

**BARRIERS TO WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN MINISTRY IN THE
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH: A CASE OF CENTRAL UGANDA
CONFERENCE**

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J23M02/012

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**

March, 2026



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
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DECLARATION

I Mugenyi Johnson Kalumba hereby declare that this research report has been produced out of my own effort with the guidance of my supervisor and has never been submitted to any other institution for any award.



Signature.....

Date.....25...../...3...../...2026

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APPROVAL

This research report has been supervised and approved by me and is therefore ready for submission to the School of Business in Uganda Christian University.

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(Supervisor)

DEDICATION

With special regard, I wish to dedicate this piece of work to my wife Dinah, and my children; Enoch, Edson, Elvis and Emily who have always been there for me through the whole of this programme. May the Almighty God richly bless you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the Almighty God for the gift of life and guiding me throughout my education; it has not been easy but it was possible. My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor, Mrs. Eva Mulema Matsiko for the tireless efforts and expertise she rendered to me during her supervision. I also want to thank my lecturers for their guidance and support they have rendered to me throughout this master's programme.

Additionally, I acknowledge the all the different stakeholders involved in this study from the Central Uganda Conference for providing me with the necessary information to complete my research.

Finally, special thanks go to my dear wife Dinah, and my children; Enoch, Edson, Elvis and Emily for their love, moral and spiritual support during the entire period of my education career.

God bless you all.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION.....	i
APPROVAL	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.2 Problem statement	4
1.3 Purpose of the study	5
1.4 Objectives of the study	5
1.5 Research questions	5
1.6 Hypothesis of the study	6
1.7 Justification of the study	6
1.8 Scope of the study	6
1.8.1 Geographical scope.....	6
1.8.2 Content Scope.....	7
1.8.3 Time Scope	7
1.9 Significance of the study	7
1.10 Conceptual framework	8
CHAPTER TWO	9
LITERATURE REVIEW	9
2.0 Introduction	9
2.1 Theoretical Review	9
2.1.1 The Feminist Theory	9
2.2 Theological interpretation barriers associated with women’s participation in ministry	10
2.3 Cultural norm barriers associated with women’s participation in ministry	12

2.4 Institutional policy barriers associated with women’s participation in ministry	14
2.5 Summary and literature gaps.....	16
CHAPTER THREE	17
METHODOLOGY	17
3.0 Introduction	17
3.1 Research Design.....	17
3.3 Study Population	18
3.4 Sample size determination	18
3.5 Sampling Techniques and Procedure	19
3.5.1 Simple random sampling.....	19
3.5.2 Purposive sampling	20
3.6 Data Collection Methods.....	20
3.6.1 Questionnaire Survey	20
3.6.2 Interviews	21
3.7 Data collection instruments.....	21
3.7.1 Questionnaires	21
3.7.2 Key Informant Interview Guide	21
3.8 Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Instruments.....	22
3.8.1 Validity for Quantitative Research.....	22
3.8.2 Reliability for Quantitative Research	22
3.8.3 Validity and Reliability for Qualitative Research	23
3.9 Procedure of Data Collection	23
3.10 Data Analysis	24
3.10.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data.....	24
3.10.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data.....	24
3.11 Measurement of Variables	25
3.12 Ethical Consideration	25
3.13 Limitations and delimitations of the study.....	26
CHAPTER FOUR.....	27
DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS	27
4.0 Introduction	27

4.1 Findings on demographic characteristics of respondents.....	27
4.2 Theological interpretation issues that come with women’s participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.....	29
4.2.1 Influence of biblical interpretations on women’s participation in ministry roles.....	31
4.2.2 Effect of doctrinal positions on women’s access to leadership and ordination.....	32
4.3 Cultural norm challenges around women’s participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.....	34
4.3.1 Cultural beliefs and gender expectations and women’s involvement in ministry	36
4.4 Institutional policy issues affecting women’s participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.....	38
4.4.1 Church policies & leadership structures and women’s participation in ministry	40
CHAPTER FIVE	42
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	42
5.0 Introduction	42
5.1 Summary of findings.....	42
5.2 Discussion of findings.....	43
5.2.1 Theological interpretation issues that come with women’s participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference	43
5.2.2 Cultural norm challenges around women’s participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.....	45
5.2.3 Institutional policy issues affecting women’s participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.....	47
5.3 Conclusions	48
5.4 Recommendations	49
5.5 Areas for further research.....	50
REFERENCES.....	51
APPENDICES	54
Appendix 1: Questionnaire.....	54
Appendix 2: Interview Guide.....	59

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Background Information about the respondents.....	27
Table 2: Theological interpretation issues that come with women’s participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference	29
Table 3: Cultural norm challenges around women’s participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference	34
Table 4: Institutional policy issues affecting women’s participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.....	38

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the barriers to women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church with specific focus on the Central Uganda Conference. It specifically focused on; establishing the theological interpretation barriers associated with women's participation in ministry, examining the cultural norm barriers associated with women's participation in ministry, and exploring the institutional policy barriers associated with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.

The study was carried out using a cross sectional survey research design where both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were also used. The data was collected using questionnaires during the data collection, both simple random and purposive sampling methods were used. A sample size of 80 church members, departmental leaders, and women actively engaged in ministry within the Central Uganda Conference plus 10 interviews with the key informants who are the Church leadership and administrators of The Seventh-Day Adventist Church-Central Uganda Conference was used in this study.

The study findings established that women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church–Central Uganda Conference is significantly constrained by a combination of factors. Biblical interpretations and doctrinal stances often limit women's access to leadership and ordination, while entrenched cultural beliefs, gender expectations, and societal norms reduce their confidence, visibility, and involvement in ministry. Additionally, institutional policies and leadership structures, including biased selection procedures, lack of mentorship programs, and limited representation in decision-making roles, further hinder women's advancement and full engagement in pastoral and leadership responsibilities.

Lastly, the study recommended the need for the church to undertake a comprehensive approach to enhance women's participation in ministry, including reviewing and reinterpreting theological teachings to highlight women leaders, implementing cultural awareness and gender sensitization programs, reforming institutional policies and leadership structures to ensure equitable opportunities, strengthening support networks for women leaders, and establishing continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess progress and address persistent barriers.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Women's ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church remains limited despite proof of the active participation of women during the early Christian church (Takawira, 2024). Theology, cultural practices, and church polity have been confirmed as key hurdles to their involvement (Mwangi et al., 2023). In Uganda, socio-cultural factors further complicate the situation by continuing to undermine full women's involvement in ministry (Wabule, 2023). This study therefore aimed to examine the barriers to the ministry of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Central Uganda Conference. This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, hypotheses, conceptual framework, significance of the study, justification of the study, scope of the study, and operational definitions.

1.1 Background of the study

This section considered historical background, theoretical background, conceptual background and contextual background.

1.1.1 Historical background

Women's ministry globally has been a story of exclusion and inclusion, and the records show women being leaders, teachers, and ministers in the early church only to be limited in the following centuries by institutions (Gupta, 2023). In the USA and Europe, debates about women ordination in the Seventh-day Adventist Church became increasingly contentious during the 20th century, with countries like Sweden experiencing intense feminist pressure to dismantle the male-dominated church hierarchies (Öster, 2023). Even where women's work had appeared in some aspects, women occupy less than 15% of ordained ministry positions in the USA, meaning that the discrepancies between gender still persist (Raysor, 2023). These intercultural matters expose the ways in which theological, organizational, and cultural barriers have traditionally limited women's ministry leadership in Christian ministry (Wood, 2023).

In Africa, women's ministries have been shaped significantly by patriarchal institutions and colonial missionary heritage that demanded men to lead churches (Dzubinski & Stasson, 2021). Studies in Southern Africa show that although the majority of women are attracted to pastoral ministry, few end up becoming leaders, with South Africa not recording more than 10% female pastors (Chinyamurindi & Rashe, 2021). Zambian women have been compelled to devise unique coping strategies in order to survive patriarchal church structures and gain access to decision-making opportunities (Kalumba et al., 2023). Women historically have spearheaded community transformation and peacebuilding in Uganda but remain in small leadership ranks within formal church ministry (Decker, 2023). This history highlights the importance of examining critically the socio-cultural and historical parameters that presently limit women's contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Central Uganda Conference (Barbe, 2024).

1.1.2 Theoretical background

Feminist Theory, initially developed by such writers as Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949) and expanded upon by feminist theologians over the 20th century (Beattie, 2004), guided this study. The theory necessitates a critical analysis of patriarchal structures that locate and reproduce gender inequality across social, political, and religious contexts. It argues that women have been dominated by male-favored and woman-barred cultural, theological, and institutional systems for centuries (Humm, 2021). The premises of Feminist Theory are the recognition of systemically based gendered injustice, the need to make the woman's experience central, and the rebuilding of social and religious systems in trying to achieve parity (Allen, 2023). Its premises are that patriarchy is institutionally and culturally constructed and not divinely ordained, gender inequality is sustained by institutional and cultural habit, and women's engagement in leadership is in the name of justice, equality, and holistic building of communities (Wood, 2019).

In the context of this research, Feminist Theory can be used since it provides a platform on which the barriers to women's involvement in ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church could be critically evaluated (Ferguson, 2023). The theory provides the basis for the determination of how patriarchal tradition, theological understandings, and systems of governance disenfranchise women from leadership roles (Butler, 2020). From its premises, the research can examine the historical, organizational, and cultural reasons in the Central Uganda Conference that deter women from engaging in ministry (Vergès, 2022). In addition, Feminist Theory calls for the opening of

ministry space to women as a path to gender justice and a strengthening of the church mission (Marcus, 2020).

1.1.3 Conceptual background

Women's ministry involvement was operationalized in this study as the intentional participation of women in various levels of ministerial practice within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and will be quantified on four fronts: levels of assumption of leadership roles, levels of decision-making, levels of access to ordination, and levels of pastoral involvement (Dixon, 2021). This model positions participation not only as presence but as the degree and intensity of involvement in institutional opportunities for ministry (Johnson, 2023). The study also theorizes barriers as independent variables influencing women's ministerial participation as the dependent variable, thus providing a model to examine the interplay between structural, doctrinal, and cultural constraints and women's ministerial participation in the Central Uganda Conference.

Barriers to women's participation in ministry have been described as systemic due to theology, culture, and structure, which limit the role of women in pastoral ministry and leadership (Zurlo, 2023). Women's participation in ministry is also defined as the extent to which women participate in leadership, pastoral, and decision-making within church structures and mission (Lee, 2021). In this study, impediments to women's ministry involvement shall be the theological understandings, cultural expectations, and organizational policies that restrict the active participation of women in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, and sub-themes of biblical literalism, doctrinal constraints, gender role typing, traditional roles, ordination requirements, and leadership selection.

1.1.4 Contextual background

Seventh-day Adventist Church Central Uganda Conference (CUC) is also one of the Uganda Union Mission administrative conferences responsible for overseeing church activities in central Uganda. It was officially constituted in 2000 to oversee the evangelism, education, health ministry, and community development programs within the central districts like Kampala and Mukono (Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, 2023). It boasts over 200 congregations and possesses related education and medical complexes such as Adventist schools and health units (Uganda Union Mission Report, 2022). By such endeavors, the CUC is at the forefront of promoting the global

vision of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and acting within the parameter of the socio-culture of Uganda (General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2023).

