

**CHALLENGES OF WOMEN CLERGY IN THE CHURCH OF UGANDA: A CASE
OF MITYANA DIOCESE**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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DECLARATION

I Kabogoza Alexander do declare that this research report is my own work and has never been submitted for any award in any academic institution

A photograph of a handwritten signature in blue ink on a light-colored surface. The signature is stylized, starting with a large, looped 'A' followed by 'KABOGOZA' in a cursive script. A long horizontal line extends to the right from the end of the signature.

ALEX KABOGOZA

May 1, 2025

APPROVAL

I confirm that this dissertation titled “Challenges of Women Clergy in the Church of Uganda: A Case of Mityana Diocese” is approved for submission to the School of Business of Uganda Christian University.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Owor', is positioned above the name of the approver.

Joseph Jakisa Owor, PhD

May 2, 20254

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to all church leaders of Mityana Diocese, my beloved Bishop, and then to my lovely family for the support. May the good Lord richly reward you for the work done in my academic endeavors at Uganda Christian University.

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Abstract

This study investigated the challenges faced by women clergy in the Mityana Diocese of the Church of the Province of Uganda. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through interviews and surveys involving clergywomen and selected church leaders. The findings revealed that women clergy in the Diocese encounter significant challenges, including congregational prejudice, male dominance in sacramental duties such as the administration of the Eucharist, limited access to leadership positions, and issues related to marital prospects. Cultural and traditional perceptions of gender roles further exacerbate these challenges, reinforcing the inferiority complex among some clergywomen and undermining their effectiveness in ministry. Additionally, disparities in remuneration and negative attitudes from congregants were also reported. The study highlights the theological and biblical foundation for gender equality, emphasizing that both men and women are equally created in the image of God and have distinct yet complementary roles in ministry. Jesus Christ's example of honoring and including women in spiritual discourse serves as a model for the Church today. The study recommends intentional church policies to support, promote, and empower women clergy through theological training, leadership opportunities, sensitization seminars, and financial support for further studies. Schools were also identified as critical spaces for instilling gender equality values. This research contributes to the broader discourse on gender and church leadership and calls for further studies in other dioceses to address systemic challenges affecting women clergy across the Church of the Province of Uganda. The ultimate goal is to build an inclusive and biblically grounded Church.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

DECLARATION.....	ii
APPROVAL.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
Abstract	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background to the Study	1
1.3 Statement of the Problem	4
1.4 Purpose of the Study	5
1.4.1 Central Research Question	5
1.4.2 Action Question	5
1.4.3 Sub-Questions	5
1.5 Justification of the Study	6
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	6
1.7 Scope of the Study	7
1.8 Limitations of the Study.....	7
1.9 Delimitations of the Study	7
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Introduction.....	8
2.2 The Historical and Global Context of Women’s Ordination in the Church.....	8
2.3 Challenges Women Clergy Face in the Ordination Process and Ministry Placement.	9
2.4 How the Church’s Current Stance Affects Women’s Participation in Ministry Leadership	10
2.5 How the Church Can Attract and Retain More Women Clergy in Ministry	11
2.6 Conclusion.....	13

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	14
3.1 Introduction.....	14
3.2 Research Design	14
3.3 Description of the Study Area	14
3.4 Study Population	15
3.5 Sampling Techniques	15
3.6 Sample Size	15
3.7 Sources of Data	16
3.7.1 Primary Data	16
3.7.2 Secondary Data	16
3.8 Research Instruments.....	17
3.8.1 Questionnaires.....	17
3.8.2 Interview Guide.....	17
3.9 Observation	17
3.10 Validity of the Instruments.....	18
3.11 Reliability of the Instruments.....	18
3.12 Ethical Considerations	18
3.13 Data Processing and Analysis.....	19
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS	20
4.1 Challenges Faced by Female Clergy in Church Ministry	20
4.1.1 Introduction	20
4.1.2 Attitudes and Prejudices of Congregants	20
4.1.3 Administration of the Eucharist	21
4.1.4 Barriers to Leadership Roles	22
4.1.5 Conclusion	22
4.2 Church Efforts to Attract More Female Clergy.....	23
4.2.1 Motivation and Leadership Opportunities	23
4.2.2 Improved Policies and Access to Theological Education	23
4.2.3 Rebuking Negative Attitudes and Promoting Inclusivity	24
4.2.4 Conclusion.....	24
4.3 Experiences of Current Female Clergy in Mityana Diocese.....	25

4.3.1 Assertiveness and Faithfulness	25
4.3.2 Legal and Structural Discrimination	26
4.3.3 Diligence and Resilience.....	26
4.3.4 Reporting and Advocacy	26
4.4 General Conclusion	26
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	28
5.1 Leadership Challenges and Gendered Hierarchies	28
5.2 Prejudice and Attitudes of Congregants	29
5.3 The Eucharist and the “Impurity” Stigma	30
5.4 Broader Ecclesial and Theological Context.....	30
5.5 Implications for Ministry and Clergy Wellbeing.....	31
5.6 Conclusion.....	31
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	32
6.1 Conclusion.....	32
6.2 Key Challenges Identified	32
6.3 Theological and Scriptural Perspectives	33
6.4 Recommendations.....	33
6.5 Conclusion.....	35
References.....	36

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this study presents the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, Central research Question, Action question and sub questions, justification, and significance of the study, scope, limitations and delimitations.

