



**Women empowerment and societal transformation: The voice of
Women in Pastoral Ministry and Church Leadership of the Methodist
Church in Kenya.**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work and has not been presented anywhere else for any academic purposes.

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I confirm that this research was carried out by the candidate under my supervision.

Signature:

Date:

Prof. Hans Morten Haugen

DEDICATION

To the love of my life, my friend and the mother to my children– Annjoy,

My affectionate daughter– Vanessa

and

My loving parents, Mr. & Mrs. Richard Linguli Mbirithi.

*To all women who are faced with uncertainties in their quest for leadership. May your
resolve never die till you fulfill your God-given abilities...*

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I celebrate my Church – The Methodist Church in Kenya for allowing me to travel abroad for further studies. I promise to apply the knowledge gained to bring transformation not only in the MCK, but the society at large.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATR: African Traditional Religion

LWF: Lutheran World Federation

MCK: Methodist Church in Kenya

MWF: Methodist Women Fellowship

NCCK: National Council of Churches in Kenya

WCC: World Council of Churches

WMC: World Methodist Council

ABSTRACT

This study examines the voice of the women leaders in the Methodist Church in Kenya. It was noted that the MCK believes in the Priesthood of all believers and democracy where all her members are free to exercise their leadership gifts in their various capacities. Nevertheless, it was eminent that though women have accessed some lower leadership, they have not managed to get to some of the top positions in the church hierarchy. Thus, this thesis investigated the informing factors that contribute to the positioning of women leaders as well as the factors hindering their work for the MCK. A theoretical framework consisting of Gender and Empowerment, Patriarchy and Power theories informed this study. Being a narrative study, qualitative study method was employed with combined multiple sources of data. A semi-structured open-ended interview guide was used to conduct twenty face to face individual interviews and two focus group interviews. Church documents and writings were also reviewed to enlighten the study.

The study reveals that although women are spiritually gifted and have reached some of the ranks of leadership in the MCK, still hurdles that center on religious and socio-cultural perceptions have continued to thrive against them, maybe explaining why they have not been able to rise to higher positions in the church leadership.

The study has also given recommendations and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This research aims at accessing women empowerment and societal transformation through the assessment of the voice of women in the pastoral ministry and church leadership of the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK). MCK is a structured mainstream church that borrows heavily from the leadership and organizational structure of the Methodist Church in the Great Britain. MCK is also a member of the World Methodist Council (WMC). The organizational structure of the Methodist Church in Kenya is as follows:

Conference:-This is the supreme body of the Methodist Church in Kenya whose head is the Presiding Bishop. It constitutes of both the elected male and female lay leaders and the clergy both of whom have an equal representation in meeting of the conference. At the conference level, there is a ministerial council that comprises of the ordained leaders, both men and women at the national level. Up to date, the Church has had six Presiding Bishops, of which none of them has been a woman.

Synod: - This is the next level of the Methodist Church in Kenya after the conference. Kenya has currently got 10 synods namely Nairobi, Kaaga, Nkubu, Miathene, Nyambene, Tharaka, Mombasa, Singwaya, Kilifi and Western Kenya; and two mission synods in Tanzania and Uganda each headed by a Synod Bishop who is elected during the Annual conference. The synod follows the same model with the conference in employment, human resource and representation. Currently, out of the twelve elected synod bishops in the MCK, there are only two women bishops since its autonomy.

Circuit: Under the synod, are the Circuits headed by the Superintendent Minister who can either be male or female. The Superintendent Minister is an employee of the conference and is posted to the circuit by the synod and can be transferred at any time to another location. The supreme governing body at the circuit level is referred to as the

Circuit quarterly meeting and it is constituted of all the elected lay leaders and ordained clergy in the circuit, both men and women. Currently, there are more male Superintendent Ministers in the MCK as compare to their female counterparts.

Local Congregation/Society: The lowest ranking level of the church is the local congregations/societies/churches where members congregate every Sunday. In most case, individual congregations have at least one minister but the day to day running of the congregation normally lies with the lay leaders that are both men and women.

The Methodist Church in Kenya has a mission in that guides its work. The mission statement of the church endeavors to have women, who are more than men, contribute directly or indirectly to the holistic ministry, development and evangelistic activities of the church in pursuit to increase the church membership. The mission calls upon the church to build up its systems and resources so as to bridge spiritual and social gaps for Church growth. This calls for involvement of women in the social, economic and political spheres of life. The MCK mission statement has this fundamental goal: *“To Preach the Good News, Set at Liberty the Afflicted and Equip Believers.”* The Church is guided by Christian principles and aims to achieve this through the following broad mission objectives:

- To empower believers into faith and freedom through God’s Word
- To promote social holiness through the spirit of Methodism
- To inspire and mentor excellence in Church leadership and management
- To enhance continued membership growth and Church sustainability

The stronghold of the Methodist Church in Kenya in regards to numbers and contributions to its growth and achievement of the mission statement lies with women. This is in concurrence with Koranteng’s claim that every time men and women are allowed religious freedom on an equal basis, the latter are often more religious as compared to the former and that the women are numerically more as worshippers

(Koranteng, 1993). Although the MCK preaches an all-inclusive Gospel, there are found difficulties in linking the same with women's leadership roles and there seem to be obstacles to women empowerment which socially affect the status of women in leadership.

Women leaders in the Methodist Church in Kenya face some major religious, political and social challenges. The church trains female theology students and ordains women as pastoral leaders and roles assigned to them such as being bishops, superintendent ministers, circuit ministers, chaplains and others being lay leaders in every level of the church. However in executing their different roles in the church leadership due to the societal tendencies, these women are entangled in hurdles against women empowerment that are based on religious, socio-cultural and political deliberations. This research therefore investigates the voice of women in pastoral ministry and church leadership of the Methodist Church in Kenya. I will also examine factors that limit the number of women leaders from occupying the topmost decision making positions of the church such as the Presiding Bishop and the Conference Secretary.

It is true to say that women in the Methodist Church in Kenya are efficiently performing their roles but some of the negative perceptions that were used earlier to keep them off from the leadership positions in the church still persist. In some instances, the women leaders are hindered from fully performing their roles because some members (particularly older men) in the Methodist Church in Kenya go on with the cultural perceptions that women are mainly to be assigned roles in the domestic domain. Some members and sadly a number of male pastors also find it difficult to work with women leaders as congregational leaders simply because they are women.

Note: Leadership in this thesis will be used to refer to women lay leaders and women pastors in the MCK.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTION

The issue of women serving as church leaders is either a very easy or a very difficult question depending on the context upon which it is being relayed upon. Some think that the Bible categorically forbids this recognition, while others argue for equal leadership rights for both genders regardless of what the Bible may teach on the subject. Many people struggle with this issue and that is why this research envisions at providing an overview of this complex subject when it comes to the Methodist Church in Kenya. There are those who still feel that women are well represented in the Church leadership while others feel that despite women being majority in membership of the Methodist Church in Kenya, the positions allotted to them in church are still dismal and much more needs to be done. Thus, the overarching question for this study is: **“How do the women pastors, female theology students and women church leaders experience their work for the Methodist Church in Kenya?”**

In order to get to the bottom of this research question and conceptualize on the issue of women empowerment and societal transformation the following broad objectives have been formulated:

1.2.1 Motivations for becoming a pastor/lay leader

This section aims at telling the personal stories of female lay leaders, theology students and pastors within the MCK and at the same time check whether these female leaders were coerced to join ministry or joined on their own volition. It will as well examine if these leaders emulated/admired a particular role model so as to join the ministry and the reasons behind it. Lastly, an inquiry will be made to ascertain whether these female pastors chose ministry as their first choice for a career or not; and what else they do/aspired to do besides being a pastor.

1.2.2 Experiences during education and while working

In this division the researcher will explore the experiences of female pastors/theological students/Church leaders within the Methodist Church in Kenya. This will help in

analyzing the kind of affirmations and mentoring the female leaders have in the present day by investigating whether the women leaders are allowed to independently exercise their God-given abilities or if they have to fit into an already prescribed pattern or model of pastoral ministry and church leadership. This will be useful in understanding the patriarchal concept of the African Society given that the prejudices that may be suffered by women leaders in course of their work and will be investigated.

1.2.3 Support from Church and Colleagues

The objective here will be to ascertain how the Methodist Church in Kenya accords training opportunities to both female and male students aspiring to join the pastoral ministry of the Church. An evaluation of the distribution of positions in elective and/or appointed leadership posts of the Methodist Church in Kenya will also be done. Consequently, a review of the impediments that hinder women from fully living out their potentials and God-given gifts as a pastors and church leaders in the Methodist Church in Kenya will be done so as to access the voice of a woman in the pastoral ministry and leadership of the MCK.

1.3 MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The question of women serving in Pastoral Ministry and Church Leadership remains a very thorny subject of discussion in today's contemporary society. A number of people think that the Bible emphatically forbids women recognition, even as others argue for equal leadership rights for both genders not considering what the Biblical writers like Paul may have written on the subject. Out of this contention, my inspiration in this thesis will be to explore the theories of women empowerment, patriarchy and models of power by applying them on the role of women in pastoral ministry and church leadership is heard and included in the Methodist Church in Kenya.

The center of attention in this paper will be based on individual experiences of women working in pastoral ministry, female theology students aspiring to join the Methodist ordained ministry and women in church leadership of the Methodist Church in Kenya. The key question that rotates around this survey is how the female pastors and church

leaders experience their work for the Church. The women were required to express their personal journey and calling to ministry, as well as their experience on the manner in which females are perceived in the Methodist Church in Kenya as pastors and church leaders. As a minister of the Methodist Church in Kenya, the researcher is aware that since its autonomy in 1967, the Methodist Church in Kenya continues to accept women to be in positions of church leadership both ordained and lay. Thus, in this thesis I aspire to look for gaps that need to be bridged so as to increase the number of female leaders in the MCK, both ordained and laity as compared to their male counterparts.

The MCK structurally shapes herself according to the setup brought by the missionaries that was founded on western culture and practices that perceived women as helpers and never central to the running of leadership and governance. Church leadership then assumed a male face. Consequently, women have over the years been hard-pressed to situations of powerlessness; to the margins because, again, active participation requires economic independence and a sound economic base, yet few women have achieved this. The attitudes of controlling women in church have been taken for granted from the period of the early church. Further, such attitudes are confirmed by the socio-cultural influences of communities that have embraced Christian religion. The churches continue to misapply generic terms to promote male supremacy over female, who were already experiencing unfair treatment in various spheres of their lives (Oduyoye and Kanyoro, 1992:140). In the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK), women's discriminations and oppressions are most likely to be contributed by the interpretations of some of the biblical texts, together with male dominance as exists in society.

In the recent years, women in the Methodist Church in Kenya have enjoyed increased access to pastoral and leadership positions such as bishops, superintendent ministers and Church executives among others. Despite such progress, there continues to be lamentations about women underrepresentation in top church leadership particularly given that since its autonomy in 1967, the Methodist Church in Kenya has only managed to have two female bishops and no woman ever since has managed to become either the Conference secretary or Presiding Bishop of the Church, which is the top most position.

Therefore, the researcher aims at examining the contentment and/or the discontentment of the extent to which women's voice has so far reached in the church and also explore what may need to be done at empowering female members so as to reach the top pastoral and leadership positions of the church.

1.4 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Here, the general discussion of the Kenyan context in regards to the voice of women in pastoral ministry and church leadership of the Methodist Church in Kenya will be given

1.4.1 Epigrammatic history of the Methodist Church in Kenya

The Methodist Church in Kenya was founded in 1862 by a group of missionaries that were sent by the United Methodist Free Churches of Great Britain (Nthamburi, 1982). Nthamburi writes that the missionaries established the first station at Ribe in the Northern Coast of Mombasa town in Kenya. He further says that Methodism was first introduced by a German Lutheran called Dr. Ludwig Krapf who worked under the backing of the Church Missionary Society (Anglican). It is noted that a pioneer missionary, Thomas Wakefield worked in the coast opening up a number of mission stations. For about fifty years, the missionaries attempted to spread the mission across the coastal towns near Mombasa and Tana Tiver but the mission failed due to the fact that missionaries suffered malaria and some died of the same. This development prompted the missionaries to consider other places that had favourable climatic conditions and possibly with people that were more receptive to the gospel. It is noted that the people along the coast were a bit hostile to Christianity due to the fact that they had already been influenced by the Arab settlers who had converted many of the to Islam (Gitonga, 2008).

According to Nthamburi, the missionaries having established the first mission station at Ribe, they started moving to the rest of the country. A missionary by the name of Mr. R.T. Worthington was assigned the task of opening the first Methodist Station in Meru at Kaaga in 1912. Here, the Church was cordially received and many of the Meru people converted to Christianity leaving behind their traditional cultural practices. Unlike the warm and humid climatic conditions of the coast that made it a fertile ground for

mosquito breeding, the climatic conditions along the Meru region were highly favorable to the missionaries due to its highland nature hence making many of the missionaries more comfortable (Nthamburi, 1982). They therefore stayed in the Meru region for a long time and engaged in widely spreading the mission in the region (Anderson, 1994).

The Methodist Church in Kenya in the year 1967 became autonomous from the Methodist Church in the Great Britain which until then had been running the affairs of the church for approximately a hundred years. Nevertheless, up to now the Methodist Church in Kenya has a strong attachment with the Methodist Church in the Great Britain. It is vital to note that the Methodist Church in Kenya employs an identical leadership and organizational structure as that of the Methodist Church in Britain. It is in the same year 1967, that the Methodist Church in Kenya opened the first indigenous congregation in the Capital city of Nairobi. The Church also extended to the neighboring countries of Uganda, Tanzania and DRC Congo as its mission areas, with Uganda and Tanzania having become Synods by themselves. The Methodist Church in Kenya strategic plan of 2012-2017 indicates that the Church has a growing population with an estimation of a total membership of 1,200,000 by the year 2012. This number continues to rapidly increase owing to the opening up of new churches and mission areas within and outside the country. As of today, the Methodist Church in Kenya is estimated to have more than three million members, over 400 full-time ministers, 1,000+ congregations and 10 synods across Kenya; one in Uganda and another one in Tanzania. The MCK sponsors over 600 schools and runs a university, three tertiary training institutes, one major hospital and 14 health centres. It has a Women's Fellowship, Men's Fellowship and Youth and Junior Church Conference fellowships (MCK, 2017).

1.4.2 The doctrinal standards of the Methodist Church in Kenya

The Methodist Church maintains and esteems its place in the Holy Catholic Church which is the Body of Christ. It exults in the heritage of the apostolic faith and devotedly acknowledges the basic doctrines of the historic creeds and the Protestant Reformation. It ever keeps in mind that in the Providence of God, Methodism was raised up to spread

Scriptural godliness through the land by the proclamation of the Evangelical Faith and declares its resolute determination to be true to its divinely appointed mission. The Methodist Church in Kenya has a universal conviction that the office of the Christian ministry depend upon the call of God who bestows the gifts of the Spirit, the grace and the fruit, which indicate those whom He has chosen. The Methodist Church embraces the doctrine of the Priesthood of all believers and therefore believes no priesthood exists which belongs exclusively to a particular order or class of men [or women] but in the exercise of its corporate life and worship, special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are obligatory and thus the principle of representative selection is recognized. Methodist Church in Kenya is anchored on the Word of God in its affirmation that the Word of God abides forever and in that the Word of God never returns to Him void. Thus, to the Methodists in Kenya, every church needs to be built on the Word of God. It is the announcement that God is bringing His Kingdom near into the lives of men and women. Thus, witnessing is central to the Methodist Church in Kenya's vision and life (MCK, 2017).