Despite institutional advancement in the church in Uganda, women's participation in ministry within the Central Uganda Conference remains constrained by institutional, cultural, and theological issues. The Uganda Seventh-day Adventist Church is well over 400,000 with over half of the members being women but with far fewer leadership roles and pastoral ministry (Uganda Union Mission Report, 2022). Although women are significantly involved in Sabbath School instruction, children's ministry, and health evangelism, they are underrepresented in decision-making bodies and ordained pastoral ministry due to their doctrinal constraints (William, 2023). This disparity points to the paradox of the tripling labors of women in church growth and their meager figures in leadership and in the ministry (Nelson, 2022).

There is proof that no women pastors were legally ordained by the Central Uganda Conference up to 2023 even in spite of ongoing pressure from members of the church and women's organizations (General Conference Secretariat Statistical Report, 2023). Such limitations are fostered by forms of orthodoxy's interpretation of scripture and cultural requirements that demand the supremacy of male leadership within church institutions (Cortés, 2024). The Uganda case reflects a larger regional problem in Sub-Saharan Africa where institutional resistance to ordaining women continues despite global debate over gender equity in ministry (Nwaomah et al., 2024). The Central Uganda Conference case therefore necessitated purposeful reforms to combat hindrances deterring women's full engagement in ministry work.

1.2 Problem statement

The Seventh-day Adventist Church should ideally promote equal involvement of women in leadership, decision-making, ordination, and pastoral ministry (William, 2023). In the Central Uganda Conference, however, women continue to be underrepresented even though they constitute the majority of the membership (Uganda Union Mission Report, 2022). They occupy fewer than 15% of the leadership positions, fewer than 10% of decision-making roles (General Conference Secretariat, 2023). Additionally, no women have been ordained as pastors yet in the Central Uganda Conference, and their pastoral ministry remains restricted to children's work and auxiliary

ministries (Nwaomah et al., 2024). If left unchecked, this imbalance is likely to entrench gender disparity and negatively affect church growth (Zurlo, 2023).

Others such as the Uganda Union Mission and ministries to women have advocated for leadership mentorship and training, yet denial of ordination and leadership at the top continues (Nelson, 2022). Further, other previous studies by researchers such as Gupta (2023) and Mwangi et al. (2023) have studied women's involvement in early Christianity and barriers to access in other environments such as Kenya and Zimbabwe. However, fewer studies have focused on the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Uganda, or more specifically the Central Uganda Conference, where the problem is pervasive (akawira, 2024). This study therefore intended to fill this gap by investigating barriers to women's participation in ministry in the Central Uganda Conference.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the barriers to women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church with specific focus on the Central Uganda Conference.

1.4 Objectives of the study

- i. To determine the theological interpretation issues that come with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.
- ii. To investigate the cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.
- iii. To explore the institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.

1.5 Research questions

- i. What are the theological interpretation issues that come with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference?
- ii. What are the cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference?
- iii. What are the institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference?

1.6 Hypothesis of the study

H₁: There are several theological interpretation issues that come with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.

H₂: There are several cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.

H₃: There are several institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.

1.7 Justification of the study

The rationale for the study was the need to account for and provide solutions to the persistent challenges facing women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Central Uganda Conference despite the current push by church leaders and pressure groups for gender inclusivity (William, 2023). Although previous studies by scholars like Zurlo (2023) and Nwaomah et al. (2024) have studied women's leadership in the church generally and in specific African nations, empirical information of how theological readings, cultural customs, and institutional regulations particularly limit women's leadership, decision-making, ordination, and pastoral involvement in Uganda is scarce. This study tried to fill this gap by providing context-specific information that can be used for policy, advocacy, and strategic interventions that enhance active women's participation in ministry.

1.8 Scope of the study

1.8.1 Geographical scope

The study was conducted in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference located along Kireka on Kabaka Road next to Prime Radio. The Central Uganda Conference was chosen as the case because it represents a significant and influential region in Uganda where women's participation in ministry can be critically examined.

1.8.2 Content Scope

This study specifically focused on; establishing the theological interpretation barriers associated with women's participation in ministry, examining the cultural norm barriers associated with women's participation in ministry, and exploring the institutional policy barriers associated with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.

1.8.3 Time Scope

This study covered data on barriers to women's participation in ministry and related church practices over the last five years, spanning 2020 to 2024. This timeframe allowed for a current analysis of trends in leadership roles uptake, decision-making levels, ordination access, and pastoral engagement among women in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church–Central Uganda Conference.

1.9 Significance of the study

The study would assist church leaders in knowing challenges facing women in ministry participation so that they can develop policies and strategies that enable gender inclusiveness.

Furthermore, the study would be of help to women in ministry by recognizing the challenges they face, which would prepare them to seek opportunities for leadership, ordination, and pastoral engagement.

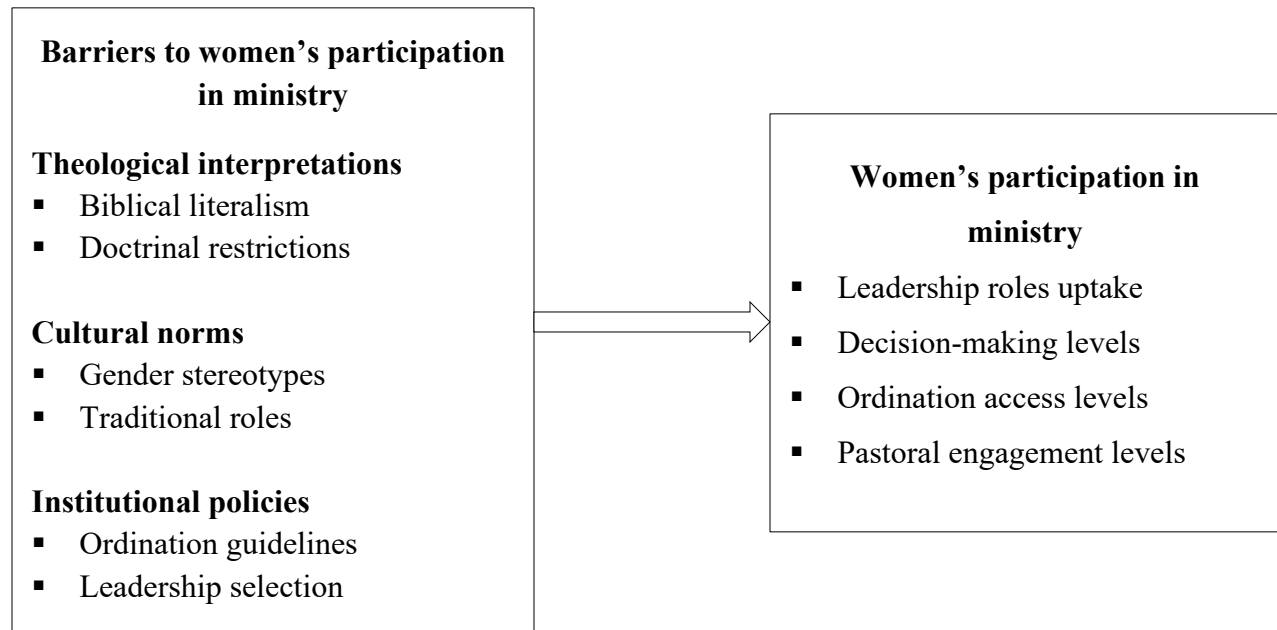
Additionally, the study would assist policy makers and religious regulators by providing evidence-based data for developing frameworks that ensure equitable representation of women in church leadership.

Lastly, the study would enlighten scholars and future researchers by filling knowledge gaps regarding women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Uganda, establishing grounds for future studies.

1.10 Conceptual framework

Independent variable

Dependent variable



Source: *Adopted from Kartini et al. (2024) and modified by the researcher (2025)*

This conceptual framework of this study shows that barriers to women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church i.e., theological understandings of biblical literalism and doctrinal prohibition, cultural expectations of gender stereotypes and traditional roles, and institutional policies of ordination policies and leadership recruitment have a direct relationship to the extent to which women can fully participate in ministry. Such barriers affect and often cut short women's involvement as evidenced through their leadership roles uptake, decision-making levels, ordination access levels, and pastoral participation levels, thereby shedding light on the pivotal link between structural, cultural, and doctrinal restrictions and overall female participation in ministry.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

To develop the research gaps in the research variables, the chapter summarized the academic writings by various authors on the barriers to women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. A concept definition was the beginning in an objective analysis of the literature, which was then followed by an examination of the objectives. The researcher used materials such as encyclopedias, magazines, journals, and books on the topic.

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 The Feminist Theory

This study was anchored in the Feminist Theory, which was first established systematically by Simone de Beauvoir in her classic work *The Second Sex* (1949). The theory has since evolved further with the writings of feminist theologians and scholars throughout the 20th and 21st centuries (Marcus, 2020). Feminist Theory emerged as a protest against patriarchy, pointing to structural inequalities in political, social, and religious systems that silence or exclude women's voices. It points to the reality that gender inequality is not natural or God-ordained but rather socially constructed and sustained through cultural norms, religious interpretations, and institutional practices that privilege men over women (Humm, 2021).

Some of the most fundamental assumptions of Feminist Theory include recognition of systemic and historically entrenched gender inequality, voice amplification for women, and reorganization of social and religious institutions for equality to be achieved (Allen, 2023). It places greater importance on removing patriarchal institutions that sustain male privilege and demands justice and equality in leadership and decision-making circles. The theory also highlights that women's representation in powerful positions contributes to fairness, equality, and all-encompassing community development, ultimately advancing the overall society and religious community (Garland-Thomson, 2020).

Underlying Feminist Theory are a number of assumptions: that patriarchy is institutionally and culturally constructed and not divine; that gender inequity is maintained by deeply ingrained habits and meanings within organizations; and that equitable participation by women enriches justice and fosters institutional mission and advancement (Butler, 2020). But the theory is circumscribed in that its emphasis on structural inequality sometimes occludes human agency, and its critiques of religious institutions aren't always compatible with theological belief of faith communities (Vergès, 2022). However, its explanatory power lies in bringing to light long-established habits and ideologies that sustain discrimination and stifle change.

In reference to this study, Feminist Theory provides a lens through which to critically analyze the barriers to women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church–Central Uganda Conference. It explains how patriarchal traditions, exegetical interpretations, and institutional procedures universally exclude women from positions of leadership, decision-making, ordination, and pastoral engagement (Ferguson, 2023). Through the use of this theory, the study not only identifies these barriers but also advocates for gender justice and inclusion as a means of empowering the mission and growth of the church (Marcus, 2020).

2.2 Theological interpretation barriers associated with women's participation in ministry

Takawira (2024) in their study examined women's role in early Christianity and highlighted how restrictive meanings in theology have continued to shape women's exclusion from ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Zimbabwe. The study revealed that biblical literalism has been used as a theological proof to keep women out of ordination and pastoral ministry, even as historical evidence suggests that women played significant ministerial functions during early Christianity. In the same vein, Mwangi et al. (2023) investigated inhibiting factors against the participation of women in the hierarchy of the Seventh-Day Adventist church in Kenya, and their findings indicated that doctrinal limitations based on sectarian interpretations perpetuate male control in the church's leadership. They based their conclusion that such theological limitations are pivotal in sustaining institutional discrimination of women in pastoral leadership.

Raysor (2023) researched obstacles to women's ministry within local churches throughout the United States and found that instruction underpinning conservative readings of the Bible sharply restricted women from assuming leadership roles. The study found that clergy and laity would

appeal to some scriptural texts in order to legitimize exclusionary practices that preclude women from being able to preach or serve as pastors. Likewise, Wood (2023) researched barriers to women's leadership in religious settings and discovered that theological stances, particularly complementarian theology, are strict frameworks denying women decision-making and leadership positions. The study identified that only policy changes are insufficient to encourage women's leadership in ministry unless the theological rationale for the limitations is addressed.