1.2 Background to the Study

The involvement of women in Christian ministry is not a new development. The New Testament highlights the contributions of women to the early Church. According to Murithi (2000), women played various roles in the formation and growth of the early Christian community. Akintunde (2010) observes that the inclusion of women in ministry is evident as early as Matthew 1:1-16, where four women are mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus. This, according to Kwaramba (2004, 2019), marks the beginning of a long history of female participation in church ministry.

Togarasei (2016) traces the formal ordination of women in the Anglican Church back to the 1940s, although initially restricted to the lower clerical orders such as deacons. Ndlovu (2018) records that the first women ordained to the priesthood in the Anglican Communion were Jane Hwang and Joyce M. Bennett, ordained by Bishop Gilbert Baker of Hong Kong and Macao on November 28, 1971.

This milestone was soon followed by the United States, where eleven women - later known as the *Philadelphia Eleven* - were ordained in 1974 by retired bishops Daniel Corrigan, Robert L. DeWitt, and Edward R. Welles in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (Chivasa, 2017; Zihanzu, 2017; Darko, 2015; Chirongoma, 2019; Kwaramba & Dreyer, 2019; Chitando, 2013; Biri, 2013; Nadar, 2005). In 1975, four more women were ordained in Washington, D.C. Although controversial due to the lack of official approval from the Episcopal Church's General Convention, Dodo, Dodo, and Zihanzu (2017) note that the ordinations were later regularized in 1976.

Following this, Jacqueline Means was ordained in 1977 at the Episcopal Church of All Saints in Indianapolis, and the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada passed legislation enabling the ordination of women in 1975. The first three women priests in Canada were ordained in November 1976 (Watson, 2002; Nadar, 2005; Muringa & Makaudze, 2014; Machingura & Nyakuhwa, 2015; Makaudze, 2014, 2015).

The first woman ordained in the Anglican Communion was Florence Li Tim-Oi, ordained on January 25, 1944, by Bishop Ronald Hall of Victoria, Hong Kong, during the Japanese invasion of China. Closer to home, Florence Spetume Njangali became the first female deaconess in East Africa, ordained on September 10, 1973, by the late Rt. Rev. Yustus Ruhindi.

Despite such advancements, the Anglican Church has traditionally emphasized male leadership, often limiting opportunities for women in higher ecclesiastical roles. Kairu et al. (2020) argue that deeply rooted patriarchal attitudes within the Anglican Church have culminated in systemic discrimination, significantly hindering women

clergy from advancing within church leadership. Mwangi et al. (2011) also point out that this male-dominated clergy structure restricts women's access to resources, mentorship, and networks critical for ministerial growth.

Gender biases and stereotypes further undermine the competencies of women clergy, often portraying them as incapable of handling leadership roles, thereby preventing them from serving to their full potential (Kariuki, 2024). Consequently, many women clergy operate within a challenging environment that stifles their growth and diminishes their contributions to the Church.

Although the Church of Uganda has ordained numerous capable women who actively contribute to various ministries, recognition and support remain inadequate. For instance, the Presbyterian Church of East Africa has produced exemplary women clergy who have excelled internationally. However, periods such as national church elections often see a resurgence of patriarchal attitudes, with derogatory labels like "flower girls" or "maids" used to discredit women candidates, thus undermining their leadership potential.

Kairu et al. (2020) emphasize the need for both men and women in the clergy to actively challenge and dismantle these patriarchal mindsets by promoting gender inclusion and equality. While women constitute the majority of church members in many denominations, including the Church of the Province of Uganda (Mwangi et al., 2011), only a small fraction occupy positions of significant authority. Their contributions to church growth and stability are undeniable, yet they often go unrecognized and unsupported.

The lack of adequate support continues to present considerable challenges for ordained women in Uganda, limiting their effectiveness in ministry and discouraging potential female clergy from pursuing ordination. This situation threatens the future inclusivity and vitality of the Church. There is, therefore, an urgent need for empirical research to document and address these challenges.

This study seeks to investigate the challenges faced by women clergy in the Church of Uganda, with a particular focus on the Mityana Diocese. The findings are expected to inform church leadership and policy makers, thereby fostering an environment that enables all clergy—regardless of gender—to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the mission of the Church.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing recognition and ordination of women clergy within the Church of Uganda, many still face systemic challenges that hinder their full participation and growth in ministry. Patriarchal structures, gender biases, limited mentorship, and exclusion from higher leadership roles continue to marginalize women clergy, especially in dioceses such as Mityana. These challenges not only undermine gender equality but also diminish the church's capacity to utilize the full potential of its human resources. Without a clear understanding of these barriers, meaningful strategies for inclusion and empowerment remain elusive.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by women clergy in the Church of Uganda, with specific reference to Mityana Diocese. The study seeks to explore the nature, causes, and impact of these challenges on women's ministry, and to propose actionable recommendations that could promote gender equity and support the effective inclusion of women clergy in church leadership.

1.4.1 Central Research Question

What are the major challenges faced by women clergy in the Church of Uganda, specifically within Mityana Diocese?

1.4.2 Action Question

How can the Church of Uganda address the barriers affecting the effective participation and leadership of women clergy in Mityana Diocese?