1.4.3 Summary

According to the Standing Orders of the Methodist Church in Kenya, a woman can be ordained to lead in any seat in the church. In the history of the MCK though, since it assumed its self-governance in 1967, only two women have rose to the position of Bishops with no single woman clinching the position of the Presiding Bishop. Additionally, despite the majority of congregants being women, very few of the women are at other top leadership positions of the MCK such as Church Chairpersons and Superintendent Ministers. It is therefore sensible to say that women have not enjoyed a fair share of the church leadership.

In spite of the steps societal transformation seems to be putting in place towards women empowerment, it seems that women involvement in the MCK may not be based on the need for equality but for the church's own benefit to fill up the gap.

1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There may be several limits to the scope of this study such as:

- The focus point of the research was on gender and therefore questions regarding race or marital status were not asked.
- The researcher did not seek the views of male pastors and church leaders as the research sought to understand the experience of female leaders alone.
- Former female pastors and leaders who may have left the Methodist Church in Kenya for one reason or another were not interviewed as only the experience of those inside the church was sought.
- Since this was not a comparative study, interviews were not contrasted with the views of female leaders in other denominations. However, there may be references to their experiences from documents and books that were used in this research.

The research predominantly focuses on women in active pastoral ministry and lay leadership of the church, as well as theological students of the Methodist Church in Kenya.

1.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a brief outline of what is to be done in this study in order to get to the bottom of the research question presented above. Women's voice in this paper will be used in reference to female lay leaders, pastors and ministerial students.

CHAPTER TWO: PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER AND CHRISTIANITY

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents viewpoints on gender and Christianity. The perspectives are captured under:

- i. Traditional view of a woman in the Kenyan context and gender beliefs noticeable in the MCK
- ii. Ecclesiology and position of women leaders in the MCK.
- iii. Gender politics and societal change: the status of women leaders
- iv. Gender disparity in Bible

2.1 Traditional view of a Woman in the Kenyan Context and Gender beliefs noticeable in the MCK

The African traditional society in general and in specific the Kenyan context is not as fair to women as many would want to think. Often women are used and handled like personal property of men, oppressed, subjugated and dishonored. In Kenya, habitually women have been treated as "second -class" as depicted in many African proverbs and sayings. In most of these proverbs, women are referred to as stoves, old cooking pots, large wooden stirring spoons, hoes, cows, merino sheep, fields and fires and even dogs usually with a derogatory meaning. "Does woman speak in public?" "Is the woman considered a person?" Women themselves appear to acknowledge this state of affairs. For instance, when there is an unidentified noise and someone asks, "*Who is there?*" A woman answers: "*It is nobody, just me!*" In some Kenyan cultures people think that it is not worth educating a girl because later she will get married and no longer belong to the family. In other groups after husband's death, the woman is forced to marry one of his brothers to get children in the name of the former husband (Luo community in Kenya for example). Again some women are forced to get married with men against their will only because they can pay a big dowry. In most parts of Kenya, women are still property of men who father them or marry them. In some societies, it is the uncle who holds sway

over a woman's life. It makes little difference and any talk of women's liberation is met with cynicism, hostility or ridicule. In the Kenyan society, the traditional role of woman seems to be largely passive. This problem is exposed by Oduyoye, M (1990) in her book, *“Women Tradition and the Church in Africa”* when she writes:

“I did study some proverbs (attempting) to demonstrate that women fall victim of linguistic imagery that socializes them to accept “their place” in society and to view with caution any call for more space”

The African theologian Oduyoye observes that in the traditional communities where gender socialization is the norm, the strategy has distorted the quality of human relations and it continues to deny the equivalence between women and men or to accept female and male as equivalent expressions of human being. Oduyoye’s study leads her to wrap up that making chauvinism is a problem in Africa. Women in general have been made to believe that being born a female means to be born inherently inferior. Most of the African women regard themselves as just mothers, caretakers, cheap laborers in the field and factories. Owing to women's low self esteem they under rate themselves and leave leadership role to men. The traditional way is that women in Kenya do most of the work in the church and in the society in general and men hold most of the leadership.

Presumably out of ignorance, a lot of twaddle has been written concerning the status of women in the African church and society. Women’s role has been reduced to children bearers and little else and at worst to domestic workers. It is sad to note that even in today’s world; women are prevented from occupying certain positions in the church because of their sex. The position of women in today’s African society and religious communities is usually prearranged by what is estimated to be valuable to the wellbeing of the whole community of women and men (Oduyoye, 2002). Oduyoye notes that although the African culture unlike its Christian counterpart allows women to be in charge of shrines and cultic centres, it moreover discernible that there are more women in secondary roles of mediums and cultic dancers, than there are women serving as high priestesses of shrines or as healers. She observes that there are more women serving as clients to divinities of cults (Oduyoye, 2000, p. 79). Such cultural/traditional notions of

women's "religious responsibility" are noticeable in the MCK. Women, in spite of their equal or inspiring potentials and spiritual gifts are made to play second fiddle to men.

It is observable that the role of women leaders in the MCK has improved owing to the social change in the society. Now MCK women leaders and especially women ministers are assuming roles such as chaplaincy, congregational leadership, administration and even management of schools.

However, the concept of gender beliefs in the Africa Traditional Religion (ATR) continues to thrive in the MCK despite the societal transformation. Gender refers to the characteristics and roles that are attributed by the society to men and women (Kibera & Kinokoti, (2007) whereas gender ideology is unverifiable sets of beliefs about women and men (Wachege, 1992). As noted by Mbiyu (2011), gender ideologies are stamped in the lives of people right from birth through the process of socialization and affects individual's inspirations since they define the social space for an individual psychologically and socially. Hence, an evaluation of gender beliefs is important for this study so as to ascertain roles that were perceived right for women in the ATR and how this may have affected the positioning of women in the leadership of MCK.

2.2 Ecclesiology and position of women leaders in the MCK

In this section, I will briefly present how the MCK acts, its structures, confessions and involvement of women in the church programmes.

According to MCK (2017), the Methodist Church in Kenya claims and cherishes its place in the Holy Catholic Church which is the body of Christ. It rejoices in the inheritance of the apostolic faith and loyally accepts the fundamental principles of the historic creeds and the Protestant Reformation. It ever remembers that in the providence of God, Methodism was raised up to spread scriptural holiness through the land by the proclamation of the evangelical faith and declares its unfaltering resolve to be true to its divinely appointed mission.

Gitonga, (2008) writes that the MCK holds on the doctrine of the evangelical faith, which Methodism has held from the beginning and still holds based upon the divine revelation recorded in the Holy Scriptures, with a conviction that ministers are stewards in the household of God and shepherds of His flock. As a result, Gitonga (2008) adds that the Methodist Church in Kenya embraces the doctrine of the Priesthood of all believers and accordingly believes that no priesthood belongs absolutely to a particular order or class of men [or women]. However in the exercise of its corporate life and worship, special qualifications for the discharge of special duties are required and thus the principle of representative selection is recognized, a sentiment echoed by MCK, (2017).

There is a universal conviction of the MCK that the office of Christian Ministry depends upon the call of God who bestows the gifts of the spirit, the grace and the fruit which indicate those whom he has chosen. All those that MCK recognizes as called of God are therefore received into its ministry, ordained by imposition of hands as an expression of the Church's recognition of the minister's personal call. Apart from the ordained ministers, the MCK recognizes lay preachers who are examined, tested and approved before being allowed to minister in the church. The church recognizes two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Methodist church is governed by two main documents namely the Standing Orders and the Deed of Church Order and Foundation (MCK, 2017).

As mentioned earlier (1.5.1), the MCK became autonomous from the British Methodist Church in 1967 but still uses the same leadership and organizational structure (Nthamburi, 1982). MCK is affiliated to the ecumenical bodies both nationally and internationally. At the national level, it is associated with the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) while internationally it is a member of both the World Methodist Council (WMC) and World Council of Churches (WCC).

The Methodist Church in Kenya endeavors to ensure that women and girls enjoy their full and equal rights based on today's dire need to promote and protect individual women and girls rights from abuse. More women have access to proper education, health care and have increased their participation in the decision-making body of the Church. Today there are many women ministries, evangelists and lay leaders (MCK, 2017).

McKenna writes that women's pastoral functions includes teaching, catechizing to other women and caring for the sick (McKenna, 1967:153). These pastoral works enumerated by McKenna that women performed are seen to be done today by women in the Methodist Church in Kenya. However, it is mumbled that through the ages the church has not been fair to women in its assigning of roles as societies would like to assume. Thus there are claims that the Methodist Church in Kenya cannot be absolved from the evils of inflicting lamentable injustices on women. It is articulated that this has been happening through its hierarchical structures which are predominantly and essentially male.

The MCK Women's Fellowship is a movement that embraces all women in the Methodist Church and other inter-denominational congregations affiliated to MCK. The purpose of MWF is to help women seek understanding and grow in Christ as they seek to participate in the mission of the Church. The mission of the MCK women is anchored on John 10:10, "*I came that all may have life and have it abundantly*". Gitonga (2008) writes *that* Methodist women have many gifts that if stirred would turn into a flame for God's services at home, Church and society. In every local Church, there is an organized group of Women Fellowship who are distinguished by the special uniform they wear. Each group is directly related to the Circuit, Synod and MCK Conference. The membership of women is open to any Methodist woman of faith who indicates her desire to belong to and participate in the Christian Fellowship and is a full communicant of MCK or an interdenominational congregation within a Methodist Circuit. An enrollment service is held each year to receive members of the Women Fellowship. During this service, each enrolled member is issued with a membership card and Women Fellowship badge to participate in a colorful lighting of candles procession where they are encouraged to be witnesses (MCK, 2017).

The thesis will at the end try to discuss the ecclesiology of the MCK with the findings in order to ascertain the extent as to which the MCK has lived true to its beliefs and convictions.

2.3 Gender politics and societal change: the status of women leaders

One of the main challenges experienced by women in the MCK is getting access to top decision making arrangements of the church such as the Presiding Bishop and the Conference Secretary and even as Bishops or even Superintendent Ministers. It is discovered that in the history of MCK, only two women recently have managed to rise to the positions of being synod bishops out of the twelve possible. The standing order of the MCK stipulates that any ordained pastor, man or woman may contest for any elective position of the church. In this, all things being equal and the voting ground being level ground, when it comes to voting the cultural mindset and gender politics in the MCK make it an easy run for the male contestants. Women ministers have aspired to occupy top leadership positions of the MCK but they have not been successful in doing so. This is because whenever women try their hand in the politics of the church, some factors ranging from religious, socio-cultural and political militate against them. Ndute (1998:99-104) writes that religious traditions continue to advance the debate of women suppression in the contemporary society and in some way, the researcher sees this subjugation in the MCK.

Ideologies of feminist theologians such as patriarchy have filtered through the Christian Church as recognized by Kiamba (2012). Infact, Gaba (1971) thinks that spiritual abilities of women are more manifest in ATR than in Christianity. It is with this observation that forces the researcher to comment that when women are nominated for some decision making positions in the MCK, some men make noise consequently confirming Morgan's dimension that an important aspect that confronts religion throughout history has been historical perpetuation of unjust, exclusivist practices that legitimize male superiority in the social domain (Morgan, 2004, p. 42). Thus, it is apparent that women have been discriminated on the basis of their sex with such discrimination purportedly being legitimized by use of scriptural texts to support the same as will be discussed in the section on Gender disparity in Bible. It is well notable that women who try to resist the institutionalized subordination in the MCK are in one form or another shut up or counter

resisted. Noticeably, women in the MCK are not given equal opportunities as their male colleagues due to the gender beliefs thriving despite the social change. Women are mostly left to play supplementary roles, most of them remaining second ministers.

Arguably, although nothing in the MCK's constitution that prohibits women from holding the highest authority of the church, almost all the top-level administrative positions in the church are presently held by men. There are lamentations that if a woman was to become the Presiding Bishop, then it would show a sign of a weakened church as was Israel when Deborah assumed leadership and restored order to the land. This agrees with the observation that women seeking leadership are considered out of their realm-even by fellow women. The tolerable kingdom from which a woman should lead as dictated by societal gender roles is being a caretaker to the society at large. This prompts Muga to write that women representation in the leadership of socio-political spheres in Kenya is characterized by women's struggle and historically, the Kenyan woman has and continues to engage in the process of leadership struggle to pursue her interest (Muga, 2009).

The status of women leaders in the MCK reflects the practicality of gender-based and gender-biased leadership roles. Assignment of leadership positions has been used in all spheres by the dominant group to suppress the inferior one and thus men have continued to suppress women. In the history of the growth of the church there have been such disparities (Oduyoye & Kanyoro, 1992:140). While some women are satisfied with and accept gendered roles in the church, others do not accept and feel oppressed by such restrictions. A majority of women feel bewildered by scripture passages that are interpreted to mean that women are to submit to the male authority (Keyser, 2011). In particular, women leaders feel that men should explore ways of including women into the top decision-making processes of the church. Overall, these women feel that considering how Jesus treated women, was the best way to understand how women are supposed to be treated and thus necessitates review of Gender disparities in Bible.

2.4 Gender disparity in Bible

The Methodist Church in Kenya's main authority is anchored in the Biblical Scriptures and thus this research aims at investigating how some of the Biblical scriptures may have been used to either defend or attack the position of women in the MCK.

Oduyoye inscribes that Biblical versions have been used to reinforce the traditional socio-cultural oppression of women in that the church in Africa continues to use the Hebrew Scriptures and some Pauline Epistles to reinforce the models of traditional religion and culture (Oduyoye, 2004). In many parts of Africa this assertion seems to be at play and thus in the book, "*Understanding Human Sexuality*," Izugbara (2004, p. 13) writes that the attribution of a mightily significant first position to men intervenes to silence women and to depress other oppositional tendencies. In religious narratives, man is depicted to be God's firstborn created to dominate the earth whereas the woman comes as a second thought; to provide comfort to the already domineering man. Despite the fact that citing the first account of creation (Gen 1:26-28), many scholars such as Mwaura (2005), Robinson (2011), Scott (2011) and Cowles (1993) reveal that humanity consist of both male and female made in the image of God with same equality and without an indication of what would be a female or male role, the second account of creation can be used to argue for subordination.

The second account of creation indicates that God made Eve out of Adam's body (rib) and as a helper. Accordingly, Bacchiocchi (1987) uses this observation to put forward a suggestion of both equality and submission – the woman is equal to man having been made of the same substance, yet the woman is subordinate to man since she was created second and from and for man. Genesis 3 offers the justification many in the contemporary society use to subjugate women. The narrative of how Adam and Eve are implicated in disobedience leaves Eve to be blamed the most for the sin. Thus, Cowles (1993) views that this has been understood to signify that women are the weaker sex and hence naturally more vulnerable to sin than men. Cowles further notes that the indication that the woman was the first to consume the forbidden fruit introducing sin to the world

serves as an upshot for the church to deny women leadership in reference to 1 Tim 2:14, *“Adam wasn’t deceived, but the woman being deceived ,has fallen into disobedience”*.