Gupta (2023) researched the women's past in early Christian ministry and evidenced that women served in teacher and leadership positions, contrary to subsequent theological portrayals where they were marginalized. The study argued that misappropriation of biblical scriptures has been central in advocating for the exclusion of women as ministers in churches today. Similarly, Zurlo (2023) surveyed women's roles in world Christianity and described how while women make up the majority of church membership worldwide, theological frameworks rooted in patriarchal readings of the Bible often keep them out of leadership positions. Zurlo highlighted that such theological exclusion not only deprives women of opportunities but also undermines the mission of the church worldwide.

Dzubinski and Stasson (2021) followed the opportunities and challenges women faced through Christian history and underscored that theological limitations have been used continuously to confine women to subordinate roles instead of leadership. The authors revealed that appeal to biblical literalism and doctrines from the past most commonly provided a culture where women were expected to serve but not lead. In the same way, Lee (2021) in his critique of women's ministry in the New Testament emphasized that misuse of scripture has been one of the most important theological impediments to women re-occupying their rightful place in ministry. In his view, if the New Testament is approached contextually, it actually provides solid grounds for women's participation in church leadership.

Lehman (2021) analyzed ministerial styles and gender, finding that theology places stilted, gendered expectations on women's expression of leadership in ministry. His study found that women were warned against becoming pastors because of theological suppositions that described leadership as masculine in character. Dixon (2021) also analyzed men and women's ministry partnerships and noted the forms in which misapplied theology has created systemic hurdles for women's participation. He added that church structures that still insist on male leadership draw

their support from differential scriptural interpretations that fail to represent the full biblical partnership vision of ministry.

Chinyamurindi and Rashe (2021) examined female pastor testimonies in South Africa and learned that theological barriers founded on patriarchal renderings of scripture were a major barrier discouraging women from pastoral ministry callings. The study reported that many female pastors faced opposition from churches who saw their calling as theologically incorrect. In addition, Kalumba et al. (2023), although focused on women within Zambia's Ministry of Education, highlighted the way theological argument is often mixed with cultural belief in order to justify keeping women out of leadership roles. They observed how, in attempts by women to negotiate decision-making, theological interpretations were employed as barriers to justify institutional opposition.

2.3 Cultural norm barriers associated with women's participation in ministry

Decker (2023) in his study illustrates that deeply ingrained gendered expectations socialize Ugandan women into congregational support roles and away from public religious leadership, shaping ministry trajectories long before formal selection processes begin. The same study continues that the imperatives of kinship obligations and reputation pressures within communities make leadership by women openly transgressive culturally, thus discouraging candidacy for pastoral tracks. To this, Wabule (2023) demonstrates that Ugandan church women leaders frequently face opposition disguised as "respect for tradition," which constrains their ability to initiate and sustain peacebuilding and transformational initiatives within congregations. Scaling up to the regional level, Nwaomah et al. (2024) discovered that in Sub-Saharan Adventism, female high membership is paired with female low leadership due to cultural scripts associating headship with maleness, reproducing informal vetoes on women's ministry advancement.

William (2023) argues that calls for the integration of women in Adventist settings are frustrated when cultural narratives of honor and decency are mixed with theological language so that change is framed as betrayal of group identity rather than policy enhancement. Within Sub-Saharan African pastoral ministries, Barbe (2024) perceives congregational offerings and leadership legitimacy coded within patriarchal respectability norms, which prompts administrators to preserve male-first structures that seem culturally "safe" to donors and elders. Nelson (2022)

similarly finds that volunteers acquire these cultural hierarchies, producing self-censorship among women who delimit their ambitions to "acceptable" ministries despite competence and call. Together these studies reveal the ways in which cultural norms shape organizational risk calculations and self-selection, limiting women's ministry pipelines before formal gatekeeping.

Cortés (2024) on the North American Division's volunteer lay pastor model illustrates how culturally familiar leadership archetypes can be prioritized in implementation, and when informally exported via denominational networks to other regions, entrench male-coded expectations by example and template training. Thompson (2024) also argues that patriarchal scripts are replicated in intergenerational mentorship programs when senior male leaders sponsor men who "fit" traditional images of leadership, thereby tightening women's invisibility in leadership apprenticeship chains. Johnson (2023) illustrates that even in online ministry spaces, platformed leadership takes offline cultural cues, granting men disproportionate voice and agenda-setting power in hybrid congregational life. These findings indicate that modernization itself does not destabilize cultural norms; rather, norms transition into new modalities unless intentionally counter-structured.

Öster (2023) contrasts Sweden's Adventist setting where feminist argumentation gained traction with settings where culture more strongly naturalizes male leadership, showing that women's ministry careers proliferate where national cultures legitimize gender equality and shrink where culture interprets equality as moral decadence. Nwaomah et al. (2024) also illustrate that across West-Central Africa, evangelism and retention efforts are frequently conducted in the absence of concurrent gender-equity reforms, amid cultural comfort with male gatekeeping amid numerical growth. Decker (2023) shows that in Uganda, logics of bridewealth and domestic role expectation are transposed onto congregational expectation of who is to "speak with authority," prejudicing women at nomination and election points. Collectively, they affirm cultural climate as a determining moderator of women's ministry outcomes, sometimes more decisive than formal policy documents.

Nelson (2022) discovered that women volunteers possess high ownership for mission but face informal cultural policing as they step outside "care" ministries into preaching and governance spheres, leading to attrition or re-direction into less visible service. William (2023) proposes a transformational advocacy model that reconceptualizes participation as faithfulness to mission

rather than cultural deviance but adds that advocacy must specifically engage communal narratives if it is to be legitimized. Barbe (2024) finds that pastoral leaders can alter congregational norms by publicly appreciating women's contributions, but change is fragile without ongoing modeling and constituency education that reinterprets respect and authority beyond male prototypes. These studies concur that cultural norms are not mere background conditions but instead active processes that script eligibility, credibility, and longevity for women in ministry, calling for norm-targeted interventions alongside policy change.

2.4 Institutional policy barriers associated with women's participation in ministry

Zurlo (2023) in his study depicted how denomination-level policy stands and regional policy habits vary, leading to patchy experiences for women candidates depending on local governance culture. Gupta (2023) learned that when institutional policies do not directly assist or promote women's candidacy, casual habits such as preferential sponsorship of men accomplish the task and ensure exclusion. Dzubinski and Stasson (2021) found that entrenched procedural conventions (e.g., seniority rules, male-preferenced selection panels) put women who are equally competent but are without institutional sponsorship at a disadvantage. Lee (2021) argued that policy reform without accompanying governance-cultural changes is likely to fail because selection committees continue to apply legacy standards that favor men. These arguments collectively prove that institutional policy barriers are underpinned by governance practice and the absence of proper gender-equity standards.

Takawira (2024) in their study put in place that institutional policy specifically formal ordination rules and credentialing procedures often contain language or precedents which limit women's eligibility to pastoral office, thus institutionalizing exclusion. Mwangi et al. (2023) in their study also found that local selection panels use policy interpretations in favor of male candidates, effectively narrowing the list of applicants and reifying gendered patterns of appointments. Raysor (2023) further contributes that policy manuals are often used unevenly in congregations, and conservative interpretations are employed to defend against the promotion of women even when there could be formally inclusive readings. Wood (2023) discovered that institutional hiring and promotion guidelines of religious institutions often do not have transparency and gender-equality protections, thus leaving implicit bias to influence results. Together, these researches indicate that

institutional policy barriers work not only via formal rules but also via discretionary meanings that gatekeep women's leadership avenues in ministry.

Lehman (2021) examined how credentialing requirements and job postings may include gendered presumptions (e.g., preferring "authoritative" styles associated with men), thereby putting women candidates whose ministry approach will be viewed as a deviation at a disadvantage. An additional study by Kalumba et al. (2023) of public-sector career progress in Zambia determined that policy requirements by official decree (such as uninterrupted service or certain prior assignments) routinely disfavor women because of caregiving interruptions, a situation replicated in church institutional policy. Raysor (2023) also reported that requests for certain types of training or supervisory experience routinely gatekept by male networks essentially exclude many qualified women from consideration. Taken together, these analyses demonstrate that seemingly neutral institutional policies can have gendered effects in operation unless policy consciously considers structural disadvantage to women.

Gupta (2023) investigated how institutional professional development and training policies can discriminate against women when access to relevant courses or supervisory assignments is informal or network-based. Another study by Mwangi et al. (2023) concluded that pipeline and mentorship initiatives will be structured and funded so as to favor male career paths, thereby reinforcing institutional prejudice even when policy is formally neutral. Dzubinski and Stasson (2021) also noted that family-inequitable career-path policies penalize women who share care burdens, leading to lower representation in higher ministry levels. Lehman (2021) proposed policy alignments such as flexible paths, overt mentoring of women, and focused leadership development to mitigate these structural limitations. In general, this literature indicates that policy barriers in institutions go beyond ordination rules into the broader context of training, mentoring, and career growth.

Lee (2021) and Dzubinski and Stasson (2021) examined governance reforms in a study and found that policy reforms from the top without grassroots involvement often fail to change outcomes because ground actors interpret, implement, or resist reforms based on dominant cultures. Takawira (2024) showed that enduring change requires both formal policy revision and dedicated change agents within organizational structures to model and impose inclusive inclinations. Zurlo (2023) argued that denominational leadership must blend policy with monitoring, capacity-

building, and incentives for inclusive appointments if they wish to see quantifiable gains in women's participation in ministry. Mwangi et al. (2023) concluded that without integrated policy, cultural, and capacity interventions, institutional barriers will persist in reproducing gendered patterns of ministry leadership. Such studies overall highlight that policy reform is needed but is insufficient unless complemented by implementation, accountability, and enabling structures attuned to women's realities.

Takawira (2024) noted that appeal and grievance mechanisms in church institutions tend to be poorly formulated or inaccessible to women, devaluing redress when policy is discriminatorily enforced. Wood (2023) also discovered that weak accountability mechanisms and weak appointment transparency allow discriminatory practices to pass unnoticed. Zurlo (2023) has noted that when audit and reporting procedures do not include gender-disaggregated data, institutional leaders are less likely to detect and act on imbalances in ministry appointments. Lee (2021) argued that the implementation of clear, traceable processes of selection and ordination with public criteria and appeal pathways reduces discretionary prejudice and increases equity. These papers point out that strengthening procedural safeguards and openness in data are essential to tearing down institutional policy barriers.

2.5 Summary and literature gaps

From the above literature review, it is evident that while several studies (e.g., Takawira, 2024; Mwangi et al., 2023; Zurlo, 2023) have examined theological, cultural, and institutional policy barriers to women participating in ministry, most of these have been based on historical, theological, or regional contexts elsewhere, with very little empirical evidence focused on the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in the Central Uganda Conference. Also, though the available literature identifies the impact of doctrinal hermeneutics, cultural stereotypes, and organizational policies in women's exclusion, still there is a void in synthesizing these obstacles holistically to visualize how they intersect to affect women's leadership, decision-making, ordination, and pastoral participation in the Ugandan Adventist setting. This study thus fills this gap by locating and examining these barriers in the Central Uganda Conference, where women's membership remains disproportionately low despite forming a majority of the members of the church.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology for conducting the research, detailing procedures and approaches for data collection. It includes the research design, study area, population, sampling procedures, sample size, data collection methods, data processing and analysis approaches, data quality control, reliability assessment, limitations and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional survey research design, which involves the collection of data from respondents at one point in time without follow-ups later on (Spector, 2019). This was a suitable design for the study as it allows efficient and cost-effective collection of information over a short period of time while still offering insightful understanding of the challenge that affects women's ministry involvement in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Central Uganda Conference (Patrik & Ugo, 2019). Since the study was focusing on measuring the relationship between cultural, institutional, and theological barriers and women's participation in ministry, the cross-sectional study design offered a platform through which patterns and associations as they exist at the point of data collection can be determined.