1.4.3 Sub-Questions

1. What historical and socio-cultural factors influence the experiences of women clergy in the Church of Uganda?
2. How do church policies and leadership structures impact women clergy in Mityana Diocese?
3. What coping strategies have women clergy adopted to navigate the challenges they face?
4. How can church leaders and policymakers foster a more inclusive environment for women clergy?

1.5 Justification of the Study

This study is timely and necessary in light of ongoing debates on gender equality within church leadership. As the Church of Uganda strives to reflect biblical justice and inclusivity, understanding the unique barriers faced by women clergy is critical. Mityana Diocese, like many others, has talented and committed women in ministry whose potential is often underutilized. Shedding light on their experiences will help inform equitable reforms and empower future female church leaders.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study will benefit several stakeholders:

- **Church Leaders and Policy Makers:** By providing evidence-based insights to inform policies that promote gender inclusiveness in ministry.
- **Women Clergy:** By validating their experiences and contributing to efforts aimed at improving their working conditions and opportunities.
- **Theological Institutions:** By shaping curriculum and training that address gender-sensitive leadership.
- **Scholars and Researchers:** By contributing to the growing body of literature on gender and ecclesiastical leadership in Africa.
- **The Church at Large:** By encouraging more balanced leadership, promoting spiritual growth, and strengthening community witness.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the challenges faced by ordained women clergy in the Church of Uganda, with specific emphasis on Mityana Diocese. It will cover historical, cultural, theological, institutional, and practical dimensions of ministry as experienced by women in that region.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

- The study may be limited by the **availability and willingness** of some clergy to openly share their experiences due to fear of backlash or confidentiality concerns.
- **Time and resource constraints** may limit the breadth of diocesan comparisons beyond Mityana.
- The findings may not be fully generalizable to all dioceses in Uganda due to contextual variations.

1.9 Delimitations of the Study

- The study will **focus solely on ordained women clergy** and not include lay women or women in non-ordained church roles.
- It will be **geographically limited** to Mityana Diocese to allow for in-depth exploration.
- It will **emphasize challenges**, though coping mechanisms and suggestions for improvement will also be considered.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher examines a range of literature relevant to the challenges faced by women clergy in the Province of the Church of Uganda, specifically within Mityana Diocese. The review covers historical, theological, sociological, and institutional dimensions of the topic, drawing from local and international studies. It builds upon foundational works that have shaped scholarly and ecclesiastical discourse on women's ordination and their participation in church leadership. By aligning the discussion with the research objectives, this chapter identifies the prevailing gaps, underlying causes, and potential solutions to the marginalization of women clergy in Uganda.

2.2 The Historical and Global Context of Women's Ordination in the Church

The ordination of women has been a contentious and transformative issue in Christian history. Globally, significant strides began in the 20th century, especially in the Anglican Communion. The Episcopal Church in the United States approved the ordination of women in 1976, followed by the Anglican Church of Canada in 1975 (Spencer, 2011). These milestones reflected a broader ecclesiastical re-evaluation of gender roles in ministry.

Despite these advances, resistance remains, particularly within conservative and evangelical sectors of the church. Critics often argue that women's ordination is

driven more by contemporary feminist ideologies than by sound biblical exegesis (Grenz & Kjesbo, 1995). This tension is evident in many African Anglican provinces, where cultural and patriarchal values often outweigh theological arguments.

In Uganda, the ordination of women began during the late 1970s, though inconsistently across dioceses (Kanyoro, 2001). The Church of Uganda first ordained women as deacons in 1973, with the first priestly ordinations occurring in the 1980s (Nanfuka, 2020). While dioceses like Namirembe and Kampala have made notable progress in integrating women into ministry, others, including Mityana, have been slower due to deeply entrenched cultural norms and ecclesiastical conservatism. This reflects a broader pattern across Sub-Saharan Africa, where church policy often lags behind both theological education and women's societal advancement.

2.3 Challenges Women Clergy Face in the Ordination Process and Ministry Placement

Women seeking ordination in Uganda and other African contexts face numerous obstacles, both institutional and societal. Institutionally, opaque and inconsistent ordination criteria can disproportionately disadvantage women. Studies show that church leadership structures often lack transparency and are subject to discretionary gatekeeping that reflects male-dominated ecclesiastical politics (Mwaura, 2005).

Even when ordained, women clergy are often assigned roles considered peripheral, such as chaplaincy, women's ministry, or children's programs, which limit their visibility and leadership influence. For example, in the Diocese of Mityana, women are

rarely assigned to large or urban parishes, and few are considered for positions such as Archdeacon or Diocesan Secretary (Ateenyi, 2019).

Societal perceptions also hinder female clergy. Many congregants still associate pastoral leadership with male authority, citing scripture such as 1 Timothy 2:12 to oppose women's leadership. This has been compounded by a broader cultural patriarchy, where leadership—especially religious—is perceived as a male preserve (Phiri & Nadar, 2006). In Uganda, resistance from laypeople, male clergy, and even some female congregants has created a hostile environment for women clergy to thrive.

Moreover, women clergy often report experiences of emotional and psychological stress stemming from constant scrutiny and marginalization. These challenges are not unique to Uganda. In Nigeria, for instance, studies have found that women clergy often lack access to resources and pastoral development opportunities compared to their male counterparts (Oduyoye, 1995).