Notwithstanding all the opinions, the OT puts forward a model of women leadership. It discloses some women who were great leaders in the history of the Bible of which this study may not dwell much on considering their number but a few will be considered as a representation of the rest. For example, Deborah judged Israel (Judges 4). Deborah is a prominent one because despite the fact that she was a woman, she served both as a judge and a prophet in Israel’s patriarchal society (Bacchiocchi (1987). Correspondingly, 2 Chronicles 34:14-28 points to another woman in the prophetic ministry. It is said that King Josiah sent five national leaders to seek Huldah’s advice concerning the book of the law. Nevertheless, Scott (2011) is quick to neutralize these arguments. He observes that Huldah was a colleague of Jeremiah and Zephaniah and thus not feasible to argue that God can use a woman where he finds no man. The background of the OT generally subordinates the woman. It is observed that during the Old Testament times, there was a strong patriarchal emphasis and as a result the dominant view on the status of women was based on male inclined culture (Jegade, 2012). There was an entrenchment in the Jewish religious system of women being inferior to men, an observation that Kasomo (2010) writes that women were disqualified from crucial religious tasks of men and were treated as not fit to play a part in most of the religious feasts – moreover, women were not to study the Torah or participate in the sanctuary service. Robinson (2011) opines that religious restrictions and a depiction of women’s inferior status can be cited in the OT. For instance, the Book of Leviticus principally dialogue about the duties of priesthood – the Levites. It is noticeable that women were not allowed to become priests.

Turning on the New Testament, Bacchiocchi (1987) goes on to say that centuries after the close of the Old Testament canon, the subsidiary role of women toughened as compared to that of the OT times. He notes that in religious circles women were downgraded to positions of inferiority and were largely barred from public worship for they were considered as unfit to learn and unsuitable to teach. It is imperative to note that Jesus

lived and taught in a patriarchal culture with a determination to counteract this cultural norm (Waweru, 2011, Mwaura, 2005 and Cowles, 1993). Cowles observes that Jesus' life and ministry modeled a challenge to the established order with an intention to liberate women from the socio-cultural barriers. For instance, it is noted that Jesus taught women with Mary having been described as "sitting at the feet of Jesus" (Luke 10:39). "To sit at the feet of Jesus," as described by Scott, (2011) means that she was a disciple which can be compare to Paul sitting at the feet of Gamaliel in Acts 22:3 which signifies that Paul was Gamaliel's disciple.

Martha's grumble that Mary was not appropriately fulfilling her household role in the kitchen is very pertinent for this study in that women are often relegated to comparable household tasks. It is quite important to note Jesus' affirmation to women's right about their role in God's service when he says, "*Mary has chosen the good part which shall not be taken away from her*" (Luke 10:42). In other words, Jesus shaped up a new standard breaking the repression of women socio-culturally (Cowles, 1993). In a similar manner, women in Matthew 28:7 are recognized as main eyewitnesses of Jesus' final events of his ministry. It is Mary Magdalene and the other Mary who the Angel gives the message about the resurrection of Christ. This is of immense implication for the reason that in the contemporary culture of that time, a woman's testimony was not to be trusted (Scott, 2011). Nonetheless as noted by Scott, Jesus entrusts the women as those who will witness and testify to those events. Thus in making women the primary witnesses of resurrection, Jesus redeems the traditional view of women undependability giving credence to Witherington's (1998) argument that by women witnessing the resurrection of Jesus, they are given prominence by Jesus not as representatives of the disciples but as true disciples able of receiving special revelations about Jesus.

During the Day of Pentecost, Jesus shared His spirit indiscriminately without gender bias. It is recorded in Acts 2:1-4 that there were women in the Upper Room together with the disciples when the Holy Spirit was poured out and all began to speak in tongues. As observed by Scott (2011), this is to signify of liberation from barriers of age, gender and

social class. This concept of gender equality exemplified by Christ is maintained by Apostle Paul. For instance in Galatians 3:28, Paul establishes the equality of men and women in Christ when he writes, *“There is no longer a Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ”*. Paul is seen to be at work with several women and as well as in recognition of their service as fellow coworkers such as as depicted when he greets Prisca and Aquila as his fellow worker in Christ (1 Cor 16:19f).

Conversely, there are some biblical texts attributed to Paul that seem to contradict the prospect of women leadership though some biblical scholars argue that such texts were not written by Paul. Such a text is to be found in 1 Cor 16:34-35 which requires women to be silent during church meetings considering it improper for them to speak but instead be submissive. 1 Tim 2:11-15 also requires women to learn quietly and submissively not letting women teach men or have authority over them. Correspondingly, Eph 5:21-25 calls upon women to submit to their husbands being the heads of their families. However, authors such as Cowles (1993) and Prior (1985) argue that of a hermeneutical principle that indicates that Paul could have been dealing with a contextual and historical condition to handle a local crisis and thus such biblical texts should not be used to imply that women should be silenced in the church.

The thesis will not dwell on biblical disparities on gender, but it is crucial to note that the abovementioned views will enlighten this study with the idea of how Christ transformed the oppressive status in mind. Jesus gave space for women to learn and as well equipped them with His Spirit for service. Paul as well recognized women leadership in the church but also at the same time uttered statements that could be considered as a barrier to women leadership in the church.

2.5 Summary

I will combine the perspectives on gender and Christianity discussed above with the theoretical framework to inform the discussions chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The theoretical framework to be utilized in this thesis will be captured under gender and empowerment, patriarchy and power theories.

3.2 Gender and empowerment theory.

Societal transformation, industrial revolution and scientific development have pushed women into new roles consequently giving a fresh view of the part that women could play in the work of the church and society. As the mission of the Methodist Church in Kenya affirms, the church is not only to preach the good news but also to help people interpret the gospel in the context of their life situations. It is without doubt evident that the new roles that women take part in in the society affect church work.

Empowerment is defined by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF¹) as “*the process by which the marginalized people assume roles as agents of their own lives and in society*” (LWF, 2009:94). Gender on the other side as defined by the oxford online dictionary² refers to the “*state of being male or female (typically used in reference to socio-cultural differences rather than biological ones)*”. This simply put means that gender as understood in this research refers to the way people organize their lives, responsibilities and roles as males and females.

The researcher seeks to address the theoretical and practical tools of gender and empowerment in the MCK. By doing so, I will seek to analyze how empowerment boosts the natural gifts and dignity of women (Ham, 2014) in the pastoral ministry and leadership of the Methodist Church in Kenya. In addition, I will explore aspects on how positions of influence are shared within the Methodist Church in Kenya and the mutuality

¹ LWF – Lutheran World Federation

² <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/gender>

between women and their male counterparts. Ham writes that empowerment lifts the natural gifts and dignity of human beings taking into place mutuality, in partnership, and in spirit of power sharing. Empowerment points to the process of reaching out to “the other” with love of the triune God affirming the power-service in Christ’s way so as to seek transformative justice as part of God’s mission. He continues to write that empowerment goes back to the Biblical notion of *imago dei* (Gen 1:26) where God says, “Let’s make humankind in our own image, according to our likeness...” Thus, it serves as an implication that every human being is created in the image of God with an empowerment with abilities and gifts to do God’s will (Ham, 2014:110).

Wanda, (1997:49) writes that women are expected to act according to certain norms defined earlier by another culture in another time. The fact that the Bible serves as the foundation of the MCK’s standing orders and traditions, it has been used to keep women bound to the subordinate power and thus serves as the basis of the discussion of the theory of gender and empowerment. This theory of gender and empowerment demands for an acknowledgement of women in leadership and rethinking of the ideology of making men more powerful than women. In view of this, there is a need to equally share power within the both genders as understood by John Collins’ discussion on the paradigm of new authority (Nordstokke, 2011, p.47). The question here remains to what extent has the Methodist Church in Kenya broken from the traditional servility and silent service giving dignity and liberation to the women in church leadership? This is in support to the notion that everyone is made in the likeness of God with equivalent abilities and responsibility. The Holy Spirit empowers all; male and female and that since Jesus valued all human beings, everyone should be included in his ministry equally, irrespective of gender, race, and status among others. This is in support of the model that lifts spirituality and founded on the allegiance of God of life that empowers to defeat the unjust powers and to transform the world towards the values of God’s kingdom (Ham, 2014:119).

The theory thus calls for equal justice, inclusiveness and participation of men and women in church leadership as demonstrated by *imago Dei* (image of God) in all persons. Gender

and empowerment theory will thus very much resonate around this work borrowing from Haugen's (2014) argument that *diakonia* (service) should be non-discriminatory; based on the principle that all human beings irrespective of their abilities and conduct have same dignity and in that diakonia should direct particular attention to those requiring to achieve substantive equality. Therefore one may agree with Msangaambe (2011) that empowerment is a process and not an event, it concerns people and not objects. Empowerment has a sense of emancipation from some mental and physical captivity and does not benefit an individual but often initiates a corporate achievement. Empowerment brings about a permanent change that opens a new world view for individuals and organizations. Thus as Msangaambe puts it, the MCK has a practical mission ecclesiology, and the intended outcome of any church's activities in the society should be to bring transformation to all humanities in the society to which the church exist (Msangaambe, 2011:161).

As a consequence, empowerment should focus more on reclaiming than reacting. It is adding to an already existing power. Therefore, the marginalized people should be empowered to set their own spaces to develop socially, spiritually and even economically. It is always good to remember that empowerment is a theological exercise with God himself at the centre stage of calling workers in the field, gifting and empowering them for his mission (*missio dei*) despite their gender differences. This is what Nordstokke calls transformation – a socio-economic reality that calls for an urgent need for change in order to break out of situations of injustice, exclusion and increasing gaps of inequality (Nordstokke, 2011:116). As enumerated by Phiri & Kaunda, (2016:199), this master thesis sought to unmask historical injustices towards women which have been used as an ecclesiastical strategy for their oppression, exploitation and exclusion.

3.3 Theory of Patriarchy

This research will check the extent of patriarchy system within the Methodist Church in Kenya by analyzing the kind of chauvinism suffered by women leaders in course of their

work and how it feels to work in a milieu of invariable, subtle intolerance. Thus this part aims at understanding patriarchy and its implications for women in church leadership.

As argued by (Oduyoye, 1986), feminism has become the method of writing for the assertion that women's experience should become an essential element of what goes into the definition of being human. Oduyoye advances that feminism is not for the female but as a part of the whole movement geared toward liberating the human community from deep-rooted mind-sets and arrangements that can only function if dichotomies and hierarchies are upheld. She asserts that both men and women should be accorded an equal chance to collaborate as partners so as to liberate the human community from entrenched attitudinal configurations (Oduyoye, 1986, p. 121). For instance within the African socio-cultural context, patriarchal systems are men centered. Patriarchal system is highly esteemed in a majority of African societies with the perception that women are to be seen not to be heard. There is much suppression and domination of women by men who are supported by the cultures and religions. Most of times, roles assigned to women are very much connected to cultural, gender and historical traditions that attempt to position women in the household domain as home makers and nurturers of the family including husband and children (Kumbi, 2007, p. 113).

It is argued that European colonial governors, educators and missionaries were not accustomed to women's political or socio-economic leadership in their countries when they spread Christianity and thus overlooked women leaders in traditional institutions in Africa (Robert, 2002:212). Robert adds that women's economic roles were stripped from them and were increasingly restricted to the home and sooner than later the delicate balance of sex roles upsurge due to the colonialist's differential treatment of women and men. The suggestion that Christianity can empower women seems questionable to many Western feminists with some concluding that Christianity is irredeemably patriarchal. Isichei for instance argues that feminists who remain Christians have tended to stress the silencing, marginalization and oppression of women in earlier and contemporary churches. He affirms that Christianity seems to reinforce traditional patriarchal values.

He however notes that women in Africa experienced Christianity as empowering giving them a place on which to stand and from which they could bypass and challenge male-dominated sacred worlds. Nevertheless he says, the truth is always complex and sometimes Christianity paved way to new forms of marginalization (Isichei, 1993:209). This argumentation prompts Robert to assert that a pulse of freedom flows from the gospel: women and men are equally made in the image of God, equally objects to God's grace, and equally empowered by the Holy Spirit. His arguments are that once this liberating word is let loose, it cannot be completely shoved back in the box (Robert, 2002:221).

E. Martey divulges that restriction of women's role to basically home amounts to injustice and restriction against women in religion and society (Martey, 1998, p.38). Thus, this socio-cultural position allotted to women within the African traditional communities is replicated on how the MCK assign roles to women. This reiterates how the socio-cultural opinion on women shapes the debate on the election of women leaders in the Methodist Church in Kenya. Adeoti observes that in many societies be it in Africa or elsewhere, a woman is perceived as a burden bearer with no rights whatsoever to equality with man. Worse even, as an absurd being incapable of reasoning thus, she is to be seen and not to be heard. She argues that the ancient world was predominantly a man's world (Adeoti, 1998, p.107). Religion and religious traditions comprise of a multifaceted set of social elements such as symbols, rituals, myths and stories, concepts and claims which to some societies give the ultimate meaning to life and connects their religious adherence to a transcendent (Runzo & Martin, 2001:19). Nonetheless, such traditions discriminate against certain groups among their believers. Ruether observes that in Christianity, the most discriminated group has been women due to the influence of the patriarchal systems in the church (Ruether, 1983:94).

Patriarchal Christianity subjugated the Christian church in classical orthodoxy. A patriarchal organization absolutely denies women's participation in the image of God because women are deemed to be bearers of sin and thus less-spiritual. Ruether points at

Augustine as the classical source of patriarchy noting that he held the view that though a woman can attain salvation; she still remains inferior being prone to sin. Augustine of Hippo indicates that a woman is only secondary in the image of God whereas the man normatively possesses the image of God. In an identical approach, Aquinas construct of gender seems to follow the Augustinian tradition to justify the inferiority of women indicating that a woman is inferior in every way including a weak body, less capability of reasoning and morally inferior (Ruether, 1983:94-96).

It is with no doubt that patriarchy dominates many of the cultures, with theology being no exception where God's voice is the "voice of a man". In the theological circles, "God the Father" is perceived to be the 'great patriarch in heaven' ruling over humans on earth (Ackermann et al, 1991:96). In reference to Robert (2012), missionaries have a contribution to the inferiority of women in the church since to many African societies, the traditional teachings of the missionary initiated churches is that women's role lies in the domestic and not in the public domain (Njoroge, 2000:58). It is observed that women who converted to Christianity were taught to make tea, garden, clean and nurse children of the whites. This notion seems to have been expanded to the church with women being delegated the role of church cleaning, arranging of flowers among other care roles. (Getui & Obeng, 2000:110-111). This explains the trend as to why the Church in Africa is highly patriarchal as men continue to use the same missionary strategy to take control over women in the church.

3.4 Power Theory

This thesis will evaluate the models of power within MCK in reference to Mosedale's (2003), 'non-zero model of power' with an aim of checking how women empowerment has been perceived in the church and also make some suggestions as to how adoption of such models may be useful.

