

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Divinity

Adventist University of Africa

Theological Seminary

Title: WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP: A BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL
ANALYSIS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35 AND ITS PASTORAL
IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SOUTH EAST RWANDA FIELD

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This qualitative action research examined the factors hindering women's Leadership, basing on the Biblical and Theological Analysis of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, and its Pastoral Implication in South East Rwanda Field. Through interviews with nine participants, including women leaders, elders and pastors. The findings indicate that women's leadership within the South East Rwanda Field (SERF) remains a minority presence, often characterized by both progress and persistent barriers. Five major barriers were identified: including self-limitation, theological interpretation of Scripture, cultural patriarchy and male gatekeeping, Underrepresentation and Restricted Roles, and institutional and structural barriers. These challenges reflect both organizational and social issues that limit women's participation in leadership within the church.

To address these challenges, a five-phased intervention program was implemented. The program included; contextual theological education, leadership empowerment programs for women, sensitization and awareness for male leaders, Community Engagement and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

The intervention significantly enhanced women engagement and leadership capacity, demonstrating that intentional full inclusion of women in leadership is both a biblical mandate and a missional necessity. A church that recognizes, affirms, and harnesses the diverse gifts of all its members irrespective of gender was better positioned to embody the gospel, strengthen its witness, and fulfill its divine commission of service, discipleship, and growth in South East Rwanda Field.

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A Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of

the requirements of the degree

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Michel Kanomero

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To my cherished wife, whose steadfast love, patience, and encouragement provided the Fortitude to persevere. To my children, my ultimate source of joy and inspiration, whose radiance serves as a constant reminder of this journey's purpose,

And to the devoted leaders who strive tirelessly, day and night,

to shepherd our women toward a luminous future.

This work is as much your legacy as it is mine.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	viii
-----------------------------	------

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ix
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CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION	1
-----------------------	---

Background and Context of the Study	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Research Questions	4
Purpose of Study	6
Delimitation of the Study.....	6
Methodology and Procedures	7
Definition of Terms	8

2. BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION	10
--	----

Image of God in both Male and Female	11
The Curse is Interruption, rather than Divine Decree.....	12
The Old Testament Women in Leadership	12
Miriam: Prophetess and Israel's Leader	12
Deborah: Prophetess and Judgess	13
Huldah: The Prophetess who Authenticated Scripture	14
The New Testament Women in Leadership	15
Jesus and Women: A Revolutionary Approach	15
Women as Disciples and Financial Supporters	16
Women the First Witnesses of the Resurrection	16
Women in the Early Church.....	17
Priscilla: Instructor of Apollos	17
Phoebe: Deacon and Patron	18
Junia: Excellent among the Apostles	19
Women Prophets and Leaders in the Pauline Churches.....	20
Theology of Equal Standing in Christ by Paul	21
Exegetical Examination of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35	22
Contextual Interpretation	22
The 'Law' and interpretation Options.....	23
The Principle of Cultural Context.....	23
Summary	24

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	25
------------------------------	----

Women should Remain Silent in the Church	26
Women are Allowed to Speak and Teach in the Church	28
Interpolation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35	29
Paul's Command is made for Order Purposes	31
Women Church Leadership and Liberation Movement.....	32
Pastoral Implication of Women in Diverse Cultural Contexts.....	39
Catholic View on Women Pastoral Implication in Church Leadership	40
Protestant View on Women Pastoral Implication in Church Leadership ..	41
Adventist View on Women Pastoral Implication in Church Leadership ..	42
Ellen White's View of Women.....	45
Summary	46
 4. EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS 1CORINTHIANS 14:34-35	 48
Historical Background	48
Authorship.....	49
Audience0	50
Religious Background.....	51
Literary Context of 1Corinthian 14:34-35	52
Textual analysis of 1Corinthians 14:34-35	55
Greek Translation.....	55
English Translation	55
Meaning of Key Words	56
Larger Context	58
Paul's View towards Women	59
Immediate Context of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35	61
Lexical, Grammatical and Syntactical Analysis	63
Contextual Determination.....	65
Summary of Lexical Analysis.....	66
Grammatical and Syntactical Analysis	66
Theology of the Text.....	69
Summary	70
Conclusion of the Exegetical Analysis of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35	71
 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.....	 74
Data Analysis: Emergent Themes from the Field	74
The Status of Women's Leadership: A Reality of Minority and Contradiction	75
Barriers to Women's Leadership: Internal, Cultural, and Theological	78
The Impact of Women's Participation: Activation and Loss	80
Future Directions: The Imperative for Training and Mindset Change	82
The Centrality of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 in the SERF Context.....	83
Culture as the Lens for Theology and Practice.....	84
Ellen G. White and the Functional Value of Women Leaders	85
The Missiological Imperative for Inclusion.....	85
Theological Implication for the South East Rwanda Field.....	86

Moving Beyond Patriarchal Tradition	87
Conclusion	87
6. SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	89
Summary	89
Recommendations.....	90
Conclusion	91
APPENDIX.....	93
RESPONSES	93
BIBLIOGRAPHY	107
VITA	112

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG	Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich.
KJV	King James Version
NKJV	New King James Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SERF	South East Rwanda Field

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context of the Study

The question of women's leadership in the church has emerged as a central issue in both scholarly and ecclesiastical discourse, particularly within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹ At the heart of the debate lies the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, where the Apostle Paul instructs, "*Let your women keep silence in the churches*" (KJV). This passage has long presented a theological challenge, as it appears to contradict both the broader biblical narrative of mutuality between genders and the practical roles women have assumed throughout church history.²

Biblical scholars have presented divergent interpretations of this text, often contextualizing it within the Greco-Roman culture of the early church.³ Some argue that Paul's instructions were directed at specific disturbances in Corinth and not intended as a universal prohibition. Others maintain that Paul upheld a hierarchical model that limited women's roles in worship and leadership. The debate extends to other Pauline writings, such as 1 Timothy 2:12, which states that a woman should not "teach or have authority over a man" (NKJV), reinforcing the traditionalist view.

¹ Michelle Lee-Barnewall et al., *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 19.

² Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Pub. Group, 2011), 34.

³ Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 74.

However, Genesis 1:26–27 and Galatians 3:28 assert the spiritual equality of men and women before God, forming the foundation for egalitarian perspectives within Christianity.⁴

Throughout history, patriarchal norms have shaped societal and ecclesiastical views of gender. Women were, often confined to domestic roles and denied access to leadership, education, and theological training.⁵ In ancient Israel, although women supported temple worship possibly serving as assistants to priests they were, prohibited from priestly roles, likely due to ritual purity laws.⁶ (cf. Leviticus 21).

Ben Witherington notes that while women participated actively in religious life, institutional restrictions limited their advancement. Barbara Morgan Gardener asserts that: “Some women are told that through the endowment they have priesthood power in their homes, but they are also told that without the presence of a man there is no priesthood”⁷

Theologians such as Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner represent opposing viewpoints in the ongoing debate. While Köstenberger interprets Pauline texts as definitive restrictions on female authority in the church, Schreiner and others advocate for gender equality in leadership, arguing that early Christianity included prominent female leaders such as Phoebe, Priscilla, and Junia.⁸

⁴ Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 56.

⁵ Ibid, 37.

⁶ Jan Voerman, *The Ordination of Women: The Priesthood of All Believers and Other Aspects* (TEACH Services, 2013), 63.

