what strategies faith communities, leaders, and traditional leaders can use to curb violence against women and children.*

The researcher will provide these strategies in the recommendations.

The following is a summary of the content of the research study.

The African traditions have a significant negative impact on the societal structures, the Churches, and schools. The secular government also contributes to the increase of GBV since their corrective measures are insufficient to curb the challenges. The purpose of this study was to create an awareness in the Churches and among traditional leaders and other structures concerned about the welfare of women and children. The baseline is that violence is not God's purpose of creation. Furthermore, the researcher intended to provoke the faith communities to re-look and re-examine their teachings of the Bible with a new perspective that will promote the rights of women and children.

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

By means of interviews and questionnaires the researcher examined human experiences provided by the participants and the literature review. The following methods were used to gather data: Interviews, questionnaires, and observations. The interviews were done via telephone and WhatsApp after permission was obtained from the participants. Some of the contacts were provided by the Church leadership, the House of Traditional Affairs, and the Congress of Traditional Affairs. The participants had options to choose how to contribute towards data gathering. The researcher, after careful analysis of expenditure, opted for questionnaires through e-mails and interviews through WhatsApp. The questions were the same for both the questionnaires and interviews. The primary source of data collection for this study was from the Church and African traditional perspective.

5.4 FINDINGS

The researcher has conducted a literature review and empirical research employing mixed methods. The general findings based on the impact of the Church and traditional leaders found by the researcher are the following:

- She observed that most participants did not have an interest in specific themes such as widow inheritance, mourning periods, impurity, and cleansing.
- The main problem of leadership and equality is caused by the interpretation of the Bible, which is mostly a misinterpretation.
- She observed that most of the male participants did not want to deliberate on polygamous marriages, extra-marital affairs, African proverbs that empower

women and girls to lead or strive for better positions, and equality. The implication is that these are a thorn in their flesh, especially those that are not doing well in education and employment.

- Some traditional leaders emphasised that they are Africans and do not want to be involved in Church and biblical matters.
- The researcher observed that most of the Royal kraals/*moshate* were led by female leaders who represented their deceased husbands and their sons who were still young. This resulted in finding a smaller number of *Bommak-goshi/wives* of the kings in this study.
- The data collected were of great value and an eye-opener on some issues like the Church who usually does not give more attention to helpful material, such as the laws, regulations, and acts that would assist them in performing their responsibilities accordingly.
- Literature which mostly acted as secondary data, carried more usable information that could curb the violation of the rights of women and children.
- The main problem of leadership and equality is mostly avoided because of the study and wrong interpretations of the Bible.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The main implications and recommendations are linked to aims 3 and 4 as the research demonstrates the curbing of the past wrongs and proposed strategies that can be used to curb violence against women's and children's rights. Both proposed strategies and recommendations are dealt with in sections 5.3.3 and 5.5:

- Traditional leaders must align themselves with the recently updated laws, bills, and regulations of the country so that they can fairly deal with issues affecting all stakeholders.
- Traditional leaders should establish information sessions during community meetings and invite relevant departments to the meetings to inform people about the topic of the day.
- Programmes of the Church should influence society to target vulnerable individuals and create changes.
- Campaigns on the importance of treating women and children as creatures of God with equal rights should be encouraged.

- Churches like charismatic Churches that accommodate widows and single women based on their age group or marital status, should be encouraged and helped with resources.
- Everyone in the society must familiarise themselves with human rights acts to exercise full respect for women and children.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The topics mentioned below are related to the notion which was researched in this study. However, they did not receive direct focus in this study because they are beyond the scope of this research. It is recommended that they be studied in more detail in future research studies:

- The re-Africanisation of the Christian faith to properly interpret the African tradition on GBV and marriage.
- The establishment of an equivalent to the African initiation schools within the Christian education to prepare young boys and girls for an African-Christian moral life and living together as members of the community.
- The Church has to use the relevant lenses when approaching African traditional practices like marriage, polygamy, LGBTQIA+, and child abuse.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Below is a list of the semi-structured questions.

Sub-Question 1	What role do faith communities, leaders, and traditional leaders play in violating women's and children's rights?
	Do you agree with Mbiti that women and children have the same rights in the African tradition as men and elders because they are equally integral parts of the community?
	Which African proverbs make it difficult for women to lead and enjoy marriage and leadership in Limpopo?
	The African tradition is proud of proverbs, but some proverbs encourage adultery. What is your observation?
	Being childless is not a choice of some partners. Should the wife be punished because of this?
	It is observed that some of the boys from initiation schools disrespect their parents, especially women and elders. How can the traditional leaders control this?
Sub-Question 2	What impact do harmful biblical interpretations and teachings have on protecting women's and children's rights?
	According to the Bible, in Genesis 1:2 and Genesis 2:23–24, God's intention with humanity was harmony. What went wrong that men are now perpetrators against women?
	The Bible translation causes diversity in understanding the role of women in the African religion. Do you agree with this statement? Substantiate your response using the Pentecostal biblical reading.
	Do you agree that people deeply rooted in the African tradition and culture belong to the African Independent Churches led by Pastors and Bishops who have not received or have limited theological training and have male-dominated leadership? Substantiate your response.
	Women in the St. John's Apostolic Faith Mission evoke a biblical genealogy of women's ancestors. An example is the order of their preaching, "I greet Mother Mary Magdalene." What is your comment on that?
	The story of creation was understood through the eyes of a man and used to promote male domination leadership throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. This influenced even the leadership of Jesus Christ. What is your response?
	Explain how the Bible influenced the following: Impurity and cleansing rites on women and the girl child.

Sub-Question 3	What role can faith communities, leaders, and traditional leaders play in correcting the wrongs of the past to promote women's and children's rights?
	Acceptance of polygamous marriage by the Church leadership.
	The misinterpretation of Scripture, especially the Pauline Letters.
	The common practice of fathers making decisions on behalf of their daughters. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinah being raped. • Lot's daughter handed over to Sodom men for rape. • A lack of sympathy for Tamar raped by her brother Ammon. • King David's lust for Uriah's wife.
	There are programmes for members of the Church that tend to forget single women in the Church, especially leadership and preaching.
Sub-Question 4	What strategies can faith communities and traditional leaders use to curbe violations against women's and children's rights?
	Traditional leaders are supposed to protect all members of the community and ensure that they are treated with dignity. How do you as traditional leader deals with the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single women. • Single men. • Polygamy. • Extra-marital affairs. • Battering of women. • Child-marriage. • Widow inheritance. • Practices during the mourning period. • Virginity testing. • Genital mutilation and women's circumcision. • Proverbs that encourage the ill-treatment of women.

	<p>Religious leaders are supposed to protect all members of the community and ensure that they are treated with dignity. How do you as religious leader deal with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single women. • Single men. • Polygamy. • Extra-marital affairs. • Battering of women. • Child-marriage. • Widow inheritance. • Practices during the mourning period. • Virginity testing. • Genital mutilation and women's circumcision. • Proverbs that encourage the ill-treatment of women.
	<p>What should be changed or encouraged to support the protection of women and children in society?</p>
	<p>What should be changed or encouraged to support the protection of women and children in church?</p>