Apparently, if we want to see people empowered, then it means that they are presently disempowered. They are underprivileged by the way power relations currently inform their choices, opportunities and welfare Mosedale writes that women empowerment has

become a recurrently mentioned development goal. She adds that despite the fact that there is a lot of literature discussing how women empowerment has been or might be evaluated; there still stands major difficulties in doing so (Mosedale, 2003). Mosedale highlights four aspects that are commonly acknowledged in most of the literature on women empowerment. Firstly, she says that for one to be empowered then they must have previously been disempowered and thus it is appropriate to speak of women empowerment for instance because as a group, they are disempowered compared with men. Secondly, Mosedale says that empowerment cannot be conferred by an intermediary but rather, those disempowered must claim it. For that reason she says, development agencies cannot empower women but mainly what they can do is to facilitate women to empower themselves by creating conditions favorable to their empowerment. Thirdly, empowerment entails people making decisions on matters that are central to their lives and being able to accomplish them. Finally, empowerment is a process and not an end product in that one cannot say to have become empowered in some absolute sense (Mosedale, 2003).

On issues of women empowerment, the common denominator is that women are restrained by the norms, beliefs, customs and values through which societies differentiate women and men (Kabeer, 1999), which may reveal itself through restrictions on women's mobility and male dominated decision fora among others. Hence, Mosedale appends that the manner in which power relations between sexes are construed and maintained must be analysed in order to evaluate the empowerment of women as a group. She says that gender relations vary geographically and over time and so they always have to be investigated in context (Mosedale, 2003). This research for that reason investigates gender relations in the context of the Methodist Church in Kenya.

Mosedale (2003) writes on what she calls 'non-zero models of power' – *power within*, *power to* and *power with* by arguing that one person's gain is not necessarily another's loss. *Power within*, for example refers to skills like self-esteem and self-confidence. Mosedale points out that a woman who is subjected to violent abuse whenever she puts across her opinion may start to hold back her views, ultimately making her believe that

she has no opinion of her own. Rowlands (1997) adds that internalization of such feelings of irrelevance is a well-recognized element of women's oppression and therefore transformational efforts should aspire to bring about changes at this level. The second level – *power to*, denotes generative or productive power which creates new possibilities and actions without dominance. This power raises the boundaries of what is attainable by one person (or group) without necessarily tightening the boundaries of what is achievable for another party (Rowlands, 1997). Lastly, is the *power with* which refers to a collective action with an acknowledgment that more can be accomplished by a group working mutually than by individuals single-handedly.

In this thesis therefore, I will seek to verify the interventions aimed at empowering women in the MCK by scrutinizing whether the church creates opportunities for women, recognize the strengths these women possess and strategies that the church has devised so as to achieve positive change.

3.5 Summary

In trying to give an answer to the question of how women pastors, female theology students and women church leaders experience their work for the Methodist Church in Kenya, the three theories together with perspectives on gender and Christianity will enlighten the discussion chapter of this thesis.

CHAPTER FOUR:

STUDY METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the procedures and methods used to collect data. It will encompass the study design and other tools utilized in implementing the research, location of the study, procedures of data analysis, coding, study validity and reliability.

4.1 Study Design

This is a narrative study and therefore the researcher involved qualitative study method combining multiple sources of data. The data collected has been reviewed making sense of it and then organized into themes that will cut across all the data sources (Creswell, 2014:185). The researcher asked thirty women to provide their stories, views, opinions and attitudes about their experiences in working with the Methodist Church in Kenya. Their stories will be retold in a narrative chronology (Riessman, 2008). At the end, the researcher will combine the views collected with his previous and prevailing *observations* in a collaborative manner (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to give the final outcome.

4.1.1 Interviews

Interviews can be defined as a way of bringing the multiple views of people, and a method of maintaining and generating conversations on issues. According to Bridget Somekh & Cathy Lewin, it is much more than just as a tool for it is an instrument that nails deeper into the structures that border the spheres of issues (Somekh & Lewin, 2005:43). In view of this point, a total of 20 individual and two focus groups interviews were carried out in this research.

Given the broad nature of the Church, the researcher using the stratified sampling method randomly selected the interviewees from five major synods namely Nairobi, Nkubu, Kaaga, Miathene and Nyambene; and female ministerial students from the Kenya Methodist University and St. Paul's University.

Individual Interviews

This was the main data collection tool in this study. A minimum of twenty five minutes to a maximum of 40 minutes was spent on every individual interview. Twenty individual interviews were conducted between December, 2016 and January, 2017 from women leaders encompassing Bishops, Superintendent Ministers, Circuit Ministers, Chaplains, and Lay leaders. I made phone calls and booked interviews with these respondents. The Distribution of the interviewees is shown below:

Role	No. of Interviewees
Bishops	2
Superintendent Ministers	6
Circuit Ministers	6
Chaplains	2
Lay leaders	4
Total	20

Semi-structured open-ended interview guide (Creswell, 2014:14) was developed to collect information from these interviewees.

The distribution of individual interviews per Synod was as follows:

Synod	Pastors	Lay Leaders	Total
Nairobi	2	1	3
Nkubu	3	1	4
Kaaga	4	-	4

Miathene	3	1	4
Nyambene	4	1	5
Total	16	4	20

Note: Pastors in the table comprise the Bishops, Superintendent Ministers, Circuit Ministers and Chaplains.

Focus Groups

With the help of theology student leaders, two focus group interviews (5 female ministerial students each) from the two institutions namely, the Kenya Methodist University and St. Paul’s University; that train MCK ministers were conducted to discern how these ministers to be perceived their role in pastoral ministry and church leadership, and how the current policies and structures in the Methodist Church in Kenya support or slow down their calling and gifts. The same interview guide used in individual interviews was adopted but with a caution from the researcher for the respondents not to depart from the subject.

4.1.2 Documents

As documents are valuable source of data in qualitative research, the Church’s Standing Orders and the Deed of the Church Order that outlines the rules, procedures and legislations were used to paint a picture of the church’s structural organization and governance. Annual Conference and Synod reports were also considered. As Creswell asserts about qualitative study, the researcher collected data by himself examining the said documents in addition to the observation and interviewing of the participants (Creswell, 2012:185). A book written by Nthamburi, Z.J. (1982), a former presiding bishop of the Methodist Church in Kenya was a very useful resource in this research in that it offered the epigrammatic history of the Methodist Church on Kenya since its foundation in 1862 by a group of missionaries who were sent by the United Methodist Free Churches of Britain until its autonomy in 1967 (Nthamburi 1982).

4.1.3 Observation

In addition to interviews and documents the researcher integrated his recent and current observations in a collaborative manner (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to give the final outcome. The past observations as a member and minister of the MCK will greatly contributed to this part. The researcher attended various worship services and women conventions, observing various activities lead by women. Some information that was not available through interviews and documents was collected in line with Patton's (1987) argument that observation gives a bigger understanding of the context. The researcher was therefore able to gather information as events occurred and access details that may have been taken for granted by informants.

4.2 Validity and Reliability of the Study

To acquire valid and reliable data, various methods of collecting and assembling data were applied in this research (Patton, 2001). These in turn helped the researcher control bias and establish valid propositions (Mathison, 1988). All the questions were understood by all the interviewees and there was no need to clarify terms. Challenges of accessing participants and convening focus groups were evident as discussed by Somekh & Lewin, (2005) due to the fears of some respondents about their privacy. However the focus group were quite useful for they provided detailed information valid for that specific time and place.

4.3 Coding

The transcribing was carefully done to ensure accuracy. Interviews were transcribed and compared for similarities, divergences and general patterns. The raw data was coded in order to turn up with meaningful information that was later processed thematically. The interviewees were anonymized as follows: BP – Bishops, SM – Superintendent Ministers, CM – Circuit Ministers, C – Chaplains, LL – Lay Leaders and MS1 – Ministerial Students from KeMU and MS2 – Ministerial Students from St. Paul's University.

4.4 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis was employed after the collection of the data. This was done through classification of information relevant to the research question and objectives. Thoughts and conceptions visible were coded and assigned to groupings and themes noticeable. Thereafter, the major themes noticeable from the interviews and observations were used to make a write-up in accordance with Punch (2005) who remarks that similar patterns of ideas should be classified under a particular theme. The researcher thereafter cross-checked the analyzed data to test out if the objectives of the study were achieved or not.

4.5 Ethical Consideration

Ethical issues were observed for the benefit of both the participants and the researcher. During interviews, the researcher explained to the interviewees what the study would be about and then sought their consent to participate. The respondents were informed that the information gathered would only be used for academic purposes. The researcher strived to anonymize the participants involved and was keen on this as it is usually an important prerequisite in research work (Bryman; 2012:137-138). No personal data either directly or indirectly identifiable will be recorded in this project hence the project was not subject to notification to the NSD.

4.6 Conclusion

To give the researcher firsthand experience with the participant (Creswell, 2014:191), the semi-structured interview guide had three main areas of attention corresponding to the research question. The first was concerned with motivations for becoming a pastor/lay leader. The succeeding was about experiences of these women leaders during their education and work for the MCK; and finally the kind of support gotten from the church and colleagues.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS/PRESENTATION OF THE WOMEN'S PLACE IN THE METHODIST CHURCH IN KENYA.

5.0 Introduction

This is the empirical chapter that thematically presents the findings from the collected data based on the interview questions. The presentation will be aligned into three main phases: Motivations for becoming a pastor/ lay leader, Experiences during education and training, and finally Support from Church and colleagues. Here, I will share findings from the individual interviews and focus group interviews and also from the observations.

5.1 Motivations for becoming a Pastor/Lay leader

Under this heading I will discuss the personal stories of women leaders, their reasons for joining ministry/church leadership and lastly mentorship/modeling.

5.1.1 What is your personal story as a leader/pastor with the Methodist Church in Kenya?

Most of the women leaders interviewed in expression of their personal journeys in the leadership of MCK were of the opinion that the role of women in the Methodist Church in Kenya is a very crucial. In arguing for this, most of them said that the roles of men and women in the church are more clearly stipulated than in the Secular World. The interviews indicated that women in leadership and pastoral ministry of the MCK have a high sense of calling to ministry. The majority of the women interviewed narrated that their personal stories have to do with God's will in their calling to pastoral ministry and church leadership. They considered themselves as having taken the 'less travelled road' but with an assurance that God's grace would be sufficient in wherever and whatever capacity He wills to take them to. To a number of them, it had taken them struggles to reach where they were while to others it was a smooth sailing.

In expressing her personal story one of the interviewees said that she was happy to have risen through ranks to becoming a Superintendent Minister amidst challenges of being

one of the few women ministers among many men ministers in the MCK. She expressed her optimism saying that despite the challenges, she was determined for higher positions in the leadership of the church. She said,

I am happy to have reached this far as woman minister in the MCK. I have seen myself rise from the lowly to this far. I am now one of the few Superintendent Ministers among many of our male counterparts and I know I am headed for greater positions in this church despite the numerous challenges.

In agreement with the assertions made above, another respondent said that the MCK has had an authoritarian controlling than one is likely to find in the ordinary life where women are taken for granted. She expressed how difficult it was for her growing in a rural African setup where many never believed in educating a girl child leave alone the thought of wanting to become a church minister. She applauded the structural governance of the MCK for having facilitated her growth in ministry regardless of the challenges she had to undergo when she expressed her interest for the ministry. In expressing her experience she had this to say:

Nothing gives me more joy than looking back and seeing what the MCK has made me to be. I grew in a rural village where education of a girl was unheard off. ...my father being a member of the East African Revival Fellowship had some enlightenment of the word. He took me to school and made me to be what I am today. However it is the structural governance of the MCK that has largely contributed to my being today. Their recognition of women in Church leadership made me love this church even more and I ended up becoming a minister. ...there have been challenges as a minister but today I am a Superintendent Minister.

Some respondents however opined that their experience in the leadership of the MCK was difficult mainly due to dominance of males at all levels of decision making and the inhabiting patriarchal structures dominating the society. Several respondents said that though the church structures offer a platform for all members, men and women equally to be elected in leadership positions, fewer women were willing to offer themselves for such. Nevertheless, those who have offered themselves have been mocked and even victimized at the end of the day. They noted that despite women having large numbers in the Church as compared to their male counterparts, it was quite unfortunate that since the Church's

autonomy only a few women have had headway to influential positions of the church. It was murmured that their experience in the MCK was that a woman's position end at the voting stage while male counterparts were making progress. One of the respondents lamented saying:

I am confused on how to tackle that question. Mine has been a painful story. Was it not for the calling, I would have quit long time ago. You are a minister and you know, women ministers in MCK are to be seen not to be heard. Only recently we managed to get two women Bishops... What does that tell you? We vote in meetings but I don't know what happens...

Concurring to the above lamentation, another respondent said that it was regrettable to note that many of the local churches were being led by men despite the huge number of women members in those churches. She said, "*We women leaders are very few and at times inconsequential*" (*lacking importance*). She added that few people seemed to take them seriously and whenever they (women leaders) offered a direction not so many people were willing to agree with them and so they were just leaders to fill up the positions but without the authority. She is quoted saying, "*We are leaders by positions but not by authority.*"

Another perception that came about was that clinching of leadership positions in the MCK was largely based on patronage and very few women were able to catch the attention of opinion makers in the church, and thus this lack of influence inevitably rendered their attempts to access power and authority an exercise in futility. One of the lay leaders had this to say:

It baffles me looking at the kind of patronage in the MCK. I have been a lay leader for some years now but reaching some top leadership in the church seems difficult. While it gives me an inspiration to know I am serving God, on the other hand I am a disturbed woman with no one to turn to. I would want to see women have more places in the MCK...

Some respondents felt that women in the MCK do comprise the large majority of active church members and are the sustaining force in almost every congregation and thus they felt that the church cannot afford to ignore their church participation. To most, their stories were that the church has endlessly supported and perpetuated the unjust social

institutions, customs and myths which the church itself should instead fight. They said that this upholding of unjust social systems had led to marginalization of women and thus made many of them to struggle so much to stand to be counted in the church and even in the society at large. These were some of the sentiments:

...I have invested my own intellectual resources, and whatever I could to build an image that supports women to speak on their own behalf. I have a great feeling that girls and women have been largely marginalized. It has been a big struggle to be here today and though we know what needs to be done, not many people in the church seem to embrace those capacities that women have and personally I feel that I am called to be able to offer that opportunity. Whatever it takes, I am willing to go places as a representative of the forces of the many girls and women that I really value and have seen have a huge capacity in whatever they do, but they haven't had a stepping stone to influence issues at a higher level due to some traditional entrenchments in the entire system

In conformity to the above opinion, another respondent said that the church should always endeavor to create one united society devoid of discrimination and division among its members. She alleged that such division of roles along gender lines had for long time continued to drag the church behind instead of moving forward. She had this to say:

In the church we are one. We cannot afford to divide ourselves along gender, race or even culture. It is not a matter of who knows who or who doesn't. Our differences should be our uniting force – the rich and the poor, male and female. My experience is that this has dragged us behind instead of moving us forward...

There were experiences that some women had taken long to rise through the leadership ranks and this did not go down very well with them. They felt that they had been unfairly treated considering the number of their male counterparts who were getting elevated to higher positions of leadership. One of the respondents said,

Since my ordination over five years ago, I have remained in the same position yet most of my male colleagues have continued to be elevated. It has been a discouraging walk but still encouraged to move on...

An additional respondent said that the church needed to accord every member equal treatment by allotting all the leadership positions on merit without looking at one's

gender given that MCK recognized and believed in the principle of the priesthood of all believers.

I would want to see my Church allot leadership positions not based on one's gender but merit. The Priesthood of all believers that we cherish as a church should be our guiding principle. Unfortunately this has not been the case.