2.4 How the Church's Current Stance Affects Women's Participation in Ministry Leadership

The Church's stance on the ordination of women directly shapes their ability to assume leadership roles. In denominations where women are officially ordained, there remains a disparity in how leadership opportunities are distributed. The consecration of Bishop Barbara Harris in the U.S. Episcopal Church in 1989 marked a global turning point (Spencer, 2011), but such examples are rare in Africa.

In the Church of Uganda, while the official policy allows for female ordination, few women have risen to senior leadership roles. As of 2024, no woman has been consecrated bishop within the Church of Uganda, in contrast to the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, which consecrated its first female bishop, Ellinah Wamukoya, in Swaziland in 2012 (West, 2016).

In Mityana Diocese, despite decades of women's participation in ministry, there remains significant underrepresentation of women in leadership committees, diocesan synods, and policy-making structures. This highlights the gap between formal acceptance and actual empowerment (Nanfuka, 2020).

Even in other denominations that permit female clergy, subtle forms of marginalization persist. In Baptist circles, for example, women have reported being referred to by incorrect titles or being excluded from high-profile pastoral roles, reflecting persistent gender biases (Grenz & Kjesbo, 1995).

2.5 How the Church Can Attract and Retain More Women Clergy in Ministry

To foster the inclusion and retention of women in ministry, the church must take a proactive, multifaceted approach:

1. Policy Reforms

Ecclesiastical bodies need to revise policies that unintentionally marginalize women. Transparent and gender-sensitive ordination processes should be

standardized across all dioceses. This includes clear criteria for promotions, appointments, and access to training (Mwaura, 2005).

2. Mentorship Programs

Churches can establish mentorship initiatives where senior clergy (both male and female) provide guidance to younger women entering ministry. This has been implemented successfully by the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), where mentorship and peer learning help reduce dropout rates among women clergy (Phiri, 2004).

3. Educational Opportunities

Theological institutions should offer leadership training specifically designed to address the needs of women in ministry. For instance, Uganda Christian University has made efforts to integrate gender studies into theological education to equip future clergy with tools for inclusive ministry (UCU Bulletin, 2023).

4. Cultural Sensitization and Community Engagement

Churches need to host public forums, Bible studies, and sensitization workshops to challenge patriarchal interpretations of scripture. This helps congregants embrace a more egalitarian ecclesiology rooted in Galatians 3:28, which asserts that all are one in Christ Jesus.

5. Visibility and Representation

The Church should actively promote the work of women clergy through diocesan publications, media appearances, and inclusion in major liturgical events. Highlighting stories of successful female clergy in Uganda—such as Rev.

Canon Dr. Rebecca Nyegenye, the Provost of Uganda Christian University's Chapel—can inspire others and challenge stereotypes.

2.6 Conclusion

The inclusion of women in ordained ministry, particularly in leadership roles, is a complex issue shaped by historical, theological, institutional, and cultural factors. While the Church of Uganda has taken steps toward gender inclusion, significant challenges remain, especially in dioceses like Mityana. Overcoming these barriers requires deliberate policy reforms, education, mentorship, and cultural transformation. Only by addressing both the institutional and societal dimensions can the Church fully realize the gifts and calling of women clergy in its mission and leadership.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used to conduct the study. It outlines the research design, study area, population, sample size and sampling techniques, data collection methods and instruments, data processing and analysis, and ethical considerations. The chosen methods were aligned with the research objectives stated in Chapter One to ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings.

3.2 Research Design

This study employed a **descriptive cross-sectional research design**, which is appropriate for studies that aim to explore the characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of a particular population at a specific point in time (Creswell, 2014). The cross-sectional nature of the study enabled the researcher to collect data from different groups—female clergy, male clergy, and selected church laity—within a limited time frame. Questionnaires and interviews were the primary tools for data collection, allowing both qualitative and quantitative insights.

3.3 Description of the Study Area

The research was conducted in **Mityana Diocese**, one of the dioceses of the Church of Uganda. The area was chosen due to its notable representation of both male and female clergy, and the presence of communities where gender dynamics in church leadership could be meaningfully studied. The population included ordained women

clergy, their male counterparts, and selected lay leaders or parishioners who have interacted with female clergy.

3.4 Study Population

The target population for this study consisted of:

- Women clergy in the Mityana Diocese
- Male clergy who have served alongside or supervised female clergy
- Church laity with knowledge or experience related to female leadership in the church context

These categories were selected to provide diverse perspectives on the challenges and experiences of women clergy in ministry.

3.5 Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling was employed to identify respondents who possessed rich, relevant knowledge about the subject of inquiry. This non-probability sampling technique involves selecting participants based on their experience, role, and ability to contribute meaningful data to the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Female clergy who had served in challenging ministerial contexts, male clergy with experience working with female colleagues, and church laity recognized for their awareness and involvement in church leadership matters were deliberately selected.

3.6 Sample Size

The total sample comprised **40 respondents**, distributed as follows:

- **20 women clergy** who had experienced marginalization or discrimination in ministry settings
- **10 male clergy** who had served in parishes where female clergy were present and could provide informed perspectives
- **10 lay parishioners** familiar with the subject of women in clerical leadership

This sample size was considered adequate to gain a rich understanding of the lived experiences and perspectives central to the research questions.