⁷ Barbara Morgan Gardner, *the Priesthood Power of Women: In the Temple, Church, and Family* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 2019), 18.

⁸ Andreas J. Kostenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Women in the Church an Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 29-15*, 2nd ed., 100.

This theological debate has tangible implications for the contemporary church, particularly in contexts like the South East Rwanda Field. In this region, women remain significantly underrepresented in leadership positions across local churches. Current estimates indicate that men hold approximately 90% of church leadership roles, with women often excluded from positions such as church elder, board chair, or officiant in religious services. These exclusions are, not necessarily based on competence or spiritual maturity, but on entrenched gender norms and selective interpretations of Scripture.

Such discrimination not only undermines the biblical model of spiritual gifting regardless of gender but also poses a challenge to the church's mission. The underutilization of capable women in church leadership may hinder the effective fulfillment of the Gospel mandate. Moreover, the church's silence on gender equity contradicts the principles of justice, stewardship, and inclusivity inherent in the Christian message.

This research emerges from a growing recognition that a reevaluation of women's roles within the church is both theologically necessary and pastorally urgent. While cultural and theological resistance remains, there is an increasing call from scholars, practitioners, and lay members to revisit biblical texts with fresh eyes, informed by historical context, linguistic accuracy, and the lived experiences of faithful women.⁹ The study aimed to explore the biblical and theological foundations for women's leadership, focusing particularly on the contested interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, and to assess its pastoral implications within the South East Rwanda Field.

⁹ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 171.

By doing so, it seeks to promote a more inclusive and biblically faithful model of church leadership—one that honors the gifts and calling of all believers, regardless of gender.

Statement of the Problem

The interpretation of Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, particularly the phrase “let your women keep silence in the churches,” has long been a point of theological contention. Diverse understandings of this passage have shaped church practices and perceptions regarding women's leadership roles. Within the South East Rwanda Field (SERF) of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, this passage has often, been used to justify the exclusion of women from significant leadership roles, leading to a gender imbalance in church leadership.

In some local churches, men occupy nearly all leadership positions, despite cases where they may lack the necessary pastoral or administrative competence. Meanwhile, talented and spiritually mature women are, excluded from positions such as church elders in charge of officiating services or administrative leaders. This exclusion appears to stem not from biblical qualifications, but from entrenched interpretations of gender roles.

Research Questions

This study therefore seeks to address the theological, pastoral, and practical implications of this exclusion by exploring four critical questions:

1. How the different interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 directly shape the current leadership policies regarding women in the South East Rwanda Field?

2. What are the specific theological and cultural barriers that prevent women in this region from transitioning from supportive roles (assistants) into authoritative positions like church elder or board chair?
3. Why does the continued underrepresentation of women in leadership despite the egalitarian principles found in Galatians 3:28, impacts the effective fulfillment of the Gospel mandate within the local Rwandan context?
4. In the perspective of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, what particular type of ‘silence’ was Paul commanding and how does the literary and cultural setting of 1 Corinthians define its scope?
5. At what point does the transition from traditional patriarchal leadership to a biblically egalitarian model become a theological and pastoral necessity for the growth of the South East Rwanda Field?

Through a thorough exploration of these questions, this study aimed to explore the theological challenges facing women in the South East Rwanda Field. It aimed to offer a clear understanding of the reasons behind their declining involvement. By examining key issues, the research identified obstacles to sustained women participation in church leadership. It proposed also theological interpretation of the 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, and suggested solutions to help restore women pastoral implication in leadership. These insights are intended to support church growth and further its ideal mission on the earth.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to critically examine Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 to determine whether it prohibits women from serving in leadership roles within the church. The study was to:

1. Analyze the biblical and theological foundations of women's leadership, with a focus on Pauline texts.
2. Explore the historical and cultural context of Paul's teachings and how they are interpreted within the SDA tradition.
3. Demonstrate the contributions women have made to church leadership throughout biblical history and current times.
4. Provide practical guidance on how Bible students and church leaders in SERF can interpret and apply 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 faithfully and contextually.

Delimitation of the Study

This study is delimited to the interpretation and pastoral implications of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, especially within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the South East Rwanda Field. While the study draws on other biblical texts and theological literature, its core focus remains on the exegesis and application of this Pauline passage.

Though broader debates on gender and leadership exist, this study does not aim to address all historical or global theological arguments. Instead, it limits its scope to how the SDA church members especially in SERF the passage under study among. Ellen G. White's writings and selected theological scholarship supplemented the biblical analysis, but only insofar as they inform the interpretation of the focal passage.

Methodology and Procedures

This research employs a qualitative methodology, combining biblical-theological analysis with field-based data collection to assess perceptions and practices regarding women's leadership in the SERF context.

a) Biblical-Theological Analysis

The study includes:

- Exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 using Greek lexicons, commentaries, and historical-critical tools.
- Comparative study of related Pauline passages (e.g., 1 Timothy 2:12; Romans 16).
- Consultation of theological sources, including writings from Ellen G. White and key biblical scholars.

b) Field Research

- A sample of 9 participants from across SERF was selected from a total of 25 districts, including:
 - 2 male elders
 - 2 pastors
 - 5 women
- Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather insights on how members perceive and interpret the biblical passage and how it influences church leadership practices.

c) Qualitative Design Benefits

- Provides a holistic and culturally sensitive understanding of the issue.
- Explores the “why” and “how” behind gendered leadership roles in SDA churches in SERF.

- Allows participants to share lived experiences, fostering a more authentic and rich narrative.
- Ensures flexibility in data analysis, enabling emerging themes to shape the conclusions.

Ethical considerations, including informed consent and confidentiality, was strictly observed throughout the research.

Definition of Terms

To ensure clarity and consistency throughout this study, the following terms are defined as they apply within the context of this research:

Church: a particular Christian organization, people within the Christian faith¹⁰

Ecclesiastical: Relating to the Christian Church or its hierarchy, specifically regarding the formal rules, traditions, and structures that govern church life and leadership.¹¹

Egalitarianism: A theological perspective asserting that men and women are created equal in status and should have equal access to all roles of leadership and authority in the church, based on the belief that spiritual gifts are distributed by the Holy Spirit without regard to gender.¹²

Equality: The idea that men and women are created equally in God's image and therefore are equally important to God and equally valuable to him.¹³

¹⁰ *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. "Church."

¹¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* (Inter-Varsity Press and Zondervan Publishing House), 1994, 1114

¹² *Ibid*, 1114

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1106

Exegesis: The critical explanation or interpretation of a biblical text to discover its original meaning within its historical, linguistic, and literary context.¹⁴ Specifically 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 in this study.

Officiant: A person who leads or performs a religious service or rite, such as presiding over the Lord's Supper, baptisms, or standard worship services.¹⁵

Patriarchy: A social or ecclesiastical system in which structural power and leadership are primarily held by men, often resulting in the subordination or exclusion of women from decision-making roles.¹⁶

South East Rwanda Field (SERF): An administrative unit of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Rwanda, serving as the specific geographical and denominational boundary for this study's field research.

Traditionalist/Complementarian View: A theological position that holds that while men and women are of equal value before God, they have different, "complementary" roles, which typically involve a restriction on women holding primary positions of authority or teaching over men in a church setting.¹⁷

¹⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* (Inter-Varsity Press and Zondervan Publishing House), 1994, 83

¹⁵ *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. "Officiant."

¹⁶ *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. "Patriarchy."