These personal stories will be discussed in chapter five under personal issues and relationships so as to paint a clear picture of how these women leaders experience their work for the MCK.

5.1.2 Were you coerced to join ministry or did you join on your own volition?

From the interviews with all women, no one indicated to have been forced to join ministry of the MCK. Though some indicated that they were actually not sure whether they wanted to become pastors, others said theirs was a calling from God since their childhood. Some of the responses are as recorded below:

Mine is a calling from above. That is how I can describe it. No one coerced me into it because if I was, then I could not be here today now that I can decide for myself. (CM3)

At no given time did I want to become a pastor. I was an active participant in church activities and it was after attending a convention that I surrendered to God to do whatever He wished with me. It is after this encounter with God, that many people came telling me that I should become a pastor. I don't know whether that was coercion, but in the next one year I found myself in a theological institution. (CM 5)

I was previously a teacher in religion and an ardent Christian. I did theology as my second degree not sure whether I wanted to become a pastor but was doing so to widen my knowledge in religion. When I completed my theology degree, I find myself a little bit unsettled until I figured out that it must have been a call from God to serve in another capacity. That is how I became a pastor. (C1)

To others, their previous lay leadership abilities and experiences in church drew them into joining the ordained ministry. One of the students in the focus groups had this to say:

For some time I met myself leading out in church activities. I actually served as a lay leader from my youth to adulthood when I decided to join ministry. I served in various capacities as a lay leader and therefore felt I could serve well as a minister. That is why I am here today training for ministry... (SM2)

I grew being a youth leader and a Sunday school teacher. In my daily service, I felt an inner urge to serve better and that is how ended into ministry. I was not in any way coerced by anyone! (CM3)

The responses indicate that most of the women either received a calling from God or their previous work in the church persuaded them to join ministry.

5.1.3 Extra-Church Motivation

Apart from the calling from God and previous work for the church being a motivation for some women to join the ministry for the MCK, there are those who felt that the society needed transformation and the pulpit would offer such a platform to fight for their rights and those of their fellow women.

You know when you speak from the pulpit no one questions that authority. I thought the pulpit would offer me a platform to fight for my rights as well as those of other women out there! (SM4)

It is important to note that most of the women interviewed were not so much focused on their negative experiences in pastoral ministry and church leadership because to them, God had called them to cause transformation to the larger society and give the genuine picture of what it means to be a woman contrary to the prevailing cultural norms. They said that they were enjoying their day to day work knowing that God had bestowed upon them the real calling of being pastors and church leaders. One of the lay leaders said:

I am called to work as a church leader. In as much as am working for the people in the church, I know I am working for God guided by the principle that service to humanity, is service to God. At times it is tiring and no one seems to appreciate what we do but I choose to focus on what is good rather than the negatives. We've to let the world know that being a woman does not make one a lesser being.

Such motivations will form the basis upon which I will evaluate the extent to which women leaders in the MCK have managed to bring transformation in the society.

5.1.4 Is there a particular role model you emulated/admired so as to join the ministry? If Yes, why so?

The Oxford Dictionary defines a role model/mentor as an ‘experienced and trusted advisor’. Many of the women interviewed mentioned specific people who had served as their role models for them and to some extent influenced them to take up church leadership. Here are some extracts from the interviews about mentorship:

Yes. My mentor into ministry was my pastor when I was in Sunday school. She always had a way of including me in participation of church activities and challenged me to work for God. I felt wanted and appreciated and vowed to become a pastor to motivate others. (MS1)

How do you talk of mentors in a male chauvinistic society? It is about survival for the fittest. You have to fight through thick and thin to get what you want. Let’s say I want to become the Presiding Bishop, who would I look up to while we’ve never had a female Presiding Bishop? You must be joking! (C2)

My calling was not influenced by any role model. I have had a difficult moment and continue to trying to identify someone to look up to. (MS2)

I am a worried person. When you talk about mentorship, I get more concerned about these girls studying theology here and even more about those aspiring to join ministry but cultural and gender issues cannot allow them to. The environment out there is not for the woman to be a leader in the church. We will fight for it anyway! (MS1)

It is notable that while some women had specific mentors, others did not have and still have no one to look up to in their ministry for the church.

5.2 Experiences during education and while working

This section will present the stories and affirmations of female leaders in the MCK, their position in the pastoral ministry and church leadership of the MCK and their conception on African society being patriarchal.

5.2.1 Personal stories and affirmations of female pastors/ministerial students/lay leaders in the MCK

The interviews here revealed accusations that despite the fact that the modern day social order has opened up avenues for women to participate in any sphere of the society, the church continues to keep some roles as men's responsibilities completely locking out women from flexing their muscles upon such positions. Out of the interviews carried out, the women in ordained ministry expressed their desires of wanting to clinch some leadership positions. Their worry however based on current experiences is that they do not know how to go about it in order to win elections. All the 26 women leaders were asked to tell what positions they aspired to arrive at and their reactions are illustrated below:

Position	Number	Percentage
Presiding Bishop	6	23.08
Conference secretary	4	15.38
Bishop	7	26.92
Superintendent Minister	5	19.24
Others	4	15.38

The interviews made it clear that there is a need for the church leadership to be clearer and more outspoken in support and affirmation of women. Here are some of the sampled reactions from the women leaders:

For the years I have worked, the church seems not very positive neither negative to the calling of a woman. We are just there as female pastors. I am wondering when some of us will ever take those positions of authority! (SM4)

It is good you asked me about my affirmation into ministry. I will never forget my first Superintendent Minister telling me, '*Kamwali utibwuo ukumenya. Kiriiria nkwoonia ngui bura iritagwa*' (Young girl, there is nothing you know. Relax, and I will show how work is done). (CM3)

One of the lay leaders interviewed said that women at the local level of the church were doing well as lay leaders but much more needed to be done in pastoral ministry to have more women as pastors. She said, *“The local level of the church leadership is doing well and there are many of us in lay leadership of the church but something wanting is in the pastoral ministry as regards to women.”*

A number of the respondents said that they feel under-utilized, limited by their gender, under-appreciated and taken for granted. They said that although many of them had had incredibly well in the pastoral ministry and church leadership of MCK, hardly ever do they get the crown of recognition, acceptance and affirmation from the church leadership as their male counterparts do. They said that it was notable that the church supported women financially for their studies but as well it should entrust them with more positions in leadership. C2 said, *“I am happy that the church supported me financially in my education, encouragement and affirmation but we need to see more in the distribution of leadership positions.”*

BP2 stated that it was more important for the women in pastoral ministry and church leadership to put their energies forward and focus on their callings and not center on the negative. She said as much as their experiences in church work may not be a pleasing one, they had an obligation of setting a precedence of a better experience in ministry for those that would come after them. In her words she said:

Certainly being a woman in ministry has had it ups and downs but it is important to focus on what is positive rather than negative so as to set a good precedence for those behind us.

The students interviewed said that there was a lot of male intolerance of women theologians quoting the words of one of the students who said, *“Many wondered how I could study theology to become a pastor yet unmarried.”* Thus, I found out that being a woman minister and unmarried was a daunting task since being a single woman minister, you were considered sexually immoral and thus treated with a lot of skepticism. One of the ministers said,

Society looks at me being a single woman minister as loose in morals, yet the same is not said of single men ministers. My argument is that if a woman is sexually immoral, there must be a male counterpart in the same.

The respondent said that whenever she spoke about it, many of the males argued that it was wrong for a woman to reason (they called it arguing) the way she did as nobody would marry her since taking her for a wife would mean marrying a fellow man.

5.2.2 Position of women in the pastoral ministry and church leadership of the MCK on African society being patriarchal

Most of the women interviewed expressed that they had been born in traditional, male-dominated and some even polygamous families that held to common cultural convictions that depict men as superior to women. A respondent in one of the focus groups said that the African culture viewed women as inferior in many ways citing that there are many African sayings that refer to men as pillars, great bulls and buffaloes, heroes and lions whereas women are referred to as mongooses. Asked what that meant she said that mongooses belong not in the home but in the bush and thus people in the bush have no right over those at home.

Another woman in the same focus group said that there is an indication to a belief that a woman's destiny is determined by marriage and that a woman does not truly belong to her birth family but with that of her husband. She narrated that for instance if a woman grew to a marriageable age but dies unmarried, then burying her at her place of birth was believed that it would bring bad luck to the siblings and may be a curse to the whole community. The respondent thus said that the African culture in which she was born dictates that every girl must be married and once she is married, the husband is considered to be the protector and provider of the family and givers of children. I quoted her saying: *"Women are simply bearers of children and are to be housewives and help their husbands raise the children."* Another respondent in the same focus group in agreement with this observation said that even though today many women are educated and even act as bread winners to their families, they are still expected to perform the traditional duties at home. She says: *"The environment I grew in influenced me so much.*

I grew up believing the lie that men are superior to women and should have power over them.”

Another conception of the women interviewed was that the church in away upheld patriarchy by failing to address domestic violence. She said that the Bible teaches that marriage is ordained by God and valuable thus churches, MCK being one of them teach that no marriage should be annulled. As a result, even badly abused and battered women cannot walk away from their marriages. An interviewee expressed her grief that sex is considered a taboo in the African culture and thus many pastor shy off from addressing sexual abuse and thus by failing to do so, the church seems to uphold a patriarchal culture where women are violated and beaten even to death. She said that herself being a pastor, for many years she did not recognize the problems and injustice of such teachings. She said:

I remember before joining university for my bachelor’s degree, I was already and ordained priest with three years experience and had already complete a diploma in divinity. Yet, I must confess that despite my training and experience, I held to the belief that man’s supremacy over woman was natural and God-ordained. The idea of equality was foreign and unknown to me. But I must now admit that that is mistaken interpretation and thwarted theology. (SM5)

SM5 said that although her perception had changed and she had begun preaching on Biblical equality to confront patriarchy, some fellow ministers and church leaders argue that some of her teachings were heretical. She said that some had already branded her a ‘feminist’ even accusing her of preaching a gospel that could cause harm to families and marriages by creating supremacy battles between men and women. She however said that she was now pleased to note that MCK was making positive strides towards freeing women from injustice and promoting equality by the fact that it had managed to elect two female bishops to date.

One of the lay leaders interviewed expressed her happiness with the MCK’s attempt to deal with the patriarchal culture of the African society by electing female bishops. She said that the church was treading on the right path of gender equality. She said:

We see great potential in our church. Lately our church has installed two women Bishops. Those are influential positions in the MCK. (LL4)

LL4 also noted that more and more women were joining the ordained ministry as compare to the past years and more churches had lay leaders at the top helm of church leadership.

In her sentiments, BP1 said that the marginality of women in church leadership and their continued exclusion from top decision making organs was as an upshot of a history of the patriarchal state in Kenyan culture. She said that both the colonial and independent state in Kenya defined the role and place of women by very specific ideas of gender roles. She added that this idea split the society into the public and private realms which were gendered with the female meant to occupy the private domain, also known as domestic realm while their male counterparts occupied the public domain. She bewailed that it was unfortunate that the private sphere attributed to women was nothing but an arena for child bearing and rearing as well as a place where men who worked in the public domain would return to replenish their energies as they prepared for work the next day.

LL4 challenged fellow women in church leadership that in order to bring about transformation in the church, women leaders need to insist on being themselves. She charged that women leaders need not to imitate male leadership. She said, *“I believe God has given women many gifts that can transform the church if they are well utilized.”* She affirmed that women bring along with them the gift of caring, the gift of loving, and the gift of embracing among many others. She thus added, *“If we insist on being ourselves as women leaders, then transformation will come about in the churches which we work in.”*

The respondents also said that it was not an easy sailing for them as women in their pastoral work and they needed to put some extra effort in order to be successful in their work. One of them said:

Our church has been ordaining women ministers for quite a number of years now but just like in the secular world, I have to work twice as hard as men in order to be successful.

Although this master thesis found that women are the biggest victims of patriarchy, ironically it also found out that many times women themselves are the enforcers of patriarchal rules. It found out that from an early age, women are conditioned to internalize unconsciously the rules of the family with the idea that any failure to do so

may be harmful to the whole family. Thus, this fear leads to strict implementation of patriarchy and the cycle continues from generation to generation. Women blindly carry this burden in the name of maintaining dignity of the family. Some respondents noted that the society at large is to be blamed but the family, the basic unit of society, is mostly the starting point for practising these rules.

We rightly complain and criticize men but seldom think how and where these men learn these customs. A child grows up seeing how these rules are followed at home and thinks of male authority as the accepted norm.

Another respondent added that if we were to carefully analyze any household, we would find that it is mostly women-folk who try to enforce the patriarchal rules. She said:

Right from a young age, a girl is repeatedly reminded about her gender, prohibited from doing many things, which are seen as unsuitable for her gender. Her clothes, diet, chores and friends are scrutinized and commented upon by the family members. At times we manage to unintentionally convey messages that are discriminatory, without realizing the impact it has on the psyche of children, both girls and boys.

She added that many are times when women have been heard telling girls not to scream loudly, not to step out after sunset, not to answer back, learn to adjust, and speak softly whereas boys on the other hand are seldom reprimanded for the same things.

It is therefore prudent to indicate that this thesis found out that many families enforce strict rules for girls and women which are implemented religiously by the elders in the family and as a result the same is replicated in the churches where these individuals attend, MCK not being an exception. They are time and again reminded of their duties towards the men-folk and even a small drift is considered to be scandalous.

5.3 Support from Church and Colleagues

In this last sub-section of this chapter, the research aimed at finding out whether the Methodist Church in Kenya accords equal training opportunities to both female and male students aspiring to join the pastoral ministry of the Church; inquire on the distribution of positions in elective and/or appointed leadership posts of the Methodist Church in Kenya;

and lastly find out what impedes women from fully living out their potential and God-given gifts as pastors and church leaders in the MCK.

5.3.1 Training opportunities

Here the researcher began by seeking answers from the respondents to the question, *“Does the Methodist Church in Kenya accord equal training opportunities to both female and male students aspiring to join the pastoral ministry of the Church?”*

It was noted that in the MCK, all students aspiring to join the pastoral ministry have to undergo a process called ‘*candidating*’– a shorthand term for offering for the ordained ministry, a process by which one is required to undertake so as to test their calling for ministry. It begins in one’s local church before they are endorsed to go for interviews at the circuit level, then to the synod ministerial training committee and lastly to a selection committee that represents the church at the Conference level.

Although the respondents seemed to appreciate the fact that there were a number of female ministerial students in both the Kenya Methodist University and St. Paul’s University, their numbers as compared to the male students was found wanting attributable to a number of things.

The students in the focus groups lamented that some of them had to undergo the candidating process severally before they were finally admitted to join ministry. Some of them indicated that they had to change their candidating circuits and even synods so as to try their lack of being allowed to join ministry. One of the students was quoted saying: *“I candidated thrice without success but eventually made it the fourth time. But this time I had to be clever and change my points of candidating.”* She attributed her woes to the patriarchal culture of her elderly male church members who thought that it was improper for a woman, and for that matter a young one to join the ministry. She narrated of an ordeal how one of the elders in her church once rubbished her ambitions to join ministry by telling her:

“Eteera ugurwee riu bwitikaniirie na mukuru wokwu kethira nukweenda utwiika minister.” (Wait you be married then you will agree with you husband whether you should join ministry.)