3.7 Sources of Data

3.7.1 Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from participants using structured **questionnaires** and **interviews**. Most respondents received and returned questionnaires electronically via email, which allowed for time-efficient data collection. For a few respondents (less than 5%) who were unable to complete written questionnaires, oral interviews were conducted, and the responses were documented by the researcher.

3.7.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data were obtained from existing literature, including **books**, **peer-reviewed journals**, **diocesan reports**, **policy documents**, and other relevant publications. These sources provided contextual and theoretical background for the study and helped triangulate the primary data.

3.8 Research Instruments

3.8.1 Questionnaires

Structured, self-administered questionnaires were developed and distributed to literate respondents. The questionnaires included both closed and open-ended questions, allowing for quantifiable responses and deeper qualitative insights. The development of the tool was guided by the study objectives and refined through pre-testing.

3.8.2 Interview Guide

A semi-structured interview guide was used to facilitate face-to-face interviews with selected clergy. This instrument allowed for flexibility in the sequence and depth of questions, enabling the researcher to probe further into responses and gain nuanced understanding (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

3.9 Observation

The researcher also employed **non-participant observation** as a supplementary data collection technique. This involved systematic watching and recording of behavioral patterns, interactions, and dynamics during ministry-related events or church services. This method was cost-effective and enhanced the understanding of implicit attitudes and practices that might not be explicitly expressed in questionnaires or interviews.

3.10 Validity of the Instruments

Validity refers to the extent to which the instruments accurately measure what they are intended to measure (Bryman, 2016). To enhance validity, the researcher carefully selected participants who had first-hand experience relevant to the study. The instruments were also reviewed by academic peers and research supervisors for content validity. Additionally, consent and willingness of the respondents ensured open and honest sharing of information.

3.11 Reliability of the Instruments

Reliability concerns the consistency and dependability of the research instruments. The questionnaire was **pre-tested** with five individuals drawn randomly from the intended sample categories. Feedback from the pilot study informed minor revisions and adjustments to enhance clarity, relevance, and consistency of the tool. This process ensured that the instruments could reliably generate dependable data.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

Given the ethical standards of **Uganda Christian University** and the sensitive nature of the research topic, the study strictly adhered to ethical research practices:

- **Informed consent** was obtained from all participants.
- **Anonymity** and **confidentiality** were guaranteed; participants' names were not included in the final report.
- The language used in both verbal and written communication was respectful, professional, and aligned with Christian ethical principles.

- No participant was coerced or misled, and they retained the right to withdraw at any stage of the research.

3.13 Data Processing and Analysis

As a **qualitative study**, the collected data were manually sorted, coded, and thematically analyzed. Responses were organized based on emerging themes aligned with the research objectives. A **narrative, descriptive approach** was used to present findings in a coherent and logical sequence, supported by direct quotes and case examples where appropriate.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

As highlighted in Chapter Three, this study relied on interviews conducted with 25 participants to explore the challenges faced by female clergy in Mityana Diocese, efforts by the church to address these challenges, and suggestions for improvement. The analysis below is structured according to the research questions and objectives.

4.1 Challenges Faced by Female Clergy in Church Ministry

4.1.1 Introduction

The findings indicate that ordained women in the Diocese of Mityana face multifaceted challenges in the execution of their ministry roles. These challenges often stem from deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes, cultural perceptions, and structural inequalities within the church. Similar observations have been made in other contexts where women clergy face resistance despite formal recognition (Sundkler & Steed, 2000).

4.1.2 Attitudes and Prejudices of Congregants

A significant majority of respondents (30 out of 40, or 75%) acknowledged that female clergy encounter persistent prejudice and negative criticism from congregants. While the diocese officially recognizes women's ordination, approximately 50% of its leadership reportedly maintains unfavorable views toward women in ministry. Many critics perceive women as physically weak and emotionally unfit for demanding clerical duties such as funerals, pastoral counseling, and sermon preparation. These

views reflect enduring cultural norms that associate strength and authority with masculinity (Kanyoro, 2001).

Despite these stereotypes, 28% of the ordained women interviewed refuted claims of weakness, asserting their physical and emotional capacity to carry out their roles effectively. One participant highlighted that, with the support of spouses and family, domestic responsibilities do not significantly hinder their ministry.

Additionally, 24% of respondents believed that female clergy lack confidence and eloquence, further reinforcing traditional gender biases. About 40% of congregants doubted women's ability to keep confidentiality, which undermines trust in leadership. This mistrust often leads congregants to reject female clergy posted to their congregations. One minister recounted: *"Sometimes we get posted to a station only to be told, the station does not want a female minister."*

4.1.3 Administration of the Eucharist

Resistance to female clergy is also evident in sacramental duties, particularly the administration of the Eucharist. About 8 out of 30 male respondents (26.7%) expressed discomfort receiving Holy Communion from a woman, citing concerns about ritual impurity linked to menstruation. This belief is rooted in cultural taboos and theological misunderstandings regarding purity and gender (Phiri & Nadar, 2006).