¹⁷ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology, An Introduction to Bible Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Hous), 1994), 1104.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The argument on whether women should be allowed to lead the church cannot be resolved without taking a critical look at the biblical data. The Bible is full of instances of women who were called by God to places of influence, authority and spiritual leadership. This chapter explores the biblical basis of women leadership starting with the creation story, the Old Testament women leaders, the revolutionary relationship of Jesus with women, and finally with the practice of the early church as in the New Testament. The aim was to prove that the bible, story of Genesis to Revelation, confirms the equality of women and men in the redemptive plan of God and acknowledges the cultural limitations that has mostly concealed this fact.

Marriot L. Soards stated that the role of women about church leadership is often a theological debate, especially regarding how Paul's words in 1 Corinthians are interpreted.¹ In some traditional communities such as parts of the South East Rwanda Field, these verses are viewed as a blanket rule against women holding teaching or leadership positions.² However building a strong theological view requires examining these verses throughout historical and critical methods³ and considering them

¹ Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Pub. Group, 2011), 34.

² Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 56.

³ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Baker Academic, 2016), 171.

alongside the broader biblical narratives on gender role and women's involvement in ministry.

Image of God in both Male and Female

Genesis 1:26-27 says, "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our own likeness, and let them have dominion So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them; (KJV). There are some important observations to be made out of this text.

One, the image of God is not gendered. Both sexes are created equally and at the same time in the image of God. As Pierce, Groothuis, and Fee note, the creation of humanity as being male and female in the image of God lays the groundwork of the crucial equality of the sexes as a norm of creation.⁴ Second, the task of the dominion over the creation is assigned to both sexes together. The dominion over, to have dominion, is not placed on the man only, who has the woman as an inferior assistant. Instead, the collective pronoun they shows that they have an equal part in the duty and privilege of manifesting the rule of God over the creation.⁵

Third, the story of creation creates a model of interdependence and not superiority. But, as Paul would later say in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12, woman is not independent of man nor man of woman, since as woman was thus created, so is man now born thus created of woman. The interdependence of male and female is indicative of the relational character of the Trinity itself.

⁴ Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 78.

⁵ Cynthia Long Westfall, *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 45.

The Curse is Interruption, rather than Divine Decree

The introduction of sin into the world upset the ideal of creation. In Gen 3:16, God tells the woman: Your will shall be against thy husband, and he shall have dominion over thee. It is important to note that this statement is not a prescription of how God would wish things to be in his ideal order, but rather it is a portion of the curse. According to Lee-Barnewall, hierarchical male rule is not presented as a divine ideal, but rather a result of the fall.⁶

The Hebrew version of Gen 3:16 suggests a foretelling of the outcome of sin and not an order of how things should be. The rule (mashal) here represented is not the good rule of those who serve, but rather the one of oppressive domination of the fallen human systems. In redemptive history God strives to recreate the primal ideal of creation of mutual equality and of cooperation that is, in full manifestation in Christ (Gal 3:28).⁷

The Old Testament Women in Leadership

However, as the OT has many instances of women whom God called to hold important offices, contrary to popular belief. These women were the ones who were in charge, prophesied, judged, and led people of God during crisis situations.

Miriam: Prophetess and Israel's Leader

The sister of Moses and Aaron, Miriam is explicitly named a prophetess. Exod 15:20-21 documents, "So Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her with the tambourines and

⁶ Michelle Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 67.

⁷ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 52.

dancing. And Miriam sang to them: Sing to the LORD, he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea". This text attributes Miriam to be among the leaders of the Exodus generation with Moses and Aaron.

The fact that Miriam was a leader is further confirmed by Mic 6:4: "I have raised you out of the land of Egypt, and I have brought you out of the house of bondage, and I sent before you Moses and Aaron and Miriam". The prophet Micah mentions Miriam with Moses and Aaron as one of the three leaders sent by God to lead Israel. According to Westfall, the fact that Miriam was included in this three-legged leadership arrangement shows that women were called by God to serve the people of Israel at the time of spiritual leadership just as men did.⁸

Deborah: Prophetess and Judges

Deborah is one of the most notable female leaders in the OT. Judg 4:4-5 introduces her: "Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel at that time. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the people of Israel came up to her for judgment".

There are a few notable points in the leadership of Deborah. To begin with, she was both a prophetess and a judge who had both spiritual and civil powers. Second, the text shows that people of Israel approached her to be judged, which proves that her authority was acknowledged and accepted by the nation. Third, Deborah acted as a military leader and summoned Barak and ordered him to head the army to fight Sisera (Judg 4:6-7).

⁸ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 78.

Because of Barak being reluctant to go to battle without Deborah, she accepted to go with him but stated that a woman would be credited with the victory (Judg 4:9). The song of Deborah in Judg 5 is another ode to her leadership, and is believed to be one of the oldest poetic texts in the Hebrew Bible.⁹ Witherington writes, "Deborah leadership was not an exception that proves the rule of male leadership, but a sign that God called and gifted women to the highest positions of authority in Israel."¹⁰

Huldah: The Prophetess who Authenticated Scripture

The Book of the Law was discovered during the reign of King Josiah, which led to a crisis, which needed to be confirmed by the prophets. Instead of going to Jeremiah or Zephaniah who were contemporary to him, the officials of the king consulted Huldah the prophetess. 2 Kgs 22:14-20 provides that Huldah authenticated the scroll discovered and sent the message of God of judgment and mercy.

The role of Huldah cannot be overestimated. As Tucker and Liefeld note, the fact that the representatives of the king approached Huldah instead of Jeremiah or Zephaniah implies that her authority as a prophet was regarded as equal or even superior to the males of her time.¹¹ God used a woman to justify His written Word to the nation of Israel.

⁹ Tucker and Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, 31.

¹⁰ Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus: A Study of Jesus' Attitudes to Women and Their Roles as Reflected in His Earthly Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 15.

¹¹ Tucker and Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, 34.

The New Testament Women in Leadership

Like the OT, as one of the parts of the Holy Scripture, the NT contains another testimony to the world about the equality of all people before God, despite their gender, in the matter of salvation, the usefulness in the mission of God, and the leadership skills in the Christian church. Women are several times mentioned as partakers of the work of God alongside men.

Jesus and Women: A Revolutionary Approach

Jesus' ministry broke contemporary social codes by teaching women, including in His inner circle of disciples (e.g., Mary of Bethany), and commissioning women as first witnesses to the resurrection.¹² The relationship that Jesus had with women in the Gospels is a surprise given the cultural practices of first-century Judaism. Although the current rabbinic culture sidelined the women and restricted their religious roles, Jesus was always emphatic of the women and their capabilities, their intelligence and ability to be regarded as disciples.

There are a few points which can be observed out of this text. To start with, the women were with Jesus and the twelve disciples in His traveling ministry (Matthew 27:55). Second, these women are mentioned in the same breath as the disciples implying that they were considered part of the ministry (Acts 1:14). Third, the women were the ones who fed them with what they could afford, which means that they had the ability to be independent and possess power. According to Witherington, the fact that Jesus had women as traveling companions was a first in Jewish culture and depicts that He purposely included women in His ministry.¹³

¹² *An Invitation to Revisit Bible's View of Women*, 23.

¹³ Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 42.

Women as Disciples and Financial Supporters

In the Holy Scripture, Luke 8:1-3 gives an incredible insight into the ministry of Jesus. He stated that, soon after, he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God and with him the twelve and some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom seven demons had gone, and Joanna, wife of Chuza, household manager of Herod.