The study also involved a mixed-methods approach with the incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative research strategies to offer a broad platform for understanding the subject. The quantitative component involved administration of standardized questionnaires to members of churches; women actively involved in the ministry, departmental leaders, and lay church workers in the Central Uganda Conference. These respondents provided numerical data to be statistically analyzed and employed to evaluate the extent to which institutional policies, theological perspectives, and cultural practices discourage women's participation in ministry (Bhardwaj, 2019).

The qualitative component complemented the quantitative findings by providing richer contextual and experiential details. It involved conducting in-depth face-to-face interviews with the assistance of semi-structured guides among key informants from church administration and leadership. They

included clergy, conference officials, and women ministry leaders whose roles are pivotal to policy practice and development within the church. Qualitative research analyzed how institutional structures, policies, and doctrine positions influence women’s access to opportunities in ministry, and problems encountered by those advocating for gender inclusion. This approach allowed the research to capture rich experience and church engagement that is difficult to quantify, and hence heightened the interpretation and utility of the results (Haradhan, 2021).

3.3 Study Population

A study population encompasses the entire group of individuals or entities pertinent to a research question, from which a sample may be selected (Naseri, 2021). Its purpose is to provide a defined group that the researcher can study to generalize findings, ensuring the research results are applicable to the broader context of interest (Schoch, 2020). The Seventh-Day Adventist Church-Central Uganda Conference comprises various stakeholders; however, this study specifically focused on church members, departmental leaders, and women actively engaged in ministry within the conference, totaling to about 100 individuals. Furthermore, the study also included church leadership and administrators such as the clergy and conference officials, totaling to about 10, who served as key informants in providing deeper insights into institutional, cultural, and theological barriers to women’s participation in ministry.

3.4 Sample size determination

According to Bujang (2021), a sample is a representative subgroup of the target population from which findings can be generalized; a sample of respondents was determined using Slovin’s formula (1960) as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

“n” is sample size, “N” is population, “e” is error (0.05) or level of confidence 95%

“N” (population) = 100 church members, departmental leaders, and women actively engaged in ministry within the Central Uganda Conference

$$n = \frac{100}{1 + 100(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{100}{1 + 100(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{100}{1 + 0.25}$$

$$n = \frac{100}{1.25}$$

n = 80 church members, departmental leaders, and women actively engaged in ministry at the lower level within the Central Uganda Conference

Therefore, the sample size was 80 church members, departmental leaders, and women actively engaged in ministry within the Central Uganda Conference. More so, the study also included 10 key informants who are the church leadership and administrators of The Seventh-Day Adventist Church-Central Uganda Conference such as the clergy, and conference officials and women ministry leaders.

3.5 Sampling Techniques and Procedure

3.5.1 Simple random sampling

This study employed straightforward random sampling to select respondents from among the 80 church members, departmental leaders, and actively involved women in ministry in the Central Uganda Conference. Simple random sampling was appropriate because it ensures that all the eligible participants have an equal chance of being included in the study, thereby reducing selection bias and enhancing the credibility and generalizability of results in the context of the church (Rahman et al., 2022). To accomplish this, the complete roster of church members and departmental leaders serving in a ministry capacity were compiled, and the random sampling method (e.g., the lottery system or computer random numbers) was used to select the 80 interviewees. This approach ensures that the sample accurately represents the views and experiences of women and men regarding the barriers to women engaging in ministry in the Central Uganda Conference (Ben-David et al., 2021).

3.5.2 Purposive sampling

On the other hand, purposive sampling was used in selecting 10 key informants from the church leadership and administrators of the Central Uganda Conference. These included clergy, conference officials, departmental leaders, and women ministry leaders who are directly involved in church governance and operations of the ministry. This method was suitable because it allows the researcher to intentionally select individuals who have expert knowledge, strategic insight, and leadership positions on the practices of ministry and gender inclusivity (Campbell et al., 2020). These key informants are positionally placed to provide detailed, contextual information on how institutional practice, church policy, and cultural expectations shape women's participation in ministry. Their views complemented the quantitative findings and enhance the ability of the study to draw practical and policy-related inferences for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in Uganda (Bakkalbasioglu, 2020).

3.6 Data Collection Methods

3.6.1 Questionnaire Survey

According to Mchumu (2011), a survey is a self-completing instrument used for the purpose of obtaining information about variables of interest from numerous individuals. Quantitative data on the hindrances to women's ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church within the Central Uganda Conference refers to the current study's method of data collection. The standardized questionnaire was administered to 80 selected church members, departmental officers, and women who are actively engaged in ministry. The questionnaires consisted of close-ended questions designed to gather respondents' experiences, perceptions, and challenges regarding theological, cultural, and institutional factors affecting women's roles in ministry. This method was selected because it is effective in gathering significant amounts of information, can be easily subjected to statistical analysis, and has the ability to provide quantifiable information on the effects of barriers on women's access to pastoral, leadership, and decision-making positions within the church.

3.6.2 Interviews

Interviews, according to Jain (2021), involve open-ended interviewing of key informants with the goal of seeking detailed and context-specific answers. For this study, 10 purposively selected key informants from the Central Uganda Conference church administration and leadership were interviewed. They included clergy, conference officials, departmental leaders, and women ministry leaders. The interviews aimed to enhance the complementing of quantitative data with more in-depth understanding of how church policy, cultural norms, and theological interpretation influence women's involvement in ministry (Taherdoost, 2021). Conducted face-to-face, the interviews used a semi-structured interview schedule to allow probes for eliciting thoughtful answers. The method was appropriate for unearthing subtle experiences, determining systemic obstacles, and understanding the actual-world realities and policy issues of promoting gender inclusivity in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (Ruslin et al., 2022).

3.7 Data collection instruments

3.7.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire was employed as the primary data-gathering instrument for the quantitative part of this research, among women participating in ministry, departmental leaders, and church members in the Central Uganda Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (Podgórecki, 2023). The survey comprised close-ended, fixed questions designed to yield quantitative data on impediments to women's participation in ministry based on theological, cultural, and institutional factors. This tool enabled systematic data collection based on study objectives, enabling the researcher to identify how these barriers affect women's access to leadership, decision-making, and pastoral opportunities. A five-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree) was used to quantify respondents' views and experiences regarding the extent, nature, and impact of these barriers on ministry involvement (Ikart, 2019).

3.7.2 Key Informant Interview Guide

A key informant interview guide was employed to collect qualitative data from leaders and administrators of the Central Uganda Conference, such as clergy, department heads, conference officials, and women's ministry leaders (Taherdoost, 2021). An open-ended interview schedule

with questions probing in-depth answers on the ways institutional policy, cultural expectations, and theological interpretation affect women's ministry engagement was employed. This instrument investigated prominent themes such as chances in leadership, mentorship, policy enactment, and organizational tradition that influence women's ministerial roles. Qualitative data gathered was employed to complement the quantitative findings by adding context and experience-based perception as well as interpreting underlying causes of systemic and structural problems that frame women's involvement in ministry. Interviews conducted with the help of this tool ensured rich and elaborate data that supports and strengthens the study (Jain, 2021).

3.8 Validity and Reliability of Data Collection Instruments

3.8.1 Validity for Quantitative Research

Validity was assessed to determine if the questions effectively capture the intended data (Sürücü & Maslakçi, 2020). Research experts evaluated the questions to assess their ability to capture the intended responses. A Content Validity Index (CVI) was computed to establish the validity of the research instrument. The researcher used the formula below to determine the validity of the research instruments.

Content validity Index (CVI) = $\frac{\text{Relevant items by all judges as suitable}}{\text{Total number of items judged.}}$

Total number of items judged.

The CVI was 0.83 which exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Duckett, 2021), hence suggesting that the questionnaire was effective for data collection.

3.8.2 Reliability for Quantitative Research

Reliability in research pertains to the consistency, stability, and dependability of research outcomes, reflecting how well a study's results can be replicated or reproduced under comparable conditions or by different researchers. The questionnaire's reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha (Mellinger & Hanson, 2020). A pilot study involving 5 respondents was conducted, and the reliability analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The following formula was used to calculate the Cronbach's coefficient

alpha. The coefficient was 0.85 which exceeded the suggested level.70 (Amin, 2005), hence suggesting that the survey was appropriate for gathering data.

3.8.3 Validity and Reliability for Qualitative Research

In qualitative research, the researcher's memory constraints can affect the study's validity. To address this issue, the researcher took detailed notes during interviews. Following each interview, the researcher promptly compiled and analyzed the data to extract meaningful insights. Results were also shared with participants to ensure an accurate interpretation of their responses. Furthermore, the researcher sought feedback from their supervisor to validate the findings (Coleman, 2022).

Reliability for qualitative research was measured by conducting the study again to ascertain if consistent results are obtained. However, due to constraints such as time limitations, the researcher did not have the opportunity to repeat the study more than once. Consequently, it became challenging to draw definitive conclusions regarding the reliability of the study. The lack of multiple repetitions undermines the ability to evaluate the consistency and stability of the findings, potentially limiting the confidence in the research outcomes. This limitation highlighted the importance of carefully planning and executing qualitative research to maximize reliability within the constraints of the study's circumstances (Hayashi et al., 2019).

3.9 Procedure of Data Collection

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from Uganda Christian University following a successful proposal defense. This letter was then used to formally seek permission from the top management of The Seventh-Day Adventist Church-Central Uganda Conference. Upon approval, the researcher scheduled appointments with key informants for face-to-face interviews and distribute structured questionnaires to selected respondents in the organization. Data collection only proceeded after obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring ethical compliance and voluntary participation in the study.

3.10 Data Analysis

3.10.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data

This was achieved by classifying respondents into categories known as codes. The data processing phase involved organizing and refining questionnaires, coding responses, and then tabulating and analyzing the data using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 (Jopling, 2019). SPSS was chosen for its comprehensive range of tools, from basic tabulation to advanced multivariate analysis, making it widely used for quantitative data analysis in academic and commercial settings. Specifically, the researcher employed descriptive statistics (such as means, frequencies, and percentages) to summarize the data. The software's efficiency in interpreting complex data and saving time in analysis was another reason for its selection by the researcher (Ali, 2020).

Data editing was crucial during this process to detect and correct errors and omissions in the collected raw data. This scrutiny of completed questionnaires ensured accuracy, consistency with other gathered information, uniform data entry, and proper organization to facilitate coding and tabulation (Pentang & Pentang, 2021).

Coding involves assigning numeric values or symbols to responses and categorizing them into distinct classes or categories. The researcher ensured thoroughness and exclusivity, ensuring each response fits into only one category within a set. Coding was essential for efficient analysis, condensing numerous responses into a few classes that contain crucial information for analysis (Skinner, 2020).

3.10.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data

The qualitative data collected in this study was analyzed using thematic analysis as defined by Creswell (2007) to identify underlying patterns and findings from the interviews with the sampled key informants, that is, the clergy, departmental leaders, conference officials, and women ministry leaders in the Central Uganda Conference. The analysis process commenced with data familiarization, where audio-interviews were transcribed verbatim. The researcher thereafter conducted coding to group responses into categories that revealed dominating themes around theological, cultural, and institutional barriers preventing women from engaging in ministry

(Jackson et al., 2019). The themes identified were charted against study aims and interpreted in a bid to make inference, with representative verbatim quotes being used to enrich findings. This approach ensured that research captures nuanced observations and context-specific facts regarding systemic, structural, and cultural obstacles that shape women's leadership opportunities, ministerial participation, and role-exchange in decision-making roles in the Central Uganda Conference (Ruggiano & Perry, 2019).