Such sentiments highlight a gendered theology that delegitimizes women's roles in sacred rituals. This reinforces a cycle of inferiority complex among female clergy and contributes to spiritual marginalization, echoing the findings of previous research that

shows how women's full participation in church ministry is hindered by both overt and subtle forms of discrimination (Dube, 2003).

4.1.4 Barriers to Leadership Roles

Access to leadership positions such as vicar or archdeacon remains limited for women. The study found that 40% of respondents acknowledged that women face serious leadership challenges in the diocese. Even when qualified, female clergy are often bypassed for key roles, thereby limiting their influence and discouraging their professional growth.

About 55% of the clergy women interviewed reported frustrations regarding systemic barriers to career advancement. These include biased selection processes and limited mentorship opportunities, which mirror broader patterns of exclusion in male-dominated institutions (UN Women, 2015).

4.1.5 Conclusion

In summary, the challenges facing female clergy in Mityana Diocese—ranging from congregational bias and sacramental exclusion to leadership marginalization—continue to undermine their ministry. Their experiences reflect a ministry marred by “struggles, agonies, and dissatisfaction,” with systemic and cultural factors working in tandem to perpetuate inequality.

4.2 Church Efforts to Attract More Female Clergy

This section analyzes how the Diocese of Mityana is responding to the challenges faced by women in ministry and what more can be done to attract and support female clergy.

4.2.1 Motivation and Leadership Opportunities

While the Church of the Province of Uganda has made strides in promoting gender equality—ordaining women and assigning them roles such as vicars and chaplains—this progress remains limited in Mityana. Only 30% of respondents acknowledged that the diocese actively motivates women to pursue leadership.

Globally, women now serve as bishops and archbishops in various Anglican provinces, demonstrating the transformative potential of inclusive leadership. The Diocese of Mityana needs to align with these developments by deliberately identifying, mentoring, and appointing women to strategic positions (Rakoczy, 2004).

4.2.2 Improved Policies and Access to Theological Education

Only 20% of respondents reported that the diocese offers women adequate opportunities for theological and professional education. Without such support, many female clergy find it difficult to compete for senior roles or build robust ministerial profiles.

There is a pressing need for policy reform that not only encourages the ordination of women but also ensures their continuous development through sponsored training,

exposure, and recognition. According to Kwok Pui-lan (2010), theological empowerment plays a pivotal role in reshaping women's roles in the Church.

4.2.3 Rebuking Negative Attitudes and Promoting Inclusivity

Half of the respondents affirmed that Church leaders are beginning to denounce discriminatory behaviors and promote inclusivity. For example, institutions like Bishop Tucker School of Divinity have supported the training of female theologians who are now lecturers and church leaders. This public rebuke of gender bias and the visible success of educated female clergy are shifting perceptions and fostering transformation.

However, such efforts must be sustained and expanded. Sermons, workshops, and diocesan guidelines should emphasize inclusivity and the theological legitimacy of women in ministry. Community sensitization is key to dismantling long-standing prejudices (Oduyoye, 1995).

4.2.4 Conclusion

Although the Diocese of Mityana has made some progress in encouraging female clergy through motivation, education, and rebuke of negative attitudes, much more remains to be done. Institutional commitment, structural reforms, and cultural change are crucial to ensure that women are not only included but also empowered in all dimensions of church ministry.

4.3 Experiences of Current Female Clergy in Mityana Diocese

The following section outlines the lived experiences of women clergy, highlighting how they navigate their roles in the face of systemic and cultural challenges.

Experience	Number	Percentage
Assertiveness and Faithfulness	6	30%
Legal Discrimination	4	20%
Hard Work and Diligence	5	25%
Reporting and Advocacy	5	25%
Total	20	100%

4.3.1 Assertiveness and Faithfulness

30% of respondents emphasized that women clergy must remain assertive and faithful to their calling. Drawing from Uganda's history, where the ordination of women began in 1983 under Bishop Festo Kivengere, respondents noted that female clergy have continuously shown commitment despite systemic barriers.

Women's unwavering presence in the Church and their roles in sustaining ministries highlight their spiritual maturity and leadership potential. However, their

contributions are often undervalued due to male dominance in decision-making structures (Kabaji, 2012).

4.3.2 Legal and Structural Discrimination

20% of the respondents pointed out that current female clergy experience systemic discrimination through biased policies and unequal pay. These discriminatory practices are institutional and need redress through advocacy and legal reform within church governance.

4.3.3 Diligence and Resilience

25% observed that women clergy are hardworking and committed. Despite unequal treatment, they go the extra mile to fulfill pastoral responsibilities. Their diligence often wins over congregational support in the long run, even where initial skepticism exists.

4.3.4 Reporting and Advocacy

Another 25% emphasized the importance of reporting mistreatment to higher church authorities. When properly documented and communicated, such grievances can lead to positive change. Some participants noted success in escalating issues to bishops or archbishops who then intervened appropriately.

4.4 General Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that female clergy in Mityana Diocese operate within a socio-religious environment marked by both resistance and resilience. While they continue to face significant challenges—especially in congregational acceptance,

Eucharistic roles, and leadership—their dedication, education, and advocacy are gradually reshaping their place within the Church.