There are a few points, which one can observe out of this text. To start with, the women were with Jesus and the twelve disciples in His traveling ministry. Second, these women are mentioned in the same breath as the disciples implying that they were considered part of the ministry. Third, the women were the ones who fed them with what they could afford, which means that they had the ability to be independent and possess power. According to Witherington, the fact that Jesus had women as traveling companions was a first in Jewish culture and depicts that He purposely included women in His ministry.¹⁴

Women the First Witnesses of the Resurrection

Perhaps the most compelling testimony of the women affirmation by Jesus is the fact that Jesus first appeared to women after His resurrection. In all the four Gospels, we read that it was the women who first saw the empty tomb and the resurrected Jesus (Matt 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18).

This is especially important considering that even in the first century Jewish society women were not regarded as credible witnesses during legal cases. According to Lee-Barnewall, had the resurrection accounts been false, the early church would

¹⁴ Witherington, *Women in the Ministry of Jesus*, 42.

not have made up women witnesses as the reason would have been to disregard their testimony in a court of law,¹⁵ yet the fact that the Gospels consistently present women as the main witnesses of the resurrection shows that the narratives were historically accurate and that Jesus intentionally gave women a prominent role.

Jesus sent Mary Magdalene to go and inform the disciples about His resurrection (John 20:17). This proclamation of the central truth in Christian faith the resurrection is an apostolic task. As Westfall notes, Mary Magdalene was an apostle to the apostles as she was sent by the risen Christ to convey the message upon which the Christian faith is founded.¹⁶

Women in the Early Church

The book of Acts and the Pauline epistles give a lot of evidence that women played a major role in leadership roles during the early Christian movement (Acts 17:4). Nevertheless, even with cultural influence to subordinate women to secondary roles, the early church acknowledged and confirmed the gifts of women in spiritual and leadership abilities.

Priscilla: Instructor of Apollos

Priscilla (or Prisca) is mentioned on multiple occasions in the New Testament as one of the leaders in the early church. Together with her husband Aquila, she is mentioned in Acts 18, Rom 16:3-5, 1 Cor. 16:19, and 2 Tim 4:19. Interestingly, in four out of six of the sources, the name of Priscilla comes before that of Aquila, which

¹⁵ Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 89.

¹⁶ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 94.

was not typical in a patriarchal society and could lead to believe that she had been the main leader.¹⁷

Most importantly, in Acts 18:24-28, we find Priscilla and Aquila seizing upon Apollos, an educated man, a man somewhat familiar with the Scriptures (v. 24), who was speaking and teaching correctly of the things of Jesus, but was only aware of the baptism of John (v. 25). It reads, Priscilla and Aquila, when they heard him, invited him to their house and told him more about the way of God (v. 26,).

There are a number of important observations. To begin with, Priscilla is mentioned first in the Greek text, implying that she was the first person to teach Apollos. Second, they were able to correct the teaching of a leading male preacher, which indicated that Priscilla had a better theological knowledge than Apollos. Third, the early church embraced this rebuke and Apollos proceeded to be an influential leader. Keener notes that Priscilla was a teacher of theology and she even taught one great male evangelist the correct interpretation of Christian doctrine.¹⁸

Phoebe: Deacon and Patron

Rom 16:1-2, Paul praises Phoebe to the church in Rome: I recommend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae, I urge you to welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people, and to render her any assistance she may need of you, as she has been to me, and to many others.

Paul gives Phoebe two important titles. To begin with, he refers to her as diakonos, meaning church officers (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8, 12). Although the meaning of diakonos is loose and can be simply translated as servant, the fact that it was used as a

¹⁷ Tucker and Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, 112.

¹⁸ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 118.

formal title in this case is that Phoebe was an official leader of the church at Cenchreae. Second, Paul refers to her as *prostatis*, which has been translated as benefactor but with connotations of one who wields authority and protection.¹⁹

Moreover, Paul might have used Phoebe to deliver a letter to the Romans. Being the carrier of the letter, she would have been in charge of its interpretations to the Romans congregation, i.e. one that would have demanded a lot of power and theological proficiency. According to Tucker and Liefeld, Phoebe was commissioned by Paul as his messenger to Rome, so, women were used in the early church as apostolic representatives.²⁰

Junia: Excellent among the Apostles

Rom 16:7 includes one of the most controversial allusions to the female gender in the New Testament: Greet Andronicus and Junia, fellow Jews with me in prison; they are remarkable among the apostles and they were in Christ when I was still in the flesh.

There are a number of textual and interpretive issues that are applicable. To start with, Junia is a feminine Greek name. Although this name was later altered by some copyists to the male form Junias in order to evade the implication of a female apostle, the earliest manuscripts use the name Junia. Secondly, Paul speaks of Andronicus and Junia as being exceptional among the apostles (*episemoi en tois apostolois*). This term means that they were highly esteemed by the apostles or, more probably, were themselves considered apostles.²¹

¹⁹ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 156.

²⁰ Tucker and Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church*, 115.

²¹ Pierce, Groothuis, and Fee, *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 201.

The fact that Junia was considered as an apostle gives solid indications that women occupied the top leadership positions in the early church. Westfall points out that, in case Junia was an apostle, then there is no office within the early church that a woman could not occupy. This single mention nullifies any suggestion that the New Testament does not permit women to hold the highest level of leadership in the church.²²

Women Prophets and Leaders in the Pauline Churches

The letters by Paul recognize the women who had prophetic and leadership roles in the churches he established. In 1 Cor 11:5, Paul provides the guidelines about the women, who pray or prophesy in the gathering, and presupposes that women did actually pray and prophesy in the congregation. Although he does put some cultural limitations on how they look, he does not prohibit their prophetic ministry.

Phil 4: 2-3 includes the names of two women, Euodia and Syntyche, who, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow-workers, whose names are in the book of life, struggled beside me in the gospel. These women are a group that Paul refers to as his fellow workers (*synergoi*) the same term applied to male workers like Timothy, Titus, and Apollos.²³

Col 4:15 mentions "Nympha and the church in her house." This source suggests that there was a woman by the name Nympha who was the patron of a house church in Laodicea, and probably its leader. Likewise, in Phlm 1:2, there is a reference to a sister called Apphia, who could have been the hostess of the church meeting in the house of Philemon. According to Keener, early Christian worship was

²² Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 162.

²³ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 125.

mainly held in house churches and women who hosted such events had great power over the community.²⁴

Theology of Equal Standing in Christ by Paul

The most influential Pauline passage to consider women leadership is Gal 3:28: There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor male nor female, but ye are all one in Christ Jesus (KJV). Paul proclaims that in Christ, the major divisions that organized the ancient world fall.

The expression nor is there male and female is similar to Gen 1:27 in which male and female are made in the image of God simultaneously. Paul does not reject the biological differences but states that gender is not the defining factor that determines access to salvation, spiritual gifts, and leadership in the new creation. According to Lee-Barnewall, Gal 3:28 does not eliminate the distinction between the sexes, but rather it states that in Christ, such a distinction is no longer a factor in determining the status or in gaining entry into the leadership system of the community.²⁵

This passage is the theological background of the special instructions that Paul gave to women in 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2. These teachings need to be understood against the backdrop of Gal 3:28, which articulates the basic theological belief of Paul concerning the equality between women and men in Christ.²⁶ Any biblical examination of women in the leadership should deal with those passages that seem to limit the role of women, especially 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians

²⁴ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 128.