3.11 Measurement of Variables

The measurement of variables in this study involved both independent and dependent variables quantified through specific indicators. The independent variables were measured using categorical scales to assess relevant demographic and contextual factors, while Likert scales (e.g., 1 to 5, with 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) evaluate perceptions, attitudes, and responses associated with each independent variable. The dependent variable was measured using ordinal scales to determine the level of impact or change observed, guided by key indicators relevant to the study's objectives. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, summarized responses, while inferential statistics tested relationships and draw conclusions on the variable interactions.

3.12 Ethical Consideration

The following ethical considerations were upheld;

First and foremost, this study adhered to ethical research standards as required by the Uganda Christian University Ethics Committee (UCU-REC). Approval was sought from UCU-REC prior to data collection to ensure that the research meets ethical guidelines. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and their confidentiality, privacy, and voluntary participation were strictly respected throughout the study.

To uphold privacy, the researcher ensured that all personal data gathered from participants was stored securely and only used for the purposes outlined in the research. No unauthorized individuals had access to the information, and all data was handled with strict adherence to privacy laws and regulations to prevent misuse.

Regarding informed consent, the researcher provided all participants with clear, detailed information about the purpose of the study, what participation entails, and any potential risks involved. Participants were asked to sign a consent form, confirming that they fully understood the study and agreed to participate voluntarily.

For anonymity, the researcher ensured that participants' identities were not revealed in any part of the research report. Any identifying information was removed or coded in such a way that individual participants could not be traced or identified by anyone reading the final report.

To maintain confidentiality, the researcher ensured that any personal information collected was only accessible to the research team and was kept secure. Participants' responses were not disclosed to third parties, and data was used solely for research purposes in aggregated or anonymized form.

In order to avoid plagiarism, the researcher ensured that all sources of information, ideas, or data from other researchers or publications were properly credited through accurate citations and references. Any direct quotes were clearly marked and attributed to their original sources to maintain academic integrity.

Finally, throughout the research process, the researcher maintained an ethical approach by following institutional guidelines and upholding principles of respect and fairness, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and the integrity of the research findings.

3.13 Limitations and delimitations of the study

First and foremost, some respondents were not willing to provide information because of being suspicious of where the information would be taken. This was solved through the remarkable reputation in the study context as a learning institution and also obtaining an introductory letter from the university.

Finally, the researcher was limited by funds that were needed to facilitate the research such as motivating the respondents, printing fees and even daily transport to the organization to collect data. However, the researcher used self-initiatives and strategies to mobilize financial assistance from family and friends who wished him well.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results of analysis that has been done to look at the specific objectives of the study and in relation to the reviewed literature. The study was carried out using questionnaires with 80 church members, departmental leaders, and women actively engaged in ministry within the Central Uganda Conference plus interviews with the key informants who are the Church leadership and administrators of The Seventh-Day Adventist Church-Central Uganda Conference. The findings are presented with the help of tables for purposes of clarity and interpretation.

4.1 Findings on demographic characteristics of respondents

This section presents the general background information about the respondents in relation to their gender, age bracket, highest level of education, and period spent working or engaging in the ministry within the Central Uganda Conference as shown in the table below;

Table 1: Background Information about the respondents

Item	Description	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	28	35.0
	Female	52	65.0
	Total	80	100.0
Age bracket	21-30 years	25	31.2
	31-40 years	30	37.5
	41-50 years	18	22.5
	51 + years	7	8.8
	Total	80	100.0
Level of education	Certificate	8	10.0
	Diploma	16	20.0

	Bachelor's degree	32	40.0
	Master's degree	13	16.2
	Others	11	13.8
	Total	80	100.0
Period spent working or engaging in ministry	1-5 years	15	18.8
	6-10 years	35	43.7
	Above 10 years	30	37.5
	Total	80	100.0

Source: *Primary data*

The study findings revealed that most of respondents were female, represented by 65.0%, whereas males accounted for 35.0%. This implies that women formed the larger proportion of participants in the study. This implies that female perspectives were more represented in the findings.

Furthermore, the findings established that the largest group of respondents fell within the 31–40 years age bracket at 37.5%, followed by those aged 21–30 years at 31.2%, then 41–50 years at 22.5%, and lastly those aged 51+ years at 8.8%, indicating a predominantly youthful and middle-aged population. This suggests that most respondents are in their active working and ministry years.

In addition, the results revealed that majority of the respondents hold a Bachelor's degree, represented by 40.0%, followed by those who hold a Diploma, represented by 20.0%, followed by Master's degree holders, represented by 16.2%, followed by those who hold other qualifications like postgraduate diplomas, represented by 13.8%, whereas those who hold a Certificate were represented by 10.0%, This indicates that all the respondents were capable of understanding and responding effectively to the study questions.

Lastly, most of respondents had spent 6–10 years in ministry, represented by 43.7%, followed by those who have been involved in ministry for more than 10 years, represented by 37.5%, and lastly those with 1-5 years of experience working engaged in the ministry were represented by 18.8%, indicating that most participants had considerable experience in ministry. This further implies that the data collected was based on informed and experienced perspectives.

4.2 Theological interpretation issues that come with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

Table 2 summarizes respondents' responses the theological interpretation issues that come with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference by using a Likert scale where SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), NS (Not Sure), D (Disagree) and SD (Strongly Disagree).

Table 2: Theological interpretation issues that come with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

Statements	Extent of agreement and disagreement				
	SA	A	NS	D	SD
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)
Certain biblical texts are interpreted in ways that limit women's participation in ministry.	42 52.5%	24 30.0%	00	10 12.5%	4 5.0%
Biblical literalism influences restrictions placed on women in church leadership.	23 28.8%	35 43.7%	6 7.5%	11 13.7%	5 6.3%
Doctrinal teachings in the church discourage women from seeking pastoral roles.	19 23.7%	38 47.5%	7 8.8%	15 18.7%	1 1.3%
The church's theological position on ordination affects women's ministry opportunities.	21 26.3%	34 42.5%	5 6.3%	20 25.0%	00
Male headship teachings restrict women's involvement in decision-making roles.	23 28.8%	35 43.7%	10 12.5%	12 15.0%	00
Women's spiritual gifts are undervalued due to prevailing theological interpretations.	24 30.0%	40 50.0%	00	16 20.0%	00
Theological arguments are frequently used to justify excluding women from senior leadership positions.	20 25.0%	42 52.5%	00	18 22.5%	00

Source: *Primary data*

Table 2 represents the descriptive statistics on the theological interpretation issues that come with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda

Conference. The findings revealed that 82.5% of the respondents agreed that certain biblical texts are interpreted in ways that limit women's participation in ministry, while 17.5% disagreed with the statement. This implies that scriptural interpretation is widely perceived as a major theological barrier that restricts women's involvement in ministry within the church.

The findings also showed that 72.5% of the respondents agreed that biblical literalism influences restrictions placed on women in church leadership, whereas 20.0% disagreed and 7.5% were not sure about the statement. This implies that rigid interpretations of scripture significantly contribute to limiting women's leadership opportunities in the church.

Furthermore, the results indicated that 71.2% of the respondents agreed that doctrinal teachings in the church discourage women from seeking pastoral roles, while 20.0% disagreed and 8.8% were not sure about the statement. This implies that church doctrines play a key role in discouraging women from actively pursuing pastoral ministry positions.

In addition, the findings revealed that 68.8% of the respondents agreed that the church's theological position on ordination affects women's ministry opportunities, whereas 25.0% disagreed and 6.3% were not sure about the statement. This implies that limitations on ordination are a significant factor constraining women's full participation in ministry.

The study further established that 72.5% of the respondents agreed that male headship teachings restrict women's involvement in decision-making roles, while 15.0% disagreed and 12.5% were not sure about the statement. This implies that gender-based theological teachings limit women's influence in church leadership and decision-making structures.

Moreover, the findings indicated that 80.0% of the respondents agreed that women's spiritual gifts are undervalued due to prevailing theological interpretations, whereas 20.0% disagreed with the statement. This implies that theological perceptions contribute to the under-recognition of women's capabilities and roles in ministry.

Lastly, the results showed that 77.5% of the respondents agreed that theological arguments are frequently used to justify excluding women from senior leadership positions, while 22.5% disagreed with the statement. This implies that theological reasoning is commonly used as a justification for maintaining male dominance in higher leadership roles within the church.

Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of respondents agreed across all statements that theological interpretations significantly hinder women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church–Central Uganda Conference, with agreement levels consistently above average. This implies that theological factors remain a dominant and deeply rooted barrier that limits women's involvement in leadership, decision-making, and pastoral roles within the church.

4.2.1 Influence of biblical interpretations on women's participation in ministry roles

From the interviews conducted with the key informants who are the Church leadership and administrators of The Seventh-Day Adventist Church-Central Uganda Conference, they were asked for their views on how the current biblical interpretations within the conference influence women's participation in ministry roles and their responses were as follows;

The key informants showed that the way the Bible is interpreted at the conference has a big impact on how women get involved in ministry because it focuses on traditional readings of scripture that put male leadership first. They pointed out that certain passages such as *1 Timothy 2:12*, which forbids women from teaching or exercising authority over men, are often read literally and so restrict women's access to leadership and pastoral positions. Church officials clarified that such views are firmly rooted in religious teachings and affect daily ministry activities as well as policy development; therefore women are urged to concentrate more on supporting roles rather than leadership roles.

Furthermore, participants said that interpretations of the Bible in the meeting tend to bolster the idea of male headship, which influences women's engagement in decision-making and leadership structures. They highlighted that passages like *Ephesians 5:23*, which presents the man as the head, are sometimes used in church government outside the family, which limits women's chances to be leaders. Informants underlined that this theological view influences attitudes among leaders and churchgoers, therefore causing opposition anytime women aspire to more active or powerful positions in ministry.

In addition, the interviews showed that even with strict readings, there is other biblical points of view that back women's involvement; however, these are less highlighted at the conference. Some leaders highlighted Phoebe in *Romans 16:1* and Deborah in *Judges 4–5*, who had notable ministry

and leadership positions in biblical days. They did admit, though, that more conservative readings tend to eclipse these ones, which constrains their impact on present events and lowers chances for women to totally participate in ministry.

Lastly, important sources observed that women's confidence and readiness to seek ministry positions are influenced by the endurance of these views. They clarified that many women internalize these messages and are reluctant to step forward into leadership when biblical lessons are often given in ways that seem to exclude women. Meanwhile, some leaders observed a slow but erratic change in attitude throughout the conference as continuous theological debates and exposure to wider readings started to challenge conventional ideas, albeit change is slow and unequal. Some of the key informants had this to say,

“.....Biblical interpretations in our conference largely uphold male leadership, and many members rely on these teachings to define ministry roles, which unintentionally limits women from exploring their full potential in pastoral and leadership responsibilities.....”

Key informant 1

“.....While the Bible has examples of women leaders, our common interpretations tend to emphasize restrictions more than possibilities, which affect how women see themselves and how the church structures opportunities for their involvement in ministry.....”