Nevertheless, a number of respondents were optimistic that although the women clergy constitute a minority of the ordained clergy in the MCK, going by the current admissions in the training institutions and the number of the female candidates applying to join ministry was a good gesture that in a few years to come there could be sudden and dramatic increase in numbers of women in the pastoral ministry of the church. BP2 was happy saying that in the last few years her synod has seen quite a number of female candidates apply and get absorbed to the ministry. She attributed their motivation may be to the fact that there was a female bishop heading the synod and thus many of them were confident that they would get an easy sailing at the synod level during their candidating process.

The research found out that there were no special reservations for women candidates and all candidates were equally undertaken through the same rigorous vetting. A student in one of the focus group said that she was once asked by her Superintendent Minister to have sexual relations with him so as that she could easily get an endorsement from him to join the ministry. The student said that she refused to give in to the advances from the minister and sure enough when she went for the candidating process, she was dropped out at the circuit level.

The respondents said that there was a need for the church to adopt the “third gender rule” as enshrined in the Kenyan law, which requires that in every three opportunities available, one should go to the gender with less representation. In doing this, they said that the church would ensure that not more than two thirds of students joining ministry goes to the same sex. In this regard, I endeavored to know how the current distribution of ministerial students in each of the colleges that train ministers for the MCK looked like. In the Kenya Methodist University the number of male ministerial students was quite higher in contrast to their female colleagues as follows:

No. of Female Students	(%)	No. of Male Students	(%)	Total
5	20%	20	80%	25(100%)

At the St. Paul’s University, the number of MCK’s female ministerial students was two times higher as compared to their male counterparts as shown below:

No. of Female Students	(%)	No. of Male Students	(%)	Total
6	66.7%	3	33.3%	9 (100%)

5.3.2 Distribution of elective and/or appointed leadership posts in the MCK

The research leads the question. “How is the distribution of positions in elective and/or appointed leadership posts of the Methodist Church in Kenya?”

Going per the structure of the MCK, the most influential posts of the Church at the top most hierarchy (Conference) are those of the Presiding Bishop, The Conference Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer. The researcher inquired about the distribution of these positions since the autonomy of the church and the following was established:

Position	No. of Men since Autonomy	No. of Women since Autonomy
Presiding Bishop	6	0
Conference Secretary	7	0
Honorary Treasurer	7	1

The second powerful positions in the structure of the MCK is that of the Synod bishops and it was noted that currently out of the twelve elected Bishops, only two are women, and the only ones that the church has ever managed to have since its autonomy. The ministers interviewed also expressed their dissatisfaction on the distribution of Superintendent Ministers’ posts lamenting that women Superintendent Ministers were very few as compared to their male counterparts and thus it showed inequality on how those positions were distributed. One of the Ministers said:

Every time there are new postings, I am optimistic of getting promoted to the position of Superintendent Minister but it has never happened. Maybe

it is because I am a woman and an unmarried one for that matter. Many of my male counterparts who were my classmates have risen to those positions and beyond. I even performed better than most of them did.

5.3.3 Impediments of women ministers in the MCK

The researcher asked the question, “*What do you think impedes you as a woman from fully living out your potential and God-given gifts as a pastor and church leader in the Methodist Church in Kenya?*”

The first argument that came forth is the aspect of working in a male dominated kind of leadership structure. One of the respondents who had worked for more than twenty years in the MCK said:

When I graduated from college in 1990 and embarked on pastoral work, I discovered things that I was not prepared for. I witnessed a lot of judgment and stereotyping of women. I remember one day in a circuit meeting where male leaders were arguing on whether the church should ordain women, forgetting that I was just sited in the room with them (only a woman and a youth in their eyes). Some of them actually said that women are like children and should neither be included in the ordained ministry of the church nor even lead as elders in the church.

As a young woman minister then, the respondent said that she was horrified of the stigma and discrimination directed towards women. She said experiencing such kind of patriarchal reality in the leadership of the church contradicted her conviction and the gospel narratives that God calls both women and men in His prophetic mission. She added that if women were to survive the wave, then there should be bold and empowered women leaders in the church who will consistently challenge patriarchal ways of doing ministry.

Another response was that when some of the women chose to enter pastoral ministry, they never experienced enthusiastic backing from their local churches. One of the respondents said, “*I do remember that there was no excitement about my commitment to the ministry such as there is when men make that decision.*” An additional respondent said that she grew up in a conservative area where she was ignored and seldom did she even get preaching appointments. Thus, these women said that their lack of

encouragement from the beginning made them feel unwanted and as a result felt a little insecure being in the ministry.

There are those women who felt that their main impediment was to be attributed to the placement system of the church. Asked why, they said probably because the system was largely administered by male personnel, many of whom may not be considerate to the needs of women in ministry. Many of the married women particularly complained that they would at times be placed away from their families thus making them inefficient in their work. Others said that their husbands were not comfortable for them working away from them thus many times being a source of conflicts in their families. One woman said:

I remember my first posting was several miles away from my home area. I had to abandon my family and probably visit them every two weeks. This did not go down well with my husband and eventually became a big source of problems in my family. Every time I talked to my boss (the Presiding Bishop) he could not listen but he instead said that in ministry I should be ready to work anywhere I am sent to!

Some of the married ministers said that they encountered a lot of pull to be “both mother and pastor” and worse enough to those that were married to fellow pastors. They said that mostly their spouses were so much involved in with the family of God neglecting their own families. Thus, it was up to them as mother and the society expected that they make up for the loss by being both father and mother to their children, even though they themselves may feel neglected. These women said that it was quite difficult to balance on how to be a pastor without losing one’s personality. One of them said:

It is of great challenge of how to work as leader in the church as well as being a leader at home. Dealing with different kind of expectations and roles both at home and work becomes difficult.

As already discussed in subchapter 5.2.1, the single female pastors said that they experienced pressures not shared by their married colleagues. They expressed that they do not get ready-made support structure that may be found within a family unit and thus there is no one to care for their needs when the day’s work is over. They said that dating was another problem with one of them saying: *“No men are ready to date their pastor!”*

Believe you me, how many?” Some of the unmarried ministerial students in the focus groups actually said that at some points during their interviews to join ministry, they were advised that they should first get married because of the challenges single women face in the church ministry.

Social challenges also held back some of the women pastors who said that if for instance the lay male leaders accompanied them to visit Christians in their homes, then rumors and speculations would start that the pastor is moving around with men. Additionally, for married women pastors, more often their husbands would feel jealous to have their wives work with men in their absence.

Societal prejudices implying that people do not want women to be in the leadership positions were also evident due to pervasive cultures and traditions with the idea that when a woman is amidst men, then something is wrong and she is out of place. Thus it was said that in such instances where some people do not want women to be leaders, they would look for every means to frustrate those leaders so that at the end of the day they prove that women leaders cannot make it.

Many women also said that they experience the problem of being lonely in pastoral ministry and church leadership. They said that it was a challenge in getting good friends within and even outside the church. A student in the focus group said that since she declared her intention of joining pastoral ministry her friends changed and some even ran away from her. These women said that as a consequence of loneliness, there is a lot of burnout on their part and some even end up contemplating leaving ministry.

It was noted that in the majority of cases, many ordained women ministers are stationed in rural circuits where they cannot cope with challenges such as African traditional stereotypes against women in ordained ministry. The problem is worsened by a lack of solidarity between women themselves to fight against their exclusion and marginalization. More often than not, their own internal divisions make it easy for them to become victims of male-dominated societies. Many of the respondents expressed that having grown up in middle class families in rural areas, they have seen the way patriarchal rules were followed and enforced by the womenfolk themselves. They said that it was surprising to

note that many times they witnessed the men folk coming to their rescue more eagerly than the ladies; hence a number of respondents felt that fellow women posed a great impediment towards their work in the Church.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has presented the findings of this study by laying out the responses from the interviewees. In so doing the researcher drew his attention into identifying the voices of women that spoke about women empowerment and society transformation in the pastoral ministry and church leadership of the MCK. The findings involve the challenges faced by these women but also focus on perceptions, experiences, visions, achievements and lived experiences that have shaped their leadership perspectives and approaches.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss and interpret the data under the following subtopics: Patriarchy and women leadership in the MCK, gender and empowerment within MCK, gender disparity in the Bible and women leadership in the MCK, women's participation in the life and mission of MCK, Issues affecting Women leaders in the MCK and transformation for inclusiveness of women in the ministry.

6.2 Patriarchy and women leadership in the MCK

As suggested by the conceptual and theoretical framework consulted in this master thesis, the field study reveals that women in the MCK are positioned from a cultural and historical understanding of women positions in Kenya.

Oduyoye (1986) writes that almost every ethnic group in Africa is patriarchal in structure (institutions of male rule and privilege), with relatively very few exceptions. According to her, the subject of equality cannot be adequately spoken on in terms of the African culture. Oduyoye says that the African culture is stuffed up with gender inequality and unfairness because according to her, role differentiations in Africa are obvious and are not meant to be valued hierarchically (Oduyoye, 2002). This explains the underlying accusation that despite the society having opened up avenues for women to participate in any sphere of the society, the MCK continues to keep some roles as men's responsibilities. This conceivably confirms Oduyoye's (1986) claim that patriarchal system is highly esteemed in the African culture and religions with much suppression and domination of women by men. Evidently, the tendency of the MCK allocating top administrative positions to men can be accounted for in the light of the African culture that understands men as the heads of institutions (Mbiyu, 2011).

This master thesis found out that most of the Methodists were mainly patriarchal in their approach to church issues. Historically, patriarchy has manifested itself in the MCK. For instance it was found that majority of the women ministers in the MCK are stationed in rural areas under supervision of their male colleagues, majority of whom have no

sympathy with these women's pursuit for liberation. This can be revealed by the lamentations of one of the woman ministers who underwent difficult times under her male superintendent minister, '*Kamwali utibwuo ukumenya. Kiriiria nkwoonia ngui bura iritagwa*' (Young girl, there is nothing you know. Relax, and I will show how work is done). The conversation in African cultures portray women not only as subordinate to men but as servants of the interests of men (Masenya, 2012:205-216). This elucidates the finding on discrimination in the MCK where the interviewees revealed that women leaders in the MCK have been unjustly discriminated based on their sex and mostly do not succeed to occupy such positions when they apply for them.

The master thesis showed how common gender discrimination is and how a lot of members seem to have accepted this discrimination as normal within the MCK. Going as per the responses from the respondents, right from their young age, gender discrimination was practiced in various forms and in particular on how roles were assigned to women (Martey, 1998). The respondents said that such things may seem negligible but they have had a profound influence. For instance growing up in such an environment, one may fail to see the discrimination but rather it becomes part of cultural and gender norms which are to be followed and defended strictly with any deviation from these patriarchal rules being seen as a direct threat to the culture.

The research also found out that lack of interest among the women makes easier for the enforcers of patriarchy to thrive. It was noted that few women were willing to offer themselves for the elective positions in the MCK and thus the few who made their way are seen as the seal of approval by all. Thus, when some women try to raise their voice against such differences, they are silenced by quoting examples of other women, invariably pitting them against each other. While women who wordlessly follow the rules and work to implement them are celebrated by the otherwise appearing patriarchal system in the MCK, the questioning women are labeled, maligned and targeted not only by men but also by fellow women. The reaction eventually demoralizes the spirit of any woman who dares to reason and question patriarchy in the church, thus ultimately silencing the reasoning voices with no reforms.

The respondents were of the view that being in the ministry as a woman seemed like walking on a road with minimal or less celebration. They said that theirs was like a wander in the desert with few affirmations and at times being made to feel like second class citizens in the kingdom of God. In agreement with Oduyoye's (1986:121) indication that both men and women should be given equal chances to collaborate as partners in liberating the humanity from deep-rooted attitudinal configurations, the women in this study said that there was a need for the top leadership of the church to become more deliberate in affirming and encouraging women leaders in the church. Most of these women said that they felt under-utilized in their work for the MCK, limited by their gender and at times felt unappreciated.

Through this master thesis, I learnt from the responses that patriarchy in Christianity contradicts God's idea that He created male and female genders to complement each other for His glory and for the good of the world (Phiri & Kaunda, 2016). Thus, the women leaders in MCK argued that such complementarities must be dispensed when it comes to the life of the church. This statement is strengthened by one of the respondents who said that the church cannot afford to divide itself along gender lines but instead both genders ought to unite into one force for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

Having engaged with women who had suffered under the patriarchal system propagated in the church, they lamented that when the church structure is controlled by men, women most of the time find themselves with no recourse or power as many of the decisions in their lives are made by a series of men, many of whom are more interested in protecting their reputation of the ministry than the people in it. As a consequence most of the women interviewed said that their access to power and authority becomes an exercise in futility due to patronage and a series of "coverings" and "protections" with which most of them cannot reach. These women spoke of cultures in MCK that have continued to question women's ability to think rationally or make decisions without the indulgence of men. I found out that the women leaders in the MCK suffered from prejudice and were expected to find contentment in their role as helpers and homemakers. These women described this environment as instilling fear into them which in turn makes them to even

distrust their own instincts and desires thus making it hard to report or even acknowledge abuses they suffer in the hands of men in course of their duties. That is why the respondents said that the church was in a way upholding patriarchy by failing to address domestic violence.

In matters to do with support and placement, the women respondents said that when young men choose to enter ministry in the MCK, they usually experience enthusiastic backing but to the most of the women, there is no much glory or excitement about their commitment to ministry. Many of the respondents therefore said that they would like to see the placement of women promoted much more strongly by the church management.

6.3 Gender and empowerment within MCK

Empowerment in so far as theology is concerned refers to the fact that all human beings are like God with capacities and abilities regardless of the prevailing social situations (LWF, 2009). God is the author of dignity and empowerment; He empowered the disciple and leader in the bible times hence they were changed. Thus, this prompts Christians to believe in divine empowerment to deal with all life situations. For this reason, Christians believe that God's mission of empowerment is at work even today to liberate those that are oppressed by different life situations and as well give a voice to the voiceless. Nordstokke writes that empowerment enables everyone to be in charge of their life situations not only as individuals but also for others including their neighbors and society (Nordstokke, 2014:45).

Ham writes that empowerment is a process that encourages connection with others through God's love, God the father, the son and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's responsibility is to empower. Jesus empowered his disciples and those who believed in him. He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cure all infirmities. When the disciples received power they were filled with miracle working ability. They set free those who were incapacitated with diseases, the lame, the blind and demon possessed. Empowerment proclaims power services as Jesus did in order to bring restorative change in human life which is God's number one mission to mankind (Ham, 2014:110).

Based on the above discourse, I noted that most of the interviewees in this research revealed that truth about gender and empowerment is in a way concealed in the lens of patriarchy in the life of MCK. Most of the respondents said that the ministry of MCK is to a large extent informed by the cultural eyes mentioning that male church ministers have contributed greatly to the creation of unjust structures that destroy and harm females. One of the lay leaders said that even before European missionaries came to Kenya, traditional religious beliefs did not allow women to be priests and diviners for they were perceived to be unclean especially in menstruation. She said that although the church has brought much healing to some cultural perceptions, still the church continues to uphold patriarchy by misinterpreting the Bible. She lamented on a certain sermon that was once preached by a male minister in her church that still keeps haunting her and reminding her how evil and weaker women were. She said: *“Scripture has been distorted to establish male superiority. How does a male pastor stand in the pulpit and say that Eve was created from Adam as an afterthought?”* This to her, illustrated the woman as of weaker sex by saying that Eve was deceived by the snake for she was weak and because she was not an original creation having been created from Adam. She stated that this misrepresentation of the scripture has been used against them as women and they are always blamed of bringing humanity down and causing human suffering in the world and thus cannot be entrusted with top leadership.