²⁵ Lee-Barnewall, *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 112.

²⁶ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 168.

14:34-35 (which was discussed in Chapter Four). These texts were read and examined carefully in terms of context and exegetics.

Exegetical Examination of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

The text in question reads “*Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. (KJV)*

Contextual Interpretation

Several key factors suggest that this prohibition is specific to its immediate context and should not be interpreted as universal mandate.²⁷

The first factor suggesting the particular interpretation of the text under study, is that 1 Corinthians 14:34:35 contradict with 1 Corinthians 11:5. In the latter verse Paul provides explicit instructions regarding women’s conduct when they ‘pray or prophesy’ during public worship. Since prophesying is regarded as a higher gift than speaking in tongues (1Cor 14:1-5), a comprehensive command for absolute silence in chapter 14 would appear inconsistent with this earlier instructions.

The nature of silence (*sigao*) in Greek, is the second suggestion of non-permanent silence, for it is used in this chapter for speakers in tongues (14:28) and prophets (14:30) to regulate orderly worship. It denotes specific, temporary silence to allow order, not a permanent prohibition from speaking.²⁸

Finally, the instruction to ‘ask their husbands at home’ implies the problem was uneducated women interrupting the service with questions. Due to lower

²⁷ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1.

²⁸ Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, 512.

educational opportunities women in the 1st century²⁹, some women were likely interrupting the proceedings with disruptive informal chatter.

The ‘Law’ and interpretation Options

Paul’s reference to the law is problematic as no Old Testament law demands female silence in worship, suggesting he may be referring to rabbinic traditions or a specific Corinthian custom.³⁰ Many scholars propose that 14:3-35 is a quotation from the Corinthian church leaders (slogan Paul is citing), which he immediately challenges in verse 36: *did the word of God originate from you?*

The Principle of Cultural Context

A proper theology of women in leadership must account for the whole of Scripture which indicates a trend toward empowerment rather than restriction. An important hermeneutical idea is to differentiate between eternal moral imperatives and culturally mediated directives. As Keener points out, Paul should be limited to his historical context, in which women were largely illiterate and prone to false teaching, where the limiting of women to learning was a solution to a particular issue in Ephesus.³¹

The instructions in the letters of Paul are based on the cultural circumstances of the first century Greco-Roman world (e.g., the holy kiss, the head covers, greeting each other with a kiss). These guidelines were fit to their context but would not necessarily be applicable to all cultures to the same extent.

²⁹ Bonita Joyner Shields, *Living in a Man’s World: Lessons I’ve Learned (and Even Some I Haven’t)* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 2013), 56.

³⁰ Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (InterVarsity Press, 1995), 74.

³¹ Keener, *Paul, Women, and Wives*, 155.

Summary

This chapter has shown that the Bible has a good basis on leadership of women in the church. In OT the creation story, God created both women and men on His image. Reason why through the examples of Miriam, Deborah, Huldah and others in the rest of the Bible, through the groundbreaking words of Jesus as a disciple-witness-proclaiming the resurrection and then through the list of women deacons, apostles, prophets, and teachers in the early church, the biblical witness consistently affirms women's capacity for spiritual leadership.

The restrictive passages in the letters of Paul need to be, viewed through the prism of this larger biblical testament and within the circumstances of the particular letters. The onus of showing that a limitation on women in leadership is an eternal design of God is on those who would restrict women in leadership.

In the following chapter, we have taken a closer contextual look at 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and discuss the history of Corinth, the religious context of the city, and the problematic issues that Paul discussed in his letter. It mentioned that the directive by Paul to women to remain silent was a case-specific edict to a particular issue in the church of Corinth, rather than to silence women and prevent them from speaking or leading.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The phrase of Paul written in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 had a great impact on how women are viewed both in society and church. The concept of woman value and consideration in different societies was critical, for the people qualified women in one way or another according to the history. Males continue to dominate leadership on a worldwide scale, and the masculine gender is still successfully associated with the role of the leader.¹ In terms of church membership and adherence, women predominate over males, yet the imbalance in leadership still exists.² However, it would be necessary for bible readers to, well understand Paul's context, if really women are excluded or not to implicate in the mission, despite their skills and abilities in order to contribute to the advancement of the church's mission.

The presence of women in church leadership is another sign of how people view and consider women, especially in South East Rwanda Field, where men lead local churches at a rate of 90%. Since this issue might or has already hampered the church's work, it is essential that it was to be carefully considered. It is with this particular purpose that this research was done, for having contribution on the understanding of what is the role of women in the church leadership, and afterward

¹ Guihen, "*Gender and Leadership in Education*," 147.

² "The Ministry of Women in the New Testament (Lee, Dorothy A.) (Z-Library).Pdf," n.d., 16.

having them as many as possible in different church leadership position to further the work of the Lord.

Marion L. Soards stated that one of the NT texts that has generated the greatest debate at the beginning of the twenty-first century was 1Corinthians 14:34–35.³ There are a number of fundamental exegetical issues with the passage that present substantial difficulty for experienced interpreters, but equally complex theological and sociological issues sometimes overwhelm and even surpass the interpretive difficulties.⁴ It seems that the statement above had affected in one way or another how people understand the role of women in the ministry and what can be their contribution on church leadership. This chapter focused on four different views of women as stated by biblical scholars regarding the interpretation of 1Cor 14:34-35.

Women should Remain Silent in the Church

The first view is that Paul's statement aimed to forbid women to preach and lead in the church. The way people understand the Bible may differs, due to how a certain passage was interpreted by the scholars. The silence of women of the 1Corinthians 14:34-35, was used to prevent women opportunity to lead the church. Charles Ryrie argues that women should not lead in any way in public worship."⁵ For Thomas Charles Edwards, the same prescriptions for women were there for long in certain conditions, then Paul, due to the current situation, he totally decided that they should keep silent in the church.⁶ The Apostle permits the women to pray and

³ Soards, *1 Corinthians*, 302.

⁴ Ibid, 302.

⁵ Lee-Barnewall et al., *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 61.

⁶ Edwards, *First Epistle To The Corinthians*~, 381.

prophesy in the assembly under certain restrictions (1Corinthians 11:5). The discussion of the gifts of tongues seems to have led him to withdraw even that limited permission.”⁷

Not only the 1Corinthians 14:34-35, echoes of 1 Corinthians are found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, especially in the Deutero-Pauline and Pastoral letters.⁸ Paul has written ordering women to be silent and submitting to their husband especially in the church, but elsewhere too. For instance, in 1Timothy 2:12, Paul expressed his will regarding the attitude of women toward men in the church; “*I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet*” (NKJV).

It seems that Paul’s command concerning the particular attitude of women in these verses has a particular meaning and one may need to understand well what Paul meant in every situation he was, otherwise there will always be misinterpretation of his real context. Scholars like Wayne Grudem argues that these verses represent a transcultural principle of male headship.⁹ He suggests that while women have spiritual gifts, the authoritative office of elder or pastor is reserved for men to maintain a created order.¹⁰

According to the above statement, the Apostle withdrew the partial permission of speaking in the assembly women were given. In one word, the women are very restricted to speak in the church.

⁷ Edwards, *First Epistle To The Corinthians*~, 381.

⁸ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, ed., *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible, v. 32 (Yale University Press, 2008), 48.

⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 822.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 822.