Key informant 2

4.2.2 Effect of doctrinal positions on women's access to leadership and ordination

From the interviews conducted with the key informants who are the Church leadership and administrators of The Seventh-Day Adventist Church-Central Uganda Conference, they were asked for their views on ways in which doctrinal positions of the church affect women's access to leadership and ordination and their responses were as follows;

The doctrinal positions of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, particularly the interpretations surrounding pastoral leadership and ordination, significantly influence women's access to ministry roles. Many important informants observed that some ideas highlight male headship as specified in texts like *1 Timothy 2:12*, which reads, *“I do not allow a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she should be quiet.”* Many times, this interpretation forms the foundation for

prohibiting women from pastoral roles, which reduces the chances for women to act as official leaders within the conference. Respondents said that this theoretical position influences policy and practice in ministry appointments, therefore supporting the idea that men hold most leadership positions.

Many interviewees pointed out that accepted beliefs regarding women's spiritual credentials also influence attitudes toward them. Although women might have amazing spiritual gifts, the church's emphasis on male ordination sometimes minimizes these gifts, especially in official pastoral settings. *Titus 2:3–5*, which tells older women to teach younger ones, is taken to mean that women are in supportive and mentoring roles instead of in charge of leadership. Such theoretical stances, key informants underlined, unwittingly restrict women's development and dissuade some from seeking for higher ministry responsibilities even with the requisite experience and theological training.

Furthermore, religious beliefs have an impact on the conference's promotion policies and leadership succession. Respondents said that institutional loyalty to classic interpretations sometimes leads to men being offered mostly senior leadership positions while women are steered toward subordinate or department leadership roles. To support male power hierarchies in church management, biblical allusions such *Ephesians 5:23* which defines the husband as the head of the wife are often used. The interviewees claim that this conceptual framework affects not just the ordination selection process but also the larger chances for women to influence decision-making in the conference. Some of the key informants had this to say,

“.....Although women possess significant spiritual gifts and ministry experience, doctrinal interpretations emphasizing male headship continue to limit their ordination, often confining them to supportive rather than authoritative leadership roles in our church.....”

Key informant 3

“.....The church's understanding of scripture, particularly passages on male leadership, shapes both policy and practice, which restricts women from accessing senior pastoral and decision-making positions despite their competence and calling.....” **Key informant 4**

4.3 Cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

Table 3 summarizes respondents' responses on the cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference by using a Likert scale where SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), NS (Not Sure), D (Disagree) and SD (Strongly Disagree).

Table 3: Cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

Statements	Extent of agreement and disagreement				
	SA	A	NS	D	SD
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)
Cultural beliefs about gender roles discourage women from serving in ministry leadership.	20 25.0%	48 60.0%	00	2 2.5%	10 12.5%
Traditional expectations prioritize men over women in church leadership roles.	13 16.2%	60 75.0%	00	4 5.0%	3 3.8%
Community perceptions negatively affect women who aspire to pastoral ministry.	22 27.5%	50 62.5%	2 2.5%	6 7.5%	00
Gender stereotypes limit women's confidence to take up ministry responsibilities.	14 17.5%	55 68.7%	3 3.8%	8 10.0%	00
Family responsibilities are viewed as barriers to women's active ministry involvement.	11 13.8%	49 61.2%	00	20 25.0%	00
Women in leadership face resistance from members due to cultural norms.	19 23.8%	57 71.3%	00	4 5.0%	00
Patriarchal cultural values influence leadership selection within the church.	5 6.3%	60 75.0%	00	15 18.7%	00

Source: *Primary data*

Table 3 represents the descriptive statistics on the cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference. The

findings indicated that 85.0% of the respondents agreed that cultural beliefs about gender roles discourage women from serving in ministry leadership, while 15.0% disagreed with the statement. This implies that deeply rooted cultural beliefs significantly hinder women's participation in leadership roles within the church.

The findings also showed that 91.2% of the respondents agreed that traditional expectations prioritize men over women in church leadership roles, whereas 8.8% disagreed with the statement. This implies that cultural traditions strongly favor male leadership, limiting opportunities for women in ministry.

Furthermore, the results revealed that 90.0% of the respondents agreed that community perceptions negatively affect women who aspire to pastoral ministry, while 7.5% disagreed and 2.5% were not sure about the statement. This implies that societal attitudes and perceptions discourage women from pursuing pastoral roles.

In addition, the findings indicated that 86.2% of the respondents agreed that gender stereotypes limit women's confidence to take up ministry responsibilities, whereas 10.0% disagreed and 3.8% were not sure about the statement. This implies that stereotypes reduce women's self-confidence and willingness to engage in ministry roles.

The study further established that 75.0% of the respondents agreed that family responsibilities are viewed as barriers to women's active ministry involvement, while 25.0% disagreed with the statement. This implies that domestic roles and expectations significantly limit women's ability to fully participate in ministry.

Moreover, the findings revealed that 95.1% of the respondents agreed that women in leadership face resistance from members due to cultural norms, whereas 5.0% disagreed with the statement. This implies that cultural resistance is a major challenge facing women who attempt to take up leadership roles in the church.

Lastly, the results showed that 81.3% of the respondents agreed that patriarchal cultural values influence leadership selection within the church, while 18.7% disagreed with the statement. This implies that patriarchal systems continue to shape leadership selection processes, disadvantaging women.

Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of respondents agreed across all statements that cultural norms significantly hinder women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church–Central Uganda Conference. This implies that cultural beliefs, traditions, and societal expectations remain strong barriers limiting women's leadership, confidence, and overall involvement in ministry.

4.3.1 Cultural beliefs and gender expectations and women's involvement in ministry

From the interviews conducted with the key informants who are the Church leadership and administrators of The Seventh-Day Adventist Church-Central Uganda Conference, they were asked for their views on how cultural beliefs and gender expectations within the community affect women's involvement in ministry and their responses were as follows;

The key informants pointed out that cultural values rooted in patriarchal standards affect how people view the function of women in the church. Many societies believe that men should be in charge of leading and caring for people, which makes women less likely to apply for or be thought about for leadership roles. This view reduces the visibility of competent women in church and reinforces the idea that men should mostly have spiritual power. Such cultural stories sometimes clash with biblical portrayals of women in leadership, like Deborah (*Judges 4:4–5*), yet the accepted societal attitude still limits.

Another issue brought out was that at the family and community level, gender expectations limit women's capacity to engage fully in ministry work. Often expected to give home chores and caring roles top priority, women have less time and energy for pastoral tasks or leadership training. This sets a structural impediment such that even very qualified and spiritually gifted women can find it difficult to match ministry leadership expectations. The informants underlined that these expectations gently reinforce inequality inside the church.

Key informants further pointed out that, as a result of conventional gender roles, women aiming for leadership positions suffer criticism and prejudice from church members. People in the community could wonder if female pastors or leaders are really in charge, which makes them less likely to be trusted and recognized for their spiritual advice. This discourages women from assuming visible leadership positions because worry about social condemnation and criticism can be off-putting even if women have the requisite administrative and spiritual talents.

Through church policies and communications, gender norms were frequently reinforced. Male leadership is usually shown as either the norm or the desired. This covers how seminars, church magazines, and sermons subtly support male leadership approaches. Consequently, women could internalize these ideas and restrain their own goals, thinking that leadership positions are not for them, hence sustaining gender inequality in ministry roles over time.

The respondents also said that cultural views occasionally affect appointment to important ministry positions and decision-making committees. Though laws are neutral, committee members may subconsciously lean toward male candidates because of societal expectations, therefore limiting chances for women to shape key church policies. This shows how organizational procedures interact with cultural values, therefore constraining women's involvement even with official policies promoting equality.

Lastly, the key informants underlined that community opposition to women in ministry might limit mentoring and growth possibilities. Experienced women leaders may find fewer protégés due to society prejudices, whereas male-dominated networks control leadership lines. Fewer role models for younger women and limited channels for leadership growth make it challenging to reach sustained gender balance in church leadership. Some of the key informants had this to say,

“.....In many communities, women are expected to remain in domestic roles, and any attempt to pursue ministry leadership is often met with skepticism, making it difficult for women to assert their spiritual authority and gain acceptance in leadership positions.....”

Key informant 5

“.....Cultural norms favoring male leadership influence not only the perception of women's abilities but also the actual opportunities for ministry training and leadership appointments, limiting women's contribution despite their spiritual calling and competence.....” **Key informant 6**

4.4 Institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

Table 4 summarizes respondents' responses on the institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference by using a Likert scale where SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), NS (Not Sure), D (Disagree) and SD (Strongly Disagree).

Table 4: Institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

Statements	Extent of agreement and disagreement				
	SA	A	NS	D	SD
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)
Church policies limit women's access to ordination.	23 28.8%	51 63.8%	00	5 6.3%	1 1.3%
Leadership selection procedures favor men over women.	19 23.8%	53 66.3%	00	7 8.8%	1 1.3%
There are no clear institutional mechanisms promoting women's leadership development.	21 26.3%	54 67.5%	00	4 5.0%	1 1.3%
Women are underrepresented in key decision-making committees.	23 28.8%	51 63.8%	00	4 5.0%	2 2.6%
Promotion to senior ministry roles is more accessible to men than women.	20 25.0%	58 72.5%	00	2 2.5%	00
Institutional guidelines restrict women from holding certain pastoral positions.	19 23.8%	57 71.3%	00	4 5.0%	00
The conference leadership structure does not adequately support women in ministry.	21 26.3%	34 42.5%	00	5 6.3%	20 25.0%

Source: *Primary data*

Table 4 represents the descriptive statistics on the institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference.

The findings indicated that 92.6% of the respondents agreed that church policies limit women's access to ordination, while 7.6% disagreed with the statement. This implies that institutional policies on ordination are a major barrier restricting women from fully participating in ministry.

The findings also showed that 90.1% of the respondents agreed that leadership selection procedures favor men over women, whereas 10.1% disagreed with the statement. This implies that the selection processes within the church are perceived to be biased towards men, limiting women's leadership opportunities.

Furthermore, the results revealed that 93.8% of the respondents agreed that there are no clear institutional mechanisms promoting women's leadership development, while 6.3% disagreed with the statement. This implies that the absence of structured support systems hinders the growth and advancement of women in ministry.

In addition, the findings indicated that 92.6% of the respondents agreed that women are underrepresented in key decision-making committees, whereas 7.6% disagreed with the statement. This implies that women have limited influence in important church decisions due to their low representation in leadership structures.

The study further established that 97.5% of the respondents agreed that promotion to senior ministry roles is more accessible to men than women, while 2.5% disagreed with the statement. This implies that promotion systems within the church disproportionately favor men, restricting women's progression to higher ministry roles.

Moreover, the findings revealed that 95.1% of the respondents agreed that institutional guidelines restrict women from holding certain pastoral positions, whereas 5.0% disagreed with the statement. This implies that formal guidelines play a significant role in limiting women's access to specific pastoral responsibilities.

Lastly, the results showed that 68.8% of the respondents agreed that the conference leadership structure does not adequately support women in ministry, while 31.3% disagreed with the statement. This implies that although majority perceive inadequate support, there is still a notable proportion that views the leadership structure as somewhat supportive.

Overall, the findings indicate that the majority of respondents agreed across all statements that institutional policies significantly hinder women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church–Central Uganda Conference. This implies that policy-related barriers, including ordination restrictions, biased selection procedures, and lack of support mechanisms, remain key obstacles to women's full involvement in ministry.

4.4.1 Church policies & leadership structures and women's participation in ministry

From the interviews conducted with the key informants who are the Church leadership and administrators of The Seventh-Day Adventist Church-Central Uganda Conference, they were asked for their views on how existing church policies and leadership structures influence women's participation in ministry and their responses were as follows;

The key informants pointed out that women's capacity to engage in ministry is much affected by formal church regulations, especially those pertaining to ordination. Policies limiting ordination or giving males particular pastoral tasks only directly reduce chances for women to take on leadership positions. These regulations erect institutional obstacles that indicate that leadership positions are largely male-oriented, which lowers women's motivation to seek ministry advancement even if they are spiritually qualified and experienced.