At this point, it is important to refer back to the LWF’s definition of empowerment as the process by which the marginalized people assume roles as agents of their own life and in society (LWF, 2009). This research unearthed that female leaders within the MCK are a marginalized lot when it comes to top decision making organs of the church. At times the men folk cite Paul’s commands for women to submit to their husbands so as to silence women in the church and prove that inequality is God’s ideal. Power being central in any societal relationship (Rowlands, 1997), it is prudent that the MCK enhances empowerment of women by facilitating rise of more women to higher levels of decision-making in the church. By arming itself with this kind of awareness and commitment, MCK will not only go a long way in empowering women within its midst, but also

transform the oppressive structures in the society for all for the advancement of God's kingdom on earth where every being, woman and man will be recognized as having been created in the image of God (*imago dei*) with abilities and gifts to do God's will (Ham, 2014:110).

I would propose that the MCK borrows from what Mosedale (2003) calls a 'non-zero model of power' as discussed below:

'Power within': the women leaders in the MCK need to experience the power within them by cultivating self-esteem, self-confidence and self-assertiveness as their empowerment tools. Though these forms of recognition and assertiveness may be difficult to come by, this model needs to be exploited for the emancipation of women in the ministry of MCK. As Mosedale (2003) writes, without doing so, these oppressed and marginalized women may in the long run develop a syndrome where they will internalize the feelings of their worthlessness and thus succumb to the manipulation of the powerful. This power within is exemplified by one of the women respondents who was quoted saying that she was committed to doing whatever she could to build an image that supports women to speak on their own behalf. It is vital for the women to understand that since they comprise the majority of active members in the MCK, they form the sustaining force of the church and should do whatever is within their reach to ensure that they are heard and included in the church at every level.

'Power to': As Mosedale says, if a person is involved in studies, such a person increases his/her level of skills without diminishing the skills of others (Mosedale, 2003). The MCK is under every obligation to ensure that women in the MCK are given equal chances for training just as their male counterparts. The study revealed that currently the female ministerial students are half as many as compared to their male counterparts under training in the two institutions that teach the MCK ministers. Consequently, this 'power to' approach as argued out by Mosedale (2003), if MCK adopts this model, it will create new possibilities for the oppressed (in this case women) in such a way that their boundaries will be increased without the threat of domination to the boundaries of the oppressor (men).

‘Power with’: this model refers to collective action (Rowlands, 1997). Based on the John Collin’s paradigm of new authority, there is need for the MCK to share power within both genders (Nordstokke, 2011). This is to say that the leadership in the MCK must realize that all humans are created in the image of God and bestowed with God’s power to be co-creative agents of His purpose on earth (Ham, 2014). By understanding that, then MCK should give equal opportunities to empower all for common purpose. Whereas women in MCK have been accepted in both lay leadership and pastoral ministry, there is a need for them to be given enough ‘space’ where they can develop themselves, provided with role models to enhance their ability and creativity.

Role modeling is very important because most of the women interviewed opined that whether a woman feels welcomed into ministry or not relies on a number of factors one of them being role modeling. The respondents said that habitually, the members of the church have a tendency of placing the pastor on a pedestal thus many consider women weaker to assume such a position. In reference to this, it was made apparent that women leaders in the MCK have fewer role models/mentors. Additionally, it was also noted that many women leaders are less likely to get people they look up after because many churches continue to thrive under the teaching that women are subordinate to men. Thus some of them said that they had no role models to look up to and theirs was their own making without any kind of role modeling.

6.4 Gender disparity in the Bible and women leadership in the MCK

As noted earlier, there are biblical versions that have been used to strengthen the traditional socio-cultural reasons at the rear of women oppression in the African church (Oduyoye, 2004). Therefore, it is important that the church and in this case the MCK interprets the Bible correctly because, in many instances, people quote the Bible to justify their actions. Nevertheless, it is wise to note that the author of Genesis tells a story of creation that presents the first man and woman as true partners. Both man and woman are created in the image of God, and both are charged with tending to the earth God has made. Thus in line with the reasoning by Haugen (2014), it is important for the MCK to

propagate equal justice, inclusiveness and participation of men and women as demonstrated by the *imago dei* (image of God) in all persons.

In this study, it was discovered that in trying to subjugate women, patriarchs frequently argue that the suggestion of a woman being created as a man's "helper" in Genesis reflects her subordinate status. The women interviewed in this study said that it is within the context of judgment, "*your desire will be for your husband, but he will rule over you,*" (Gen 3:16) and not creation, that hierarchy and subjugation entered the church. Thus in interpreting the scriptures, where there was once mutuality, subjugation came about and where there was once harmony, power-struggle took place. It was made clear that although the church has brought much healing to some cultural perceptions, in a way the church carries with traces of patriarchy by misinterpreting the Bible. This is affirmed by one of the respondent's view that Scriptures have been distorted to establish male superiority over women in the MCK.

It was also bewailed that there is an indication that Eve was created from Adam as an afterthought which is often taken to illustrate that women are of a weaker sex; and also that Eve was deceived by the snake for she was weak and not an original creation having been created from Adam. Thus, the respondents in this study argued that such distortion of the scripture has been used in opposition to them as women and they are always held responsible for bringing humanity down and causing human suffering in the world. Hence, some people in the MCK use such indications to intimate that women cannot be entrusted with the top leadership of the church.

Another misrepresentation of the scripture to suppress women in the MCK is the Pauline commands for women to submit to their husbands and to be silent in the church, which often taken out of context to prove that inequality is God's own principle. Therefore, such falsification of the Bible was found out that may make the oppressed people and in this case women to easily assume that their plight is in one way or another designed by nature, God or history and thus there is nothing they can do about it. Also, notable in this study as Walter observes is that women outnumber men in society and also in the church which

is also true for the MCK, but still suffer prejudice under the hands of men (Walter, 1990:73).

It is important for those members of the MCK involved in subjugation of women to learn that Jesus had men and women followers who were His co-workers at the bottom of His ministry. Murphy (2013:57) contests that Jesus did not raise the question of gender but His message extended a loving acceptance of both women and men in a similar way with no regard to social standing, ethnicity or cultural background. The various gifts of believers as expounded by the Pauline teachings are neither gender-based nor gender-preferred. Just like Jesus, Apostle Paul demands unquestionable and total surrender. Love and compassion overpower those involved in the ministry to empower and transform structures of death in mission. Thus as argued by Murphy, women who experience agonizing negative responses from men or other women members, and those that are shamed need a 'big hug' from the leadership of the MCK and an earnest admission of guilt with an assurance that the church will not leave things as they are (Murphy, 2013:61).

Phiri & Kaunda (2016:199) calls for critical and authentic solidarity stating that all through history the Bible has been negatively used to promote oppression and the discrimination of women minorities. Thus they agitate that the Bible must be interpreted within the paradigm of the hermeneutics of life by reading and interpreting the scriptures not as an end in themselves, but as a means for promoting life in its fullness for all people including women, girls and sexual minorities. Therefore, as argued by Phiri & Kaunda, the MCK must acknowledge its responsibility of manifesting God's unconditional love, unrestricted acceptance and unreserved appreciation of the world as God's good creation. Consequently, the church cannot claim to be Jesus' community if its love for the other human being is founded on conditions for the love of Christ is unconditional.

6.5 Women's participation in the life and mission of MCK

The call of Jesus "to follow" has a fundamental objective for all to participate in His mission. This study found out that women in the MCK participate in God's mission despite the many challenges they face. It was established that women in the MCK appreciate the roles dedicated to them and that some of them were content and did not want change of roles in the church due to what was argued as effects of socialization in patriarchal backgrounds.

The study found out that women in the pastoral ministry and lay leadership of the MCK are appreciated and their charismatic gifts acknowledged. However, a notable fraction of women wished to join administrative positions of the church but notions such as patriarchy in the society and at times distortion in the interpretation of the Bible did not allow them. This notwithstanding, positions relegated to women in the MCK did not correspond with the Methodist gender ideology. While the MCK has an open room for every Christian believer regardless of their gender, age and/or social status to hold any position in the church, in this study it was found that women in the MCK were to a large extent left out of administrative leadership positions of the church. Many of the respondents felt that their role in the MCK was perceived as that of supporting men in leading the church which was argued to be oppressive as it denied women an opportunity for self-actualization.

Women in this study admitted that although they were leaders in their own capacities and at certain levels within the hierarchy of the church, their positions seemed as to only benefit men leaders because it is them who most of the time mobilized fellow women to support male leaders to take up certain top positions as opposed to one of their own rising up and taking the lead. The respondents indicated that women in the MCK were equally gifted as their male counterparts were but this did not translate to women's equality in matters of church leadership due to the patriarchy systems being propagated in the church.

This study observed that women played an important role in sustaining the church through financial contributions and other social support. However, this study can convincingly opine that roles assigned to women in pastoral and other leadership

positions of the MCK do not correspond to the support that these women offer and their large numbers in the church membership. Such minimal placement of women is oppressive and hinders their pursuit for self-actualization. Therefore, this study challenges that women in the MCK cannot actualize their talents and gifts if they are not given a platform to practice and execute thus conforming to Freire's (1970) assertion that any situation that hinders another from pursuit of self-actualization is oppressive in nature.

In tandem with (Haugen, 2014) who writes about the right of every individual to utilize their God-given capabilities, women participation in the pastoral ministry and church leadership of the MCK is important not only for the purposes of expressing their interests but also offers them a podium to make use of their talents. The study acknowledges that both men and women are gifted in a diversified way with different abilities (Nordstokke, 2011) that are important for the growth of the church. Consequently, recognizing that women are spiritually gifted is not enough but there should be an understanding that the Holy Spirit operates in an egalitarian manner as observed in the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Thus, the MCK must understand that the term "Body of Christ" points to an organ with multiple units that must work together (Eph. 4). When positioning women in the MCK this should serve as the guiding principle over and above Paul's pronouncement in Galatians 3:28 that rebuff cultural perceptions in regard to whom serves in the kingdom of God.

6.6 Issues affecting Women leaders in the MCK

Having discussed the issues of patriarchy and gender empowerment, this study revealed a number of factors that affect the work of women in pastoral ministry and church leadership of the MCK in their quest to serve the church. These issues will be classified under support and placement, personal issues and relationships as well as their advice to those aspiring to join MCK ministry.

6.6.1 Support and placement

Women in this study revealed that their role in the MCK even though full of unfathomable challenges was better set as compared to the secular world. Despite the challenges, most of the women were optimistic of their good ending. While many said

that their decision to join ministry attracted no or less excitement from their kins and the society at large, others said that they had an enthusiastic backing. Some women said that they encountered some considerable amount of resistance from the church backgrounds within which they grew and in particular those from rural backgrounds that were typically conservative in conformity to the African traditions that relegated the woman's position to the domestic realm and not in the public domain (Njoroge, 2000:58). They expressed that whenever a young man decided to go into ministry, they received a passionate backing but for them as women, they were perceived to be trespassing on a man's ground.

In sharing her personal story as a pastor with the Methodist Church in Kenya, one of the Superintendent Ministers in this study testified of very positive experiences in their work. She said, *"I am happy to have reached this far as a woman minister in the MCK... am now one of the few Superintendent Ministers among many of our male counterparts and I know I am headed for greater positions..."* This among other women said that they had proceeded through the standardized denominational channels from their candidating process all the way to their studies and subsequent inclusion into the MCK ministry. Many reported that in their placement process they had not encountered any problems which could be ascribed to the fact that they were women but instead they said that their gender had actually served as an advantage to them because some of the places they were interested in were desirous of appointing a woman in their staff.

However there are those women who experienced problems in their placement and most of them attributed their woes to the staffing office which was largely dominated by male personnel that were insensitive to the needs of women in ministry. Some said that their journey had been a survival for the fittest and that they had to fight through thick and thin to get what they wanted. Thus, these women said that they would love to see a situation where the placement of women is strongly promoted by the administrators devoid of the kind of patronage that was being currently witnessed. These women also said that being qualified did not automatically guarantee them promotion in the ministry. One of these

women reported that since her ordination, she had continued to remain stagnated in one position whereas her male competitors were getting promoted.

6.6.2 Personal issues and Relationships

Women in this study pointed out that woman ministers not only struggle with interpersonal relationships but also with their inner feelings. These women are susceptible to doubts, fears and personal problems. They said that a certain kind of isolation accompanies their profession. One of the ministerial students in the study narrated how she experienced challenges of getting good friends within and even outside the church. She said that her intention to join pastoral ministry made many of her friends abscond her and as a result she experienced a lot of loneliness. Such isolation at times gives them a lot of burnout and some women leaders end up grappling with feelings of self doubt which at times make some of them think of exiting from ministry.

Some women said that they were struggling with rejection mostly those stationed in rural circuits which were tied to the African traditions of stereotyping women in ministry. These women said that their problems are coupled with lack of team spirit among the women themselves so as to fight against their exclusion and marginalization. Thus, their lack of a united force made them become an easy target of manipulation in the male-dominated societies. Some of them said that having grown up in middle class families in rural areas, they had witnessed the way patriarchal regulations were followed and imposed by the womenfolk themselves.

Another aspect of relationships that was found to be facing the women leaders in the MCK is dealing with their male colleagues who seemed to be programmed to relate to women with sexual flirtation. The women in this study felt disappointed that such habits were carried over in the church from time to time. Some mentioned cases where their seniors had asked for sexual relations with them and when they refused they were faced with difficulties in course of their work and even some were dropped from ministry for refusing to heed to such grievances.

This master thesis revealed that opposition is sometimes encountered by these women leaders from lay people who are very rigid in their attitudes and expectations. Such individuals find it difficult to accept a woman as an authority figure and more surprised to find a minister who is a woman. One of the respondents narrated how she witnessed a lot of judgment and stereotyping from male leaders who even in her presence could afford to discuss how the church should not ordain women or even be allowed to be leaders in the church for the simple reason that women are like children in their thinking.

Another issue observed in this study is the fact that women ministers and leaders have to also deal with issues of marriage and motherhood. Some admitted that their husbands had difficulties with their pastoral roles which put them as pastors at too much “limelight” and at times very demanding thus leaving them with less time with their families. Being a mother and a pastor too was such a haul because as a mother, the society expected them to be available every time for the husband and children. On the other hand, the single female leaders and pastors expressed how the society looked down upon them as lose in morals and unfit to become pastors as unmarried individuals. The unmarried also struggled with lack of support that could be available from the family institution. Also, these women said that not many men were willing to court them for marriage, and that some of them were even advised that they should first get married before joining ministry since once they joined ministry, no man could be willing to marry them.