The above understanding on Paul's command, may lead Bible students to think that Paul contradicted himself, for he allowed women to speak in tongues and prophesy having their heads covered in the assemblies. It is now difficult to confirm veracity on Thomas' argument that women are not allowed to speak in the church, basing on Paul's writings.

Women are Allowed to Speak and Teach in the Church

Another view is stressing on egalitarianism, theologians such as Kistemaker and Lee, argue that Paul was addressing specific local disruptions in Corinth,¹¹ likely uneducated women interrupting services with questions rather than issuing a universal ban. They point to 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul assumes women are praying and prophesying publicly.¹²

For Bonnidell Clouse, suggested that Paul's command are the married ones. He suggested that the restriction to speak in the church is regarding with only married women.¹³ Verse 35 can hardly suggest that Christian widows, single female adults, or wives of unbelieving spouses must wait until they return home to inquire of a man about the meaning of a confusing part in the pastor's sermon.¹⁴ Moreover, Paul's statement ends up telling women to learn from their husband at home if they have something to ask. The unavoidable conclusion on this particular issue, that Paul addressed his command exclusively on the married women. One may wonder, are the rest of them allowed to speak in the church? On this particular issue, Clouse explains

¹¹ Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, 640.

¹² Michelle Lee-Barnewall et al., *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 104

¹³ Clouse et al., *Women in Ministry*, 26.

¹⁴ Clouse et al., *Women in Ministry*, 26.

that the silence of women Paul suggest is no other than when only the preacher is speaking, otherwise women are allowed to speak in the church (including teaching).

The weakness of this view is that learning from their husband at home implies a new idea that only wives are restricted to speak in the church for they would have an opportunity to speak at home and learn from their husband. It would mean therefore, that the rest of women such as widows, unmarried women are excluded from the order of keeping silent. Therefore, it can be a paradox if the non-married women are not concerned with the rule of Paul, and if his real intention was to make silent all women in the church.

Interpolation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

Thirdly, it is questionable whether the scriptures that forbid women from speaking in church were originally said by the apostle Paul or if they were added later. Some interpreters like Gordon Fee however, argued that the apostle Paul is not the author of these verses for he could not contradict himself.¹⁵ Fee stated that despite the fact that these two verses may be here or at the conclusion of the chapter in every known manuscript, the text-critical criteria of transcriptional and intrinsic likelihood together raise serious concerns about their legitimacy.¹⁶ By affirming so, he declared that the vv. 34-35 is not Pauline even though they are in the passage known to belong to him.

Moreover, the argument of interpolation of the 1 Cor 14:34-35, was accepted by other others like David E. Garland. He said, others attempt to overcome the issue by reading 14:34–35 as Paul's account of a repressive Corinthian decree made by

¹⁵Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, "The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 730.

¹⁶ Ibid., 699.

certain male traditionalists who wished to prevent women from speaking in the church.¹⁷ With the above conclusion, the passage under study was added to Paul's letter in order to humiliate women in the church and preventing them to speak and teaching over men.

The attempt of interpolation of the verse under research however, might need more clarification to be accepted as true for the following reasons: as the Apostle, Paul was informed of the disorder in the church of Corinth, during the worship program. He was determined to resolve and correct the issue, and make different orientations about the order in speaking in tongues and prophesying. Another weakness of this argument is that Paul's authorship of 1Cor was accepted authentic very early in the third century and none can be accepted to attribute unauthenticity over it.

Secondly, Gordon Fee, though argued that Paul was not the author of 1Cor 14:34-35, he didn't stand on the point for so long, for he wrote again explaining what Paul intended to say, when he wrote that women should be silent in the church. In his observation, Gordon D. Fee interpreted the verse that, the Paul's rule "let your women keep silent in the church," as not forbidding women to speak in the church, but not disturbing the preacher or teacher while of delivering a sermon or teaching.¹⁸ Paul forbidden women to question or interrupt the instructor (preacher); the verb "to speak" is merely a word for conversing in the broadest meaning possible and is not meant to be offensive. Although occasionally it refers to engaging in conversation with someone, it does not mean to jabber, ramble, or the like. Perhaps Paul had in mind

¹⁷ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Baker Academic, 2003), 916.

¹⁸ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1987), 33.

this notion of verbally exchanging words with the speaker. Nowadays, hardly even the males regularly engage in that behavior, unless the preacher specifically invites them to do so, and even then, infrequently.¹⁹

Therefore, the argument of interpolation is weakened by the insufficiency of support to convince the readers how the verse under study was not written by Paul, while the authorship of the whole Epistle is generally accepted. The ad hoc nature of 1 Corinthians is reflected in its extremely unusual language. The typically Pauline terminology of law, sin, righteousness, and faith barely emerges, because it is centered on concerns that came up in the life of a certain community at a certain moment early in its growth.²⁰

Paul's Command is made for Order Purposes

The fourth view is that the silence of women written by Paul, though regarded differently by Bible scholars as a tool for leadership umbrella, there are some interpreters regarding it as standing for the order purposes. David Gill and Moyer Hubbard suggest that “these verses (1 Cor 34, 35), need to be balanced with what Paul has said earlier, where he expects women to praying and prophesying in the fellowship.”²¹

This view is much better to understand for it reminds the readers that Paul should not contradict himself. Paul had said in previous chapters (11:2-16), that women should cover their heads when praying or prophesying in the assembly. It

¹⁹ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1987), 33.

²⁰ Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Abingdon Press, 1998), 22.

²¹ David W. J. Gill, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Zondervan, 2015), 75.

would seem to be contradiction to what now he commands in vv34-35. Presumably, Paul's command concerning the particular attitude of women in these verses has a particular meaning and one may need to understand well what Paul meant in every situation he was, otherwise there will always be misinterpretation of his real context.

Women Church Leadership and Liberation Movement

Ian Jones and Janet argued that women face challenges in leadership that males do not encounter. Every woman must consider what it means to be a woman in ministry; regardless of the church we attend, our leadership challenges the nearly 2,000 years of male leadership.²² Nowadays, it seems that people everywhere are motivated to struggle for their rights in all spheres of life, including the right to express themselves. The history however, reveals that among the ignored people in matters of expression, especially in public, the women are on the frontline, for the female public speakers were accused of "unsexing" themselves, becoming "masculine," and "usurping" a position that belonged to males.²³

The only occupations that women held before to World Wars I and II were those of housewives; neither business nor management positions allowed them to demonstrate their abilities or capabilities.²⁴ According to Barnewall, women were in charge of the domestic sphere and cared for the home, whilst males were affiliated with the worlds of business, work, and politics.²⁵ The Greek philosopher Aristotle

²² Ian Jones et al., *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches: International Perspectives*, n.d., 77.

²³ Ian Jones et al., *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches: International Perspectives*, 42.

²⁴ Lee-Barnewall et al., *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 37.

²⁵ Ibid, 37.

said that women are "deformed males" and that "the male is by nature superior and the female is inferior, the male ruler and the female subject." He made these claims in his book *Politics*.²⁶

However, this view started to change with the rise of the feminist movements inspiring women to fight for their rights.²⁷ Finally, the Evangelical churches ended by uplifting the power and ability of women in church leadership as well as the states proclaimed the women's civil rights in the secular matters. The Evangelical feminists said that the secular feminists showed them how they were mistreated in the family and at church and that they were attempting to assert their rights as a result of their standing in Christ.²⁸

According to the history, different movement fighting for women liberation, started post World War I&II and the tumults were in different parts of the world. However, it seems that the church did not escaped the storm of vibrant vindication of women right too. Therefore, during the period, women grew up learning the importance of self-effort and the need to take action on behalf of cherished values.²⁹ According to the above statement, as the feminism ideology rose vigorously in the world, women themselves started to understand how able they are in different areas including speaking in public.