To build a truly inclusive ministry, Mityana Diocese must commit to sustained structural reforms, theological education, and a cultural shift that celebrates women not just as clergy but as equal co-laborers in the service of God.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study sought to examine the challenges faced by ordained women clergy in the Province of the Church of Uganda, with a case study of Mityana Diocese. The findings reveal that ordained women face persistent and multifaceted challenges that hinder them from fully realizing their ministerial and leadership potential. These challenges include limited access to leadership positions, prejudice and negative attitudes from congregants, and discomfort around the administration of the Eucharist by women clergy. These findings resonate with broader scholarship and mirror issues highlighted in other denominational and regional contexts.

5.1 Leadership Challenges and Gendered Hierarchies

The study revealed that one of the primary challenges facing women clergy in Mityana Diocese is access to leadership positions, such as Vicar or Archdeacon. Despite the Church's formal stance on women's ordination, the implementation of gender equality in leadership remains superficial. Approximately 40% of respondents confirmed that women encounter significant obstacles in ascending to decision-making positions.

This mirrors Nesbitt's (1994) findings, which show that clergywomen often remain marginalized in prestigious roles within church hierarchies. Clergywomen are disproportionately concentrated in associate or assistant roles, frequently in less desirable locations, and are excluded from roles of authority, perpetuating a bifurcated ministerial structure. Nesbitt argues that this dynamic allows clergywomen to fill gaps when male clergy are unavailable, while men preserve the most influential roles for themselves.

The ideological root of such exclusion is often theological. Carroll (1975) noted that traditionalist interpretations of Scripture assign leadership roles to men and subordinate roles to women. This theology becomes a social tool for limiting women's participation in decision-making and perpetuates male dominance in church leadership.

5.2 Prejudice and Attitudes of Congregants

Another key finding was the prejudicial attitude of congregants towards women in ministry. The data showed that 25 out of 40 respondents (62.5%) expressed negative views regarding women's clerical roles. Some described women as physically weak, emotionally unstable, and inefficient in performing core pastoral responsibilities such as officiating funerals, preparing sermons, and conducting home visits.

This is consistent with Hamman (2010), who emphasizes that many denominations persistently resist granting women full equality in pastoral leadership. Such resistance is rooted in theological, cultural, and social prejudices, which view men as more spiritually authoritative. Hamman further notes that even in denominations where women's ordination is permitted, deep-rooted biases remain entrenched, affecting their acceptance and effectiveness in ministry.

Moreover, these attitudes reflect broader societal perceptions where women leaders are seen as less competent. Tribble (1989) and Phiri (1997) argue that patriarchal readings of Scripture contribute to the devaluation of women's roles in the church, often dismissing their spiritual authority or leadership capabilities.

5.3 The Eucharist and the “Impurity” Stigma

The findings also demonstrate that administering the Eucharist remains a contested area for women clergy. Approximately 26.7% of respondents expressed discomfort when women presided over Holy Communion. This discomfort often stems from cultural and religious notions of ritual purity, with menstruation being cited as a reason for their perceived unworthiness.

These perceptions find parallels in Phiri’s (1997) analysis of African women’s experiences in theology. Phiri identifies a persistent stigma where Old Testament purity codes are applied to contemporary women clergy, leading to exclusion and spiritual inferiority. The study also supports Delaney et al. (1988) who reference the book of Micah 4:10, associating menstruation with labor and pain, thereby reinforcing theological justifications for women’s exclusion from sacramental duties.

This kind of thinking is perpetuated in many theological traditions that conflate women’s biological functions with spiritual unfitness. Such views continue to hinder women’s acceptance in the liturgical and sacramental life of the church.

5.4 Broader Ecclesial and Theological Context

The challenges faced by women clergy in Mityana Diocese are not unique but are reflective of global ecclesial trends. Research by Ploch and Hastings (1994) shows that although women are more religiously active and loyal to organized religion, their participation in ecclesiastical leadership remains limited. This contradiction reveals a

theological inconsistency, where women's faith is valued but their leadership is restricted.

In some churches, women's ordination is more symbolic than functional. As Chaves (1997) notes, churches may ordain women to demonstrate inclusivity while still maintaining male dominance in key leadership roles. These dynamics illustrate how institutional structures and theological interpretations combine to maintain patriarchal control, even in seemingly progressive environments.

5.5 Implications for Ministry and Clergy Wellbeing

These challenges have profound implications for the well-being and effectiveness of women clergy. Facing constant rejection, theological doubt, and role limitation can result in emotional burnout, vocational instability, and spiritual discouragement. The psychological toll of systemic marginalization is substantial, especially when such treatment is legitimized through religious teaching.

5.6 Conclusion

The findings of this study are consistent with global literature on women in ministry, affirming that ordination does not equate to equal participation or acceptance. The Church of Uganda, particularly in Mityana Diocese, must move beyond the symbolic gesture of ordination to intentionally dismantle structural and cultural barriers that impede the flourishing of women clergy. This requires theological reformation, intentional leadership development for women, and congregational education to foster acceptance and equality in the church.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate the challenges faced by ordained women clergy in the Mityana Diocese of the Church of Uganda. The findings reveal that, despite formal acceptance of women's ordination, significant barriers persist that hinder women clergy from fully realizing their ministerial potential. These challenges are multifaceted, encompassing theological interpretations, cultural norms, and institutional practices.