6.6.3 Advice

Women in this study were very enthusiastic in urging that more women pursue church-related professions. They said that all that was required of the women aspiring to join the MCK ministry was patience so as to be able to overcome the bias and prejudices evident. Some of the women leaders narrated how they were investing their intellects and resources so as to befit those women that could come after them in the MCK ministry. Thus, these women advised those aspiring to join ministry to keep their focus on their calling and not concentrate on the negative. Mostly, they recommended that these women should find their place at every cost, work out their full potentials as individuals by being

fully themselves and without complying with “traditional” role of a woman. The respondents also advised that the top leadership of the church should encourage women and make them feel welcomed and not as if they were getting different treatment from their male colleagues. They said that potential candidates for ministry should not be held back by the fact that they are women and that they should not be made to experience the feeling of loneliness as some of them were. They said that all the women needed so as to live their full potentials in the MCK ministry was acceptance, affirmation and mentoring.

6.7 Transformation as a social change

This master thesis focused on the ecclesiological need for the inclusion of women in the Methodist Church in Kenya pastoral ministry and church leadership. It found out that the training of women ministers as well as their inclusion into pastoral and lay leadership of the church is as important as that of their male counterparts because without women being incorporated into the church’s leadership, the MCK would not be complete given that women consists the largest part of the church.

Thus, this study found out the Methodist Church in Kenya has made tremendous efforts to ensure that women enjoy their full and equal rights following a crying need in today’s society to promote and protect individual women and girls’ rights from abuse. It is noteworthy that in the present-day MCK, more women have access to proper education, health care and have increased their participation in the decision-making body of the Church. This is evidenced by the fact that as compared to the previous years, MCK has currently managed to elect two women Bishops. While responding about the position of women in the pastoral ministry and church leadership of the MCK on African society being patriarchal one of the lay leaders (LL4) said,

“We see great potential in our church. Lately our church has installed two women Bishops. Those are influential positions in the MCK...”

Women in the MCK have also taken up leadership positions in the church as lay leaders, preachers and ministers. They go on board in developmental projects of the church and usually contribute abundantly in nearly all aspects of the church’s activities.

“...we are getting somewhere. I am also happy that in my church all the three top leaders in the executive are women”

Although women leaders in the MCK are performing their roles, it is perceived that there are a number of religious, socio-cultural and political perceptions that deter them from fully performing those roles. For instance, the ordained women in the church seldom get a chance to occupy some of the top hierarchal positions in the MCK in spite of the societal transformation in the modern day civilization.

It was observed that in some way, women in the MCK take part in contemporary roles save for the traditional roles that the society prearranged for them. I observed that training of women leaders is carried out regularly in each Circuit and Synod and occasionally at the Conference level. The purpose of the trainings is to enlighten and empower women on leadership skills, bible study and worship, economic justice, human and women rights, reproductive health, among others. Seminars and rallies are also organized to address contemporary gender issues including women and the church, family and society. Other activities are imparting handicraft skills and holding home science demonstrations. Training on starting and running small-scale businesses plus small and medium projects is also offered. The Methodist Women Fellowship (MWF) runs many projects at the congregational, circuit and Synod levels such as; hostels, health clinics, bee keeping, poultry, milling, nursery and primary schools. At the Conference level women have established a Leadership and Training Center with facilities for meetings and training halls and accommodation. The Women Fellowship educates children and youth on dangers of drug abuse, dealing in arms, retrogressive cultural practices such as Female genital mutilation (FGM) in order to enrich their spiritual life values.

The narration above tells that women in the MCK are mission-oriented as can be seen through their activities that are planned and executed by MWF. The MWF is a creation of the MCK which has severally in its annual meetings ruled to work towards an inclusive Methodist Church and to believe that all men and women are created in the image of God (Ham, 2014) and that everyone is allowed in the order of God so that His work may be manifested through all (Msangaambe, 2011).

This master thesis discovered that the inclusion of women in the pastoral ministry and church leadership of the MCK through purposeful transformation may not be wholly achievable without the recognition of the WMF, its resultant empowerment and support as it offered a shoulder to lean for women spiritually as well as added a therapeutic value to those women who felt excluded, marginalized and oppressed in their own church by their fellow Christians. Women interviewed in this study exclusively revealed that the MWF had helped them in their formation, skill development, management and spiritual expression. Thus, the MWF has managed to bring a revolution to the mission of God by propagating transformation through the church to the world by bringing new hope, life and prosperity for all. Transformation entails a radical change (LWF, 2009) that brings about new hope for all and change that involves pain that goes with uncertainties for those who are privileged in positions. Transformation ‘disempowers’ those who are wrongly empowered and brings those that are disempowered throughout history to their rightful position in the church (Phiri & Kaunda, 2016). Transformation is a process of radical social change in which the old dehumanizing practices are substituted with ‘purposive’ strategic intervention with a view of creating a new community of God (Nordstokke, 2011) where Christ is Lord.

The MCK has over the years embraced transformation as a social change at the heart of God’s mission to the world where both men and women are getting restored to full humanity. Thus, this participation of both men and women on an equal basis is both empowering and transformative in its nature. By so doing, the MCK authenticates the argument that both genders are equal and self-reliant and can have far reaching contributions in their own rights (Phiri & Kaunda, 2016). As a result, it is only when both genders are engaged in true partnership in the mission of God that the historical divisions along gender, race and cultural lines among others can be challenged and corrected.

Gender is a component of what it means to be created in the image of God, and the skills, gifts and abilities of all should be valued regardless of gender. It is a misdemeanor to God as well as to many people in the church and society (especially when men say that women are not ready to lead), to restrict women who feel called to serve in God’s

mission and in the ordained ministry of the MCK. This is so because, discrimination on gender basis does not boost God's mission or enhance its role as good news (MCK, 2017). Rather than glorifying God, such intolerance serves as a stumbling block and a scandal made by some ill-informed men's decision and not God's.

This study can report that to the MCK, the spirit and practice of Christian love (LWF, 2009) is a crucial provision for its members. The MCK constantly advises its members to be made perfect in love (MCK, 2014:16) with a reminder that it is binding for every member to share their gifts wisely with each other for the nourishment of the Body of Christ. In enforcing its social responsibility in the spirit of fellowship with each other, the MCK obligates each of its members to do good and avoid harm of any kind to the other, doing good by being merciful after one's power given that these form the pillars upon which the life and mission of the church are anchored. As a result, the leadership of MCK acknowledges that women all over the world continue to provide enormous social, moral, financial and legal support to the institutions of the family, church and society.

MCK, (2017) is of the view that the new millennium marks important progress having been declared in recognition of achievements in improving the life of women in Africa and indeed Kenya. Women contribute a lot in peacemaking and conflict resolution processes. That is why today, the MCK empowers women by involving them more in small, medium and big enterprises that bring incomes to their households. MCK just as in any other society acknowledges women as the real social agents. It is these same Christian women that are at the moment significantly contributing to the welfare of the Church. Today, there are many more women ministers, ministerial students, evangelists and female lay leaders than some years ago (MCK, 2017).

6.8 Summary

It is against the above backdrop that the voice of women in pastoral ministry and church leadership of the MCK was investigated, assessed and evaluated. As imperfect as the MCK might seem to be, there are serious attempts by the church to engage women in its formations. All the same, there is a fierce struggle geared towards eliminating the forms of discrimination that are being propagated against women in the church. It is remarkable

that the MCK strongly bases its foundation on the law of love of Christ for all His disciples and at the same time advocates for love as the guiding principle upon which all its members are to be treated regardless of the impeaching cultural standards.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will summarize the study making conclusions and recommendations in accordance with the findings and objectives of the study.

7.2 Summary and conclusions of the study

The purpose of this master thesis was to investigate how the women pastors, female theology students and women church leaders experience their work for the Methodist Church in Kenya with the objectives of assessing the motivations behind these women becoming pastors/lay leaders, their experiences during education and while working as well as the support they received from church and colleagues in the MCK. All these aimed at evaluating the voice of women in pastoral ministry and church leadership of the MCK, establish the marginalizing factors and explore strategies that may be applicable in promoting women empowerment.

The study reveals that MCK has not fully integrated women despite the pointer that the church embraces the doctrine on the Priesthood of all believers which outlines that no priesthood belongs exclusively to a particular gender. This can be accounted for by the finding that most of the top hierarchal positions in the church are male-dominated and also the fact that despite the women forming the majority of the people in the church, they form a very small group within ministers' ranks and those in lay leadership. It became visible that there are gender biases in the leadership of MCK whereby men by the virtue of their socially defined masculinity stand at the better end of leadership stake than women.

The master thesis attributes the basis of marginalization of women leaders within MCK to patriarchal and cultural stereotypes that even at times are used to inform the reading and understanding of the biblical texts. In doing so, the unreserved participation of women in the mission of the MCK is facade with issues of integrity and biblical justice.

Therefore, this study found out that the position of women leaders in the MCK is woefully underrepresented but apparently, there is a strong wave of transformation that has in recent times evolved in the church which aims at reversing things. Notably, some aspects of tradition appear to have been retained through their very rejection. Thus, the emerging factors that influence gender disparity in the leadership of MCK can be ascribed to the concept of patriarchy and that of societal roles and expectations. MCK being guided by the Holy Bible as its ultimate authority, such shaping may also be accredited to the issues of gender discrepancies that seem evident in the Bible such as the flow of power along male line where God is seen as male, with such concept of male superiority in terms of leadership spilling over to the today’s church leadership. In addition, the society in which MCK thrives in dictates that women are caregivers and nurturers and so their place is behind the scenes and not leading at the front. Thus, there is a need for essential changes in the MCK so as to empower women more and transform the structures that deny them life in its fullness. At this point, I will present the resources available for women empowerment and societal transformation in the MCK and the impediments faced by these endeavors.

Resources for women empowerment

	Church internal	Societal
Personal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women access to leadership positions e.g. Superintendent Ministers, Bishops 2. Increased number of women lay leaders 3. More female ministerial students 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sensitization on gender issues and their acceptance 2. High awareness of human rights, for instance education of girl-child
Network	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MWF 2. More women membership and supportive female colleagues 3. Priesthood of all believers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Societal influence such as, “third-gender rule” 2. Role modeling

Impediments on women empowerment

	Church internal	Societal
Personal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bad experiences 2. Low self-esteem and self-confidence 3. Placement in circuits 4. Delay in ordination 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High level of patriarchy 2. Gender roles 3. Marriage 4. Relationships in public space
Network	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Church traditions 2. Opposition from other leaders 3. Bible interpretation in MCK and also among women 4. Male dominance in leadership positions 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Domestic violence 2. Conservative leaders with traditional views on a role of a woman

As shown above, this thesis acknowledges that women leaders in the MCK have gone a step forward in breaking the traditionally accepted roles of a woman as prescribed by the society. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates that there are hurdles facing women leaders which mainly center on religious and socio-cultural perceptions. I can however sum up that the MCK seems to be accepting change and if the trend continues, then in near future more women may rise to higher positions of leadership within the church.

Patriarchy, gender and empowerment and power theories were utilized in this study. These were considered appropriate because they accounted for the understanding of the MCK's positioning of women leaders. This study acknowledges that the church, and in this case the MCK should be the best agent in letting the society know that God's perspective on gender is placed on impartiality where God's purpose for all, both men and women is to participate in *Missio dei*. This affirms the understanding that all human

beings are created in God's image differently but equally. The theories presented observations that could be useful in deconstructing the marginalizing effects and reconstruct them in an approach aimed at empowering women. Thus, once patriarchal structures are challenged, it provides an avenue for women empowerment and as a consequence power is eventually appropriately shared thereby allowing women to cultivate self-esteem as well as increase their levels of skills. This study employed qualitative study method combining multiple sources of data. The data collected was reviewed and combined with observations in a collaborative manner in line with the study objectives.

In general, this study shows that there are gender differences in the leadership of the MCK which point to men getting better deals than women, the opportunities to rise through the leadership ranks and the levels to which women increased over the years. As a consequence, this study has several recommendations to make.

7.3 Recommendations of the Study

This master thesis in reference to the findings of the study can make the following recommendations to the general MCK membership and to women as individuals.

7.3.1 Recommendations to the MCK

The MCK should:

- Advocate for recruitment, education and ordination of more women by enforcing the policy on 'the third-gender rule' where not more than two thirds of ministerial students, lay leaders and ordained ministers of the church should be allowed to be of the same gender.
- Sensitize their members on how to separate their culture from the scripture. This can be done by reading the scripture alongside with the study of the cultures within which the MCK is found so as to admit that the positioning of women in

the church is largely informed by cultures that need to be reconstructed so as to fit in a Christian community that embodies in the Priesthood of all believers.

- Push the male clergy and male members of the church to support women in ministry and second them to the top leadership positions of the church.
- Acknowledge that women form the majority of its membership and have been empowered by the Holy Spirit for a purpose. Hence, the church must liberate women to put into effect their spiritual gifts and God-given talents.

7.3.2 Recommendations to the individual women

In some cases, the small number of women in top leadership positions of the church may be attributed to personal factors, for instance lack of self-esteem and confidence, limited aspirations and lack of motivation and ambition to accept the challenges of leadership. Therefore to those women already in or aspiring to join the pastoral ministry and church leadership of the MCK I recommend that they:

- Must to be more determined about working on personal factors that hold them back from taking their rightful place in the church and society in general
- Must promote their self-esteem and confidence in relation to church leadership.
- Must work extra hard to become role models to other aspiring women leaders and to act as ambassadors of other women so that the church can begin appreciating their leadership styles.
- Being a minority must acknowledge that they have a much bigger responsibility because everyone is watching how they perform
- Must learn to challenge the traditional gender roles allotted to them and devise mechanisms through which to negotiate for shared domestic responsibilities with other family members.

- Must network among themselves by holding regular consultations to discuss issues affecting women so as to make sure that they speak in one voice and their voices are heard.

7.4 Suggestions for Further Studies

This study focused on the voice of Women in Pastoral Ministry and Church Leadership of the Methodist Church in Kenya. Thus, there may be other areas of concern in the church such as history, beliefs and practices that may not have been extensively studied. There is still need for more research of this nature so as to help make known what women in pastoral ministry and church leadership are capable of doing and their approach to societal transformation. A comparative study involving other denominations may be worthwhile in ascertaining the experiences of female pastors and church leaders in other denominations as compared to the MCK. Lastly, this research only sought the views of women pastors and female church leaders only and I therefore propose that future studies could as well seek to hear from their male counterparts about their perception of women in church leadership.

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APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

Motivations for becoming a Pastor/lay leader

- 1) What is your personal story as a leader/pastor with the Methodist Church in Kenya?
- 2) Were you coerced to join ministry or did you join on your own volition?
- 3) Is there a particular role model you emulated/admired so as to join the ministry? If Yes, why so?
- 4) As a pastor, was this your first choice career? If No, what else did you do/do you do besides being a pastor?

Experiences during education and while working

- 1) What is your personal story as a female pastor/theological student/Church leader within the Methodist Church in Kenya?
- 2) What kind of affirmation and mentoring do you have in the present day?
- 3) Are you allowed to be yourself as woman, or do you have to become 'male' to fit into an already prescribed pattern or model of pastoral ministry and church leadership?
- 4) There is a conception of the African Society being patriarchal. In this regards, have you encountered some sort of discrimination and if so, how does it feel to work in an environment of a constant, subtle discrimination?

Support from Church and Colleagues

- 1) Does the Methodist Church in Kenya accord equal training opportunities to both female and male students aspiring to join the pastoral ministry of the Church?
- 2) How is the distribution of positions in elective and/or appointed leadership posts of the Methodist Church in Kenya?
- 3) What do you think impedes you as a woman from fully living out your potential and God-given gifts as a pastor and church leader in the Methodist Church in Kenya?