Unfortunately, the women were prejudiced unqualified in leadership by different people. For instance, Karin Klenke said Prejudice against women in

²⁶ Alice Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God Rethinking What We Were Taught about Men and Women in the Church*, 15.

²⁷ Lee-Barnewall et al., *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 43.

²⁸ Ibid, 69

²⁹ Lee-Barnewall et al., *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 42.

leadership occurs particularly in environments where men predominate or if it is thought that men need to possess certain attributes.³⁰ The accusation against female public speakers was that their behavior "unsexed" them, made them manly, and violated a male-exclusive function.³¹ Some Christian women find it difficult to accept this text in light of the current state of the Women's Liberation Movement.³² Thus, the feminist movements did manage to affront such antagonism of understanding and practices of disregarding women and make a vibrant sound in different parts of the world.

The active involvement of American Evangelical women in social change and outreach was one of the notable aspects of America from the Civil War to the turn of the century. However, throughout the 1840s and 1850s, acceptability of female public speakers grew.³³

Another important issue, is how even though the women somehow were starting their day concerning the leadership in different aspect of life, they are still few of them in high positions comparatively to men.³⁴ The end result is a compilation of writings from many academic fields that examine the intricacy of the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles around the globe in educational settings.³⁵

³⁰ Karin Klenke, *Women in Leadership: Contextual Dynamics and Boundaries*, 1. ed (Emerald, 2011), 19.

³¹ Lee-Barnewall et al., *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 42.

³² Cornelius R. Stam, *Commentary on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Mequon Road Germantown, WI: BereBerean Bible Society, 1988), 188.

³³ Lee-Barnewall et al., *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 42.

³⁴ Guihen, "Gender and Leadership in Education," 2.

³⁵ Ibid, 2.

Nowadays, women have leadership positions in almost every area of the corporate and governmental sectors. Yet we have only made some progress. Women's leadership possibilities remain far from equal, notwithstanding fifty years of equal opportunity laws. The largest poll reveals that less than a fifth of top leadership roles in both the public and commercial sectors are held by women.³⁶ However, the research made clear that both men and women are equal in different aspects. A significant portion of the American public believes that men and women are similar in terms of important leadership qualities including intellect, honesty, ambition, decisiveness, and inventiveness, according to a new Pew Research Center study on women and leadership.³⁷

Nowadays, the question remains the same; that of women leadership in crisis in the public and private sectors as well as in the church.³⁸ Today, women have leadership positions in almost every area of the corporate and governmental sectors. Yet we have only made some progress.³⁹ The women church leadership and total involvement in mission despite the diverse facts of equality with men, remains an issue for the church, where the people still opposing them for some positions.⁴⁰ What unique gifts do women bring to this? Though, the number of churchgoers is still declining. Four different suggestions were the basis of discussion concerning the women involvement in church positions as follow:

“Robert Culver argues for what might be called the traditional view that women should not exercise authority over or teach men. Susan Foh suggests a

³⁶ Deborah L. Rhode, *Women and Leadership* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 1–2.

³⁷ Deborah L. Rhode, *Women and Leadership*, 5

³⁸ Rhode, *Women and Leadership*, 1.

³⁹ Ibid, 1.

⁴⁰ Mervyn Davies and Graham Dodds, *Leadership in the Church for a People of Hope* (T&T Clark, 2011), 13.

modified view which would allow for women to teach but not to hold positions of authority. Walter Liefeld presents a case for plural ministry that questions ordination as a means of conferring authority. Alvera Mickelsen defends the full equality of men and women in the church.”⁴¹

The above discussion shows how the diverse opinions about women’s role in church leadership are still controversial in community. They are seen by some, as having capability but limited in authority while others claim the women to have full equality to men in the church.

How women are viewed by the society differ from they probably are. In different area of life women have demonstrated high level of thinking, acting and performing where some men were unable to succeed as we stated in the following chapters. However, according to Richard and Catherine Kroeger, women are vulnerable to become misleading by false teaching and turn by becoming false teachers. After being tricked, they said Eve served as Adam's first false teacher.⁴² John Piper, on the other hand, argued that Paul's ban on women instructing men was justified because of the women's lower level of knowledge.⁴³

Assumed that the same author says there is no difference between men and women in terms of salvation in other passages of the Bible (Gal 3:28), it appears that there is another rationale for this command. In this passage, Paul explains how there are no distinctions among individuals because everyone is treated equally by God. The job of God is the burden for everybody, whether men or women, to carry out and work with their Lord for the salvation of mankind as it is written in (1 Corinthians

⁴¹ Clouse et al., *Women in Ministry*, 2.

⁴² Andreas J. Kostenberger, and Thomas R. Schreiner, *Women in the Church An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 29-15*, 2nd ed., 110.

⁴³ John Piper & Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 2nd ed. (Crossway Books, a division of Good News Publishers, 1991), 75.

11:5). This is another crucial aspect that everyone needs to comprehend. By stating so, Paul himself seems to allow women to prophesy in the congregation, which is in opposition or contrast with the verse (1 Cor. 14:34-35).

Some interpreters like Gordon Fee however, argue that the apostle Paul is not the author of these verses for he could not contradict himself. Fee stated that despite the fact that these two verses may be here or at the conclusion of the chapter in every known manuscript, the text-critical criteria of transcriptional and intrinsic likelihood together raise serious concerns about their legitimacy.⁴⁴ By affirming so, he declared that the vv. 34-35 is not Pauline even though they are in the passage known to belong to him.

Basing on the different views of biblical scholars above, the position of Paul towards women's attitude in the church is in one way or another, contextualized according to one's understanding and then the conclusions are different. Therefore, the following section, will be dealing with what the Bible said about the role of women in leadership in the history of God's people.

Women in Corinth were violating their idea of women's roles based on Gen 2:18–22 by praying and prophesying in front of others. Contrary to Josephus' understanding of their purpose they were acting in their leadership capacity.⁴⁵ However, the writing of Paul in the previous verses, he allowed women to prophesy while their heads are covered vv. and now the vv. 34-35 contradict the previous ones, and then became problematic. Numerous academics from this era have also noted a

⁴⁴ Gordon D. Fee, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. (2014). Epub," 699.

⁴⁵ J. Murphy-O'Connor, *Keys to First Corinthians: Revisiting the Major Issues* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 155.

discrepancy that exists between 1 Corinthians 11.2–16 and 14.33b–36. This is because, while Paul does not criticize women's participation in the ritual, chapter 11 assumes that women participate via prayer and prophesy.⁴⁶

This leads to some conclusions; Joseph A. Fitzmyer said: In conclusion, it is important to remember that passages like these, with their abrupt changes and tensions, may have more in common with Paul's dictation to a scribal secretary than we now recognize. Paul claims in 16:21 that he writes the final greeting in his "own hand," which would suggest that he dictated the letter to a scribe.⁴⁷ According to him, Paul's secretary not Paul himself, added the verses 34-35 in this chapter probably.