Another point highlighted was that leadership selection procedures often favor men over women. Institutional inertia is produced when selection committees adhere to historical norms and precedents traditionally placing males in prominent leadership roles. Women may be overlooked during appointments to senior pastoral positions or decision-making committees, regardless of their competence or commitment. This influences representation and the capacity of women to shape important choices inside the church.

Key informants further underlined that the lack of defined institutional means for advancing women's leadership development restricts possibilities for mentorship and career development. Since policies hardly ever provide organized routes for finding, training, and developing female leaders, less women are ready to fill senior positions. This paucity of proactive development plans limits the pool of women leaders qualified to support ministry on regional as well as national levels.

Several respondents noted that women continue to be underrepresented in important decision-making committees as the leadership structure contains inherent obstacles. Though rules do not expressly limit involvement, hierarchical structures typically prefer continuity of male leadership. This underrepresentation influences policy development and the ranking of problems important to women, hence entrenching structural disparities in leadership.

Another key point to note is that males often have simpler access to senior government positions. Together with inherent biases in evaluation criteria, leadership hierarchies may lead men to be quickly promoted to top-tier jobs while women are delayed or denied. This inequality reinforces the view that males are better suited for leadership positions and discourages women from seeking top ministry responsibilities.

Lastly, the key informants emphasized that although some regulations support women's involvement, the general conference leadership structure does not adequately enable their integration into leadership positions. Limited responsibility for gender equity and the concentration of power in male-led systems combine to cause continuing inequalities in women's representation throughout ministries and restrict their capacity to affect church-wide decisions. Some of the key informants had this to say,

“.....Church policies around ordination and leadership clearly favor men, and even capable women often find themselves excluded from senior roles, which restricts their ability to contribute fully to ministry initiatives within the conference.....” **Key informant 7**

“.....Leadership structures tend to perpetuate male dominance, with few formal mechanisms to promote or mentor women leaders, making it difficult for women to access influential positions despite their dedication and spiritual calling.....” **Key informant 8**

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter includes the discussion of findings in relation to the literature. It also summarizes all findings reported in chapter four according to questions of the study, draws conclusions, suggests recommendations and also proposes some areas for further study.

5.1 Summary of findings

The findings revealed that biblical interpretations and doctrinal positions within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church–Central Uganda Conference significantly limit women's participation in ministry. The questionnaire findings revealed that most of the people who answered believe that some parts of the Bible, teachings about male headship, and religious teachings keep women from being leaders, getting ordained, and making decisions. The interviews confirmed these views, as important informants said that exact interpretations of texts like 1 Timothy 2:12 and Ephesians 5:23 influence policies, leadership choices, and ministry methods, guiding women toward supportive roles rather than leadership. Though the Bible cites instances of female leaders like Phoebe (Romans 16:1) and Deborah (Judges 4–5), these are less highlighted, which reduces women's self-assurance and constrains their chances to seek pastoral or senior leadership roles. The results generally show that theological interpretations and doctrinal positions taken together shape institutional policies, leadership structures, and attitudes, therefore sustaining male domination and limiting women's complete involvement in ministry.

Furthermore, the findings established that cultural values, gender roles, and social expectations significantly limit women's involvement in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church–Central Uganda Conference. The survey responses showed that most respondents believed that patriarchal values, family responsibilities, gender stereotypes, community perceptions, conventional expectations favoring men, and cultural views on gender roles reduce women's confidence, access to leadership, and general participation in ministry. The interviews, in which key informants said that patriarchal cultural norms, family and community expectations, criticism from church members, encouragement of male leadership in church communications, slight prejudices in

leadership appointments, and limited mentoring opportunities taken together discourage women from pursuing or sustaining leadership positions, corroborated these results. Taken together, these results show that deep-rooted social and cultural mores still interact with church policies and systems to generate ongoing obstacles limiting women's visibility, power, and ministry chances.

Lastly, the findings indicated that institutional rules and leadership structures severely reduce women's ministry involvement in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church—Central Uganda Conference. According to the poll results, most respondents strongly felt that church rules limit ordination, male-oriented leadership selection processes favor men, there are few opportunities for women's leadership development, women are underrepresented on decision-making boards, promotion systems disproportionately favor men, and institutional policies limit women from particular pastoral roles. Interviews with important informants supported these results, as they said that official policies, discriminatory selection procedures, lack of organized mentorship and leadership development programs, hierarchical preferences for male continuity, and little support from the general leadership together limit women's progress and involvement in ministry jobs. The quantitative and qualitative data together reveal that institutional biases built into leadership structures and policies generate ongoing challenges that limit women's participation in ministry, leadership access, and decision-making influence.

5.2 Discussion of findings

5.2.1 Theological interpretation issues that come with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

The results of the survey showed that biblical readings in the Central Uganda Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church greatly restrict women's involvement in ministry. Most of those polled believed that literal interpretations of biblical passages like 1 Timothy 2:12 and Ephesians 5:23 limited women's opportunities to lead, ordination, and decision-making positions. The results support Lee's (2021) claim that conventional readings of New Testament passages sometimes downplay women's leadership by stressing male headship and reducing female involvement in pastoral positions. Likewise, Mwangi, Kariuki, and Kabugi (2023) discovered that conservative scriptural interpretations limited women from reaching greater hierarchical levels in the SDA Church in Kenya. This differs from Gupta (2023), who points out that early church women like

Phoebe and Junia served and led, therefore strict readings do not accurately reflect biblical potential.

The study also showed that religious views that support male headship and support particular theological viewpoints affect institutional rules and appointments of leaders, directing women toward encouraging jobs rather than leadership. This result supports Dzubinski and Stasson's (2021) observation that doctrinal structures sometimes legitimize male domination and unintentionally deter women from seeking higher ministry positions. Furthermore, Barbe (2024) observed that doctrinal positions affect pastoral leadership and resource allocation, hence supporting male leadership in Sub-Saharan African SDA churches. On the other hand, Dixon (2021) discovered in particular churches that partnership-based ministry approaches challenge male-dominated hierarchies, therefore not all biblical interpretations always limit women.

The results of the research showed that women's confidence and readiness to seek ministry positions depend as well on theological interpretations. Restrictive beliefs absorbed by women inhibit their drive to pursue pastoral and leadership roles. This fits Raysor (2023), who noted that psychological obstacles for women seeking church leadership arise from doctrinal expectations and ideas of scriptural authority. Similarly, Wabule (2023) discovered that because of society and religious expectations, women in Uganda typically self-select out of leadership. Conversely, Takawira (2024) discovered that in several Zimbabwean situations, awareness of positive biblical examples can help to reduce these restrictions by reinforcing women's leadership confidence when historical examples of female ministry are actively taught.

The results showed that theological positions and male headship beliefs have an influence on committee representation and decision-making processes, hence underrepresentation of women in important leadership positions. This supports Allen (2023), who underlined that theological interpretations combine with institutionalized patriarchal standards to restrain women's access to positions of authority. Likewise, Kalumba et al. (2023) discovered that in Zambian ministries, gendered socialization and leadership conventions limit women's capacity to hold decision-making roles, therefore strengthening male-dominated hierarchies. However, Wood (2023) pointed out that institutional rules and mentoring programs in certain faith-based groups can help to reverse these patterns, therefore demonstrating how structural support might affect the influence of religious limits.

The study results ultimately showed that, despite instances of biblical female leaders, theological interpretations and doctrinal views taken together preserve male dominance and limit women's participation in ministry. This connects to Zurlo (2023), who points out that women in global Christianity typically encounter institutional obstacles, like conservative interpretations and organizational forms, limiting leadership possibilities. It also strikes a chord with Barbe (2024) and Johnson (2023), who stress that male-dominated power structures and legal enforcement affect opportunities and affect women's leadership paths. By contrast, Lee (2021) and Gupta (2023) contend that churches can increase leadership inclusion by stressing historical and biblical examples of female leaders, therefore implying that theological interpretation rather than scripture itself is a key driver of women's involvement.

5.2.2 Cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

The results showed that within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Central Uganda Conference, cultural ideas about gender roles greatly limit women's engagement in ministry. Deep-seated patriarchal norms, respondents said, place men as main leaders and women as expected to take on supportive roles. The results support those of Wabule (2023), who noted that cultural values in post-conflict Uganda determine women's roles in religious leadership as well as more general social change, and Decker (2023), who found that Ugandan women frequently face societal expectations that restrict their leadership chances. These results, however, contradict Dixon (2021), who points out that in some churches gender collaborations in ministry enable more balanced leadership, therefore implying that cultural influences could differ across settings.

The results of the research showed that women's ministry participation is hampered by gender expectations at the neighborhood and family level. Respondents pointed out that caregiving duties and household chores limit women's capacity for leadership development by consuming their time and energy. The results support Allen's (2023) claims in the literature that gendered socialization and cultural expectations affect women's ability to seek leadership in institutions as well as at home. Likewise, Kalumba et al. (2023) found that in Zambia, domestic responsibilities and social expectations limit women's participation in leadership roles in education ministries. Conversely, Nelson (2022) discovered that certain church systems specifically those based on volunteers can

help women to negotiate these expectations more freely, therefore demonstrating that not all church designs restrict the same.

The results of the study showed that women's ambitions for leadership roles are inhibited by church member criticism and community attitudes. Key informants observed that distrust of female power and societal bias lower trust in women leaders, therefore limiting their exposure and influence. The results connect with Öster (2023), who discovered that perceived social disapproval is a major deterrent for women seeking pastoral leadership, and Raysor (2023), who noted that historical prejudices in church groups reinforce gender hierarchies. On the other hand, Cortés Jr. (2024) showed that North American volunteer lay ministry models gave women chances to develop leadership legitimacy; therefore cultural barriers may be overcome by church structures and context.

Institutional support of male leadership via church publications and leadership appointments helps to sustain gender inequality, according to the study's results. Respondents said that subtle prejudices in appointment procedures, publications, and sermons keep up the idea that men are the obvious leaders. This result connects with the work of Barbe (2024), who found that in Sub-Saharan SDA churches institutionalized leadership expectations favor men, and Nwaomah et al. (2024), who found that organizational communication techniques might reinforce male dominance in church leadership. However, Thompson (2024) discovered that some SDA churches with intergenerational mentoring initiatives purposefully encouraged women's leadership, therefore demonstrating how deliberate institutional policies can offset these societal prejudices.

The study results showed that few chances for mentoring and little access to leadership networks limit women's participation in ministry even more. Respondents said that in church leadership the dearth of role models and mentorship pathways lowers women's confidence and inhibits their career development. The results support William (2023), who underlined that transformational advocacy systems are required to generate long-lasting chances for women in ministry, and Takawira (2024), who noted that lack of mentorship in Zimbabwean SDA churches inhibits women's ministerial growth. Gupta (2023), on the other hand, discovered that early church women frequently flourished in ministry notwithstanding social barriers, implying that mentoring and support systems, when available, can much reduce cultural constraints.

5.2.3 Institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

According to the study results, institutional regulations limiting women's access to ordination greatly limit their involvement in ministry inside the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Central Uganda Conference. Respondents said that official rules clearly benefit males in leadership pipelines, therefore deterring women from pursuing top ministry positions. The results connect with those of Mwangi et al. (2023), who noted that in Laikipia–Samburu, Kenya, SDA institutional regulations limited women's advancement inside church hierarchies, and by Raysor (2023), who highlighted local church policies still constrain women's pastoral involvement. Öster (2023), on the other hand, discovered that historical changes in legislation let women increasingly fill leadership positions in Sweden, therefore institutional settings might either help or impede women depending on policy frameworks.