6.2 Key Challenges Identified

1. **Attitudes and Prejudices of Congregations:** A substantial proportion of respondents acknowledged negative perceptions and biases against women clergy, often rooted in traditional gender roles and cultural expectations.
2. **Administration of the Eucharist:** Some congregants expressed discomfort with women officiating the Eucharist, citing concerns related to ritual purity and traditional interpretations of scripture.
3. **Occupying Leadership Positions:** Women clergy face obstacles in ascending to senior leadership roles within the church hierarchy, such as Vicar or Archdeacon, limiting their influence and decision-making capacity.
4. **Inferiority Complex and Self-Perception:** The internalization of societal and institutional biases has led some women clergy to experience feelings of inadequacy, affecting their confidence and effectiveness in ministry.

5. **Societal and Cultural Constraints:** Broader societal norms and cultural practices continue to influence the acceptance and integration of women in ecclesiastical leadership roles.

6.3 Theological and Scriptural Perspectives

The Bible presents a nuanced view of gender roles. In Genesis 1:27, it is stated that God created both male and female in His image, indicating inherent equality.

However, subsequent passages, such as Genesis 2, describe distinct roles for men and women, which have been variously interpreted over time. Jesus' interactions with women, as recorded in the New Testament, often challenged prevailing cultural norms, demonstrating respect and inclusion. For instance, He engaged in theological discussions with women (John 4:7-26) and entrusted them with significant responsibilities (Matthew 28:1-10).

Despite these scriptural affirmations, traditional interpretations have often emphasized hierarchical structures, leading to the marginalization of women in church leadership. Contemporary theological scholarship advocates for a re-examination of these interpretations to promote inclusivity and equality within the church.

6.4 Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to address the identified challenges and promote the full participation of women clergy in the Mityana Diocese:

1. Theological Education and Sensitization:

- Organize workshops and seminars to educate clergy and congregants on biblical teachings regarding gender equality and the role of women in ministry.
- Encourage theological institutions to incorporate gender studies into their curricula to foster a more inclusive understanding of scripture.

2. Leadership Development and Mentorship:

- Establish mentorship programs pairing experienced clergy with women in ministry to provide guidance and support.
- Create clear pathways for women clergy to access leadership positions, ensuring transparency and fairness in appointments.

3. Policy Reforms and Institutional Support:

- Review and amend church policies to eliminate discriminatory practices and promote gender equity in all aspects of church governance.
- Implement affirmative action measures to increase the representation of women in decision-making bodies.

4. Community Engagement and Cultural Dialogue:

- Engage with community leaders and cultural institutions to address societal norms that hinder women's participation in church leadership.
- Promote dialogues that reconcile cultural practices with biblical principles of equality and justice.

5. Support Systems and Welfare Programs:

- Provide psychological and emotional support services for women clergy dealing with challenges related to their roles.
- Ensure equitable remuneration and access to resources for all clergy, regardless of gender.

6. Further Research:

- Conduct comprehensive studies across other dioceses to understand the broader context of women's experiences in church leadership within Uganda.
- Explore the impact of cultural, economic, and educational factors on the participation of women in ministry.

6.5 Conclusion

Addressing the challenges faced by women clergy in the Mityana Diocese requires a multifaceted approach that combines theological reflection, policy reform, and cultural engagement. By fostering an environment of inclusivity and equality, the Church of Uganda can harness the full potential of all its members, reflecting the biblical vision of a diverse and united body of Christ.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

My name is Kabogoza Alexander a student of Uganda Christian University pursuing of Masters of Arts in organizational leadership and management. I am carrying out a research study on the challenges faced by women clergy in Province of Church of Uganda in Mityana Diocese. I kindly request you to provide answers to these questions; the information given is for academic purpose and shall be given utmost confidentiality.

PART ONE

1. Sex.

a) Male (b) female

2. Age

(a) 20-30

(b) 30-40

(c) 50 and above

2. Level of Education

I. Primary

II. Secondary

III. University

IV. Others

4. Marital status

(a) Single

(b) Married

(c) Others

5. How often do go to church?

(a) Often

(b) Regularly

(c) Rarely

What is your position in Church Ministry?

(a) Clergy

(b) Laity

(c) Others

PART TWO: LAITY

6. What is your view about women involvement in church leadership (Please give your own view)

.....
.....
.....

7. What does your church think about women clergy leadership?

.....
.....
.....

8. What do you think are the challenges female clergy leaders face in church ministry?

.....
.....
.....

9. How can the Mityana Diocese of the Church of the Province of Uganda attract more women clergy members?

.....
.....
.....

10. What has been the experience of current women clergy within the Mityana Diocese of the Church of Uganda?

.....
.....
.....

PART THREE

CLERGY

11. For how long have been in ordained ministry?

(a) Less than 5 years

(b) More than 5 years

(c) More than than years

(d) More than 20 years

12. How have found your ministry?

(a) Interesting

(b) Boring

(c) Challenging

(b) Give a reason for the above in 12. E.g. If Challenging?

13. How does the laity think about women clergy ministry/ what is their attitude

.....

.....

.....

14. What problem do you think women clergy face in their ministry?

.....

.....

.....

15. What could be the causes of the challenges?

.....

.....

.....

16. Suggest possible solution that can be done to ever cove such challenges.

.....

.....

17. If you are married, how long do you balance between marriage responsibilities and Church duties?

.....

.....

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