The results of the research showed that leadership selection processes unduly favor men over women, therefore supporting hierarchical stability and reducing women's capacity for decision-making impact. Important informants observed that committees frequently follow past conventions that inherently give male applicants preference. These results fit with the research by Barbe (2024), who found that in Sub-Saharan SDA churches, the way leaders are chosen tends to keep men in charge. Nwaomah et al. (2024) also argued that in West-Central African SDA divisions, evaluation methods are set up to put women at a disadvantage. Conversely, Thompson (2024) showed that in some churches, intergenerational mentoring programs can assist fair selection by implying that intentional institutional actions might neutralize entrenched biases.

The results of the research showed that women's career advancement, skill development, and mentoring are hampered by the lack of organized means for their leadership growth. Respondents emphasized that women find it difficult to acquire the experience required for top ministry jobs without defined paths or programs. The results connect with the research by Gupta (2023), who noted historical patterns of women's mentoring shortages in early Christian ministry, and by Takawira (2024), who underlined the need of organized leadership programs in raising women in Zimbabwean SDA churches. But Johnson (2023) discovered that in some churches digital platforms for training and leadership networking may increase women's access to skill development, therefore institutional backing is not always lacking in all settings.

The results of the research showed that women are still underrepresented in important decision-making committees, which keeps them from having much of an impact on church leadership and organizational policies. Respondents pointed out that structural biases and hierarchical preferences help to keep men in charge. The results support William (2023), who underlined that, in order for women to meaningfully participate in church decision-making, transformational advocacy frameworks are absolutely essential; and by Wood (2023), who claimed that underrepresentation in faith-based institutions mirrors more general societal inequalities. Conversely, Cortés Jr. (2024) noted that North American volunteer lay pastor systems gave more chances for inclusive decision-making, therefore indicating that committee structures might be changed to improve women's representation.

The study results showed that men particularly benefit from little encouragement from general leadership and hierarchical promotion systems, therefore limiting women's advancement to senior ministry positions. Key informants noted that men typically get more leadership exposure and quicker promotions than women who are just as qualified. These results support Kalumba et al.'s (2023) observations of comparable patterns in the Zambian Ministry of Education, where promotion schemes favored men, and Decker's (2023) argument about how Ugandan institutions support male advancement. Conversely, Chinyamurindi and Rashe (2021) discovered that some female pastors in South Africa overcame structural obstacles by personal agency and strategic career navigation, suggesting that institutional obstacles, albeit important, are not always insurmountable.

5.3 Conclusions

The study concludes that within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Central Uganda Conference, religious views and doctrinal stances greatly limit women's involvement in ministry. Policies, leadership appointments, and ministry behaviors are all shaped in ways that benefit men by literal interpretations of biblical texts, teachings on male headship, and theological positions. Although scripture gives instances of women in leadership—Phoebe and Deborah come to mind these are downplayed, which lowers women's confidence and limits their chances to take on pastoral and higher leadership posts. Therefore, theological and doctrinal frameworks continue to reinforce male dominance in ministry leadership.

The study also concludes that women's active participation in ministry is greatly hampered by cultural values, social norms, and gender stereotypes. Patriarchal norms, society views, family responsibilities, gender stereotypes, and conventional expectations all limit women's confidence, access to leadership, and involvement in church activities. Reinforced by subtle prejudices in communication, leadership selections, and mentorship possibilities, these cultural barriers discourage women from seeking or maintaining leadership positions. Consequently, institutional structures interact with cultural and social norms to entrench gender inequity inside the church.

Finally, the study concludes that strong limits on women's advancement and influence within ministry are imposed by institutional policies and leadership arrangements. Together, policies restricting ordination, prejudiced leadership selection processes, absence of organized mentorship programs, underrepresentation in decision-making committees, and hierarchical promotion systems impede women from reaching top jobs. Institutional structures, together with religious and cultural elements, clearly generate continuing barriers that limit women's leadership access, lower their decision-making power, and limit their full participation in ministry responsibilities. These results underline how important it is to have institutional changes that help women be treated fairly in church leadership.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been found necessary concerning the barriers to women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church with specific focus on the Central Uganda Conference.

Review and reinterpretation of theological teachings: The study recommends that Church leaders ought to think over a careful review of biblical interpretations and doctrinal stances now restricting women's involvement in ministry. Stressing biblical instances of women in leadership like Deborah and Phoebe and advocating balanced theological instruction can inspire more acceptance of women in pastoral and senior leadership positions. Programs for church leaders and members on inclusive biblical interpretation could also help lower gender biases in ministry appointments and leadership perceptions.

Cultural awareness and gender sensitization programs: The study also recommends that the Church should design initiatives that raise awareness of gender equality and question patriarchal

values that discourage female leadership in order to overcome social and cultural hurdles. Seminars, workshops, and community outreach programs can help change views on women's roles in ministry. Moreover, despite social expectations, mentoring initiatives pairing seasoned female leaders with younger female members can foster leadership abilities, confidence, and resilience.

Reform of institutional policies and leadership structures: The study recommends that the leadership arrangements and policies of the church should be changed to provide fair chances for women's growth. This might entail ensuring gender-sensitive leadership selection processes, creating clear channels for women's leadership development, raising women's presence in decision-making committees, and offering formal training and mentorship initiatives. Clear and merit-based promotion systems should be established to lessen biases favoring men and guarantee competent women have access to high ministry jobs.

Strengthening support networks for women leaders: The church should encourage both official and unofficial networks to give women in ministry advice, advocacy, and peer support. This covers developing venues where women can swap stories, debate difficulties, and work together on leadership development planning. Such networks would also provide venues for supporting gender-inclusive policies and urging the church to actively support women leaders.

Continuous monitoring and evaluation of gender equity initiatives: The church is advised to set up means of monitoring and evaluation to track advancement toward women's participation in ministry. Regular evaluations of policies, leader nominations, and mentoring programs might reveal ongoing obstacles and assess the efficacy of interventions. Regular changes should be guided by comments from female leaders and church members to guarantee that the changes are successful and long-lasting.

5.5 Areas for further research

Future studies might look at how theological education courses affect women's ambitions for leadership inside the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, seeing if exposure to inclusive biblical readings raises women's involvement in ministry positions.

Further research could look at how different parts of Uganda have different cultural influences, and see how different social standards, family expectations, and views of the community either help or hurt women's participation in ministry.

Finally, future research could look at how well mentoring programs and institutional policies meant to help women become leaders work, and which ones help women get more representation in decision-making and high-ranking pastoral jobs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

**For church members, departmental leaders, and women actively engaged in ministry
within the Central Uganda Conference**

Introduction and Purpose of Study

Dear Respondent,

I am Mugenyi Johnson Kalumba a student pursuing a degree of Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership and Management (MAOLM) of UCU. As a requirement for the award of Degree of BBA, I am required to conduct a research. My topic of study is, “Barriers to women’s participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church: a case of Central Uganda Conference.” Upon that background, you have been selected as an important respondent for this study which is purposely for academic purpose. I therefore kindly request you to truthfully provide responses to the following questions. All information will be treated utmost confidentiality.

Section A: Background Data

Please tick the box representing the most appropriate responses for you in respect of the following items:

1. Gender

(a). Male ☐

(b). Female ☐

2. In what age bracket do you belong?

(a). 21-30 years ☐

(b). 31-40 years ☐

(c). 41-50 years ☐

(d). 51+ years ☐

3. What is your highest level of education?

(a). Certificate ☐

(b). Diploma ☐

(c). Bachelor’s Degree ☐

(d). Master's Degree ☐

(e). Others specify.....

4. For how long have you worked or engaged in the ministry within the Central Uganda Conference?

(a). Less than 1 year ☐

(b). 1-5 years ☐

(c). 6-10 years ☐

(d). Above 10 years ☐

Section B: The theological interpretation issues that come women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

Rate your degree of agreement on the theological interpretation issues that come women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference using a scale of 5(Strongly Agree), 4(Agree), 3(Not sure), 2(Disagree) and 1(Strongly Disagree).

s. no	Statements	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1	Certain biblical texts are interpreted in ways that limit women's participation in ministry.					
2	Biblical literalism influences restrictions placed on women in church leadership.					
3	Doctrinal teachings in the church discourage women from seeking pastoral roles.					
4	The church's theological position on ordination affects women's ministry opportunities.					
5	Male headship teachings restrict women's involvement in decision-making roles.					
6	Women's spiritual gifts are undervalued due to prevailing theological interpretations.					

7	Theological arguments are frequently used to justify excluding women from senior leadership positions.					
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Suggest any other theological interpretation issues that come women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference other than the ones mentioned above?

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Section C: The cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

Rate your degree of agreement on the cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference using a scale of 5(Strongly Agree), 4(Agree), 3(Not sure), 2(Disagree) and 1(Strongly Disagree).

s. no	Statements	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1	Cultural beliefs about gender roles discourage women from serving in ministry leadership.					
2	Traditional expectations prioritize men over women in church leadership roles.					
3	Community perceptions negatively affect women who aspire to pastoral ministry.					
4	Gender stereotypes limit women's confidence to take up ministry responsibilities.					
5	Family responsibilities are viewed as barriers to women's active ministry involvement.					
6	Women in leadership face resistance from members due to cultural norms.					
7	Patriarchal cultural values influence leadership selection within the church.					

Suggest any other cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference other than the ones mentioned above?

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Section D: The institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

Rate your degree of agreement on the institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference using a scale of 5(Strongly Agree), 4(Agree), 3(Not sure), 2(Disagree) and 1(Strongly Disagree).

s. no	Statements	SA	A	NS	D	SD
1	Church policies limit women's access to ordination.					
2	Leadership selection procedures favor men over women.					
3	There are no clear institutional mechanisms promoting women's leadership development.					
4	Women are underrepresented in key decision-making committees.					
5	Promotion to senior ministry roles is more accessible to men than women.					
6	Institutional guidelines restrict women from holding certain pastoral positions.					
7	The conference leadership structure does not adequately support women in ministry.					

Suggest any other institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference other than the ones mentioned above?

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Thank you very much for your cooperation

Appendix 2: Interview Guide

For Key Informants (Church leadership and administrators of The Seventh-Day Adventist Church-Central Uganda Conference)

Dear sir/madam

I am Mugenyi Johnson Kalumba a student pursuing a degree of Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership and Management (MAOLM) of UCU. As a requirement for the award of Degree of BBA, I am required to conduct a research. My topic of study is, “Barriers to women’s participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church: a case of Central Uganda Conference.” Upon that background, you have been selected as an important respondent for this study which is

purposely for academic purpose. I therefore kindly request you to truthfully provide responses to the following questions. All information will be treated utmost confidentiality.

Section A: Introductions

1. Tell me about yourself (*age and level of education*)
2. What position do you hold in this institution?
3. How long have you worked in this position?

Section B: Theological interpretation issues that come with women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

4. How do current biblical interpretations within the conference influence women's participation in ministry roles?
5. In what ways do doctrinal positions of the church affect women's access to leadership and ordination?

Section C: Cultural norm challenges around women's participation in ministry in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

6. How do cultural beliefs and gender expectations within the community affect women's involvement in ministry?
7. What forms of resistance, if any, do women face due to traditional gender norms in the church?

Section D: Institutional policy issues affecting women's participation in ministry within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church- Central Uganda Conference

8. How do existing church policies and leadership structures influence women's participation in ministry?
9. What institutional measures are in place to promote or limit women's advancement into leadership roles?

Thank you for your cooperation