One could have anticipated that "women should keep silent in all the assemblies of the saints." V. 33b should be added to what comes before to get around the issue.³⁶ Paul concludes what he has been saying about the importance of order in the Corinthian assembly (vv. 26–33) with a reminder that other churches are calm.⁴⁸ With the statement above, it seems that the author affirms that vv.34-35 were intruders in the passage, for the verse 36 completed what was spoken in vv. 33b. Thus, community approval of women in leadership positions is a need for their ability to prophesy and pray; otherwise, they wouldn't seek out these abilities unless they could be employed in public (11:5).⁴⁹

When reading this chapter with these kind of questions in mind, ones may find themselves interpreting Paul's words in ways other than what he intended. However,

⁴⁶ Jorunn Økland, *Women in Their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 269 (T & T Clark International, 2004), 8.

⁴⁷ Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians a New Translation with Introduction*, 2008, 50.

⁴⁸ Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1995), 265.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 265.

there is a risk of bringing up themes that are not relevant to the immediate context of the speech or formulation when one deviates from it.⁵⁰ In his observation, Fitzmyer in the above statement argued that its necessary to know what is the Paul's context is the phrase under study, before one gets to the conclusion about it. It means that the phrase needs to be understood not literally as it is written but in its real context.

Pastoral Implication of Women in Diverse Cultural Contexts

How the women are viewed in church leadership realm may differ according to the denomination cultural context. For example, the Catholic Church has a standing point on the very issue, different from the protestant view, especially evangelical churches. In his observation, Ngoc Bich Ly Le said that in spite of efforts to advance women's rights, it is clear that the regulation disadvantages women. Because they are women, they are not only ineligible for ordination but also for local church administration, although their male colleagues are granted full access to these privileges.⁵¹

Since women have a long history of serving as diaconates, the ordination of women to the priesthood is still a contentious and contentious issue in the Orthodox Church, despite the fact that women's ordination to the clerical orders of the church is not a modern event per se.⁵² Therefore, this section focused on the different cultural contexts concerning women pastoral implication in church leadership.

⁵⁰ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, ed., *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible, v. 32 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 407.

⁵¹ Ngoc Bich Ly Le, *Struggles for Women-Inclusive Leadership in Toraja Church in Indonesia and the Evangelical Church of Vietnam: Agency and Structural Change* (Globethics.Net, 2017), 98.

⁵² Gabrielle Thomas and Elena Narinskaya, eds., *Women and Ordination in the Orthodox Church: Explorations in Theology and Practice* (Cascade Books, 2020), 12.

Catholic View on Women Pastoral Implication in Church Leadership

The process of admitting someone into one of the holy orders of bishops, priests, or deacons, is known as ordination in the Catholic Church's liturgical traditions.⁵³ The 1983 Code of Canon Law, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and the apostolic letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis* all articulate the teaching of the Catholic Church regarding ordination. It is belied that only a Catholic male is eligible for ordination and that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful.⁵⁴

The official Roman Catholic position is necessarily hostile to women's ordination, according to Catherine Gyarmathy-Amherd's analysis of official Catholic theology on women's ordination. Her analysis focuses on the years shortly after Vatican II.⁵⁵ To sum up, the Catholic Church does not admit the equality of men and women in terms position in the church, especially that which requires ordination.

⁵³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordination_of_women_and_the_Catholic_Church

⁵⁴ Ngoc Bich Ly Le, *Struggles for Women-Inclusive Leadership in Toraja Church in Indonesia and the Evangelical Church of Vietnam: Agency and Structural Change* (Globethics.Net, 2017), 98.

⁵⁵ Ian Jones et al., *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches: International Perspectives*, n.d., 7.

Protestant View on Women Pastoral Implication in Church Leadership

The women implication in the pastoral ministry in evangelical churches is now obvious in the world.⁵⁶ American evangelical women played major leadership roles in numerous benevolence societies and reform movements, driven by a millennialism that believed their work could help usher in the kingdom of God on Earth.⁵⁷ The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden's march towards the ordination of women as priests and bishops is aptly portrayed by Christina Odenberg's depiction of the equality trend.⁵⁸

According to Pierce and Groothuis, the appropriate outworking of the biblical ideal of equality is for women and men to have equal opportunity for ministry in the church, and shared authority with mutual submission within marriage. This is how they define biblical equality.⁵⁹ The idea that anyone should be excluded from any position, ministry, or opportunity only because of their gender is rejected by egalitarianism.⁶⁰

Additionally, one can observe that in different evangelical churches the women are leading as pastors, bishops, apostles and evangelists. This is an indicator sign of how women are now engaged in the ministry playing different roles in church leadership. According to Sherry Surratt Jenni Carton, despite the fact that both men and women's success can be attributed to their appearance, 75% of respondents to a

⁵⁶ Lee-Barnewall et al., *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 36.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 36.

⁵⁸ Jones et al., *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches: International Perspectives*, n.d., 9.

⁵⁹ LeeIl., *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian*, 19.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 19.

Women Work! Survey felt that women's appearance at work has a greater impact on how others view them than does men's appearance.⁶¹ It seems that the women ordination issue was welcomed in evangelical church, as the way of liberating women from violation of their rights regarding church leadership and women pastoral implication in the ministry.

Adventist View on Women Pastoral Implication in Church Leadership

The Seventh day Adventist church doesn't forbid women to hold leadership position and working in the ministry. However, women are not permitted to ordination, but rather to spiritual gifts.⁶² It is necessary to understand that ordination is not necessary for preaching. Nobody is requesting that women be prohibited from preaching, either to the church or the general public, as preaching is a spiritual talent.⁶³ Nevertheless this does not mean that the church believes that women should be unrestricted in any leadership position in the church. The Bible designates males for the headship position of elder/overseer (1 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:12, 13).

Paul's teachings should provide evidence for this significant deviation if Christ's priestly ministry made it possible for women to serve as leaders in the church on par with men's ministry. This is because Paul specifically addresses both the ordination of church leaders and Christ's priestly ministry.⁶⁴ Some attempt to clarify that wherever males are referenced in the Bible, it should be understood that women

⁶¹ Sherry Surratt and Jenni Catron, *Just Lead!: A No-Whining, No-Complaining, No-Nonsense Practical Guide for Women Leaders in the Church* (Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint, 2013), 130.

⁶² Council of Adventist Pastors, *The Adventist Ordination Crisis* (Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers., 2001), 17.

⁶³ *Biblical Authority or Cultural Conformity*, 18.

⁶⁴ Voerman, *The Ordination of Women*, 19.

are included rather than excluded by language usage, and that it is therefore acceptable to appoint women as elders as well.⁶⁵ The inclusion of women is occasionally a relevant argument in general or common circumstances, but not everyone can relate to the appointment of elders or bishops as church leaders.⁶⁶

The SDA church defines ordination as the church's method of authorizing, blessing, and identifying the people to be set apart for service to the church in a specific position; it does not bestow supernatural abilities.⁶⁷ The church recognizes a person's call and suitability for a certain post or ministry through ordination.⁶⁸ Let's assume that a woman may claim to have God's call for the position which necessitates ordination. The church responded to such a question as follow: God never assigns roles to people that conflict with His revealed Word, whether they be men or women. Any purported call to serve in the Lord's mission must be evaluated in light of the inspired scriptures' combined wisdom.⁶⁹ Additionally, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has long acknowledged that God invites both men and women to serve in pastoral roles. The church has chosen to call one ordination and the other commissioning, which is the only distinction.⁷⁰ Thus, one can say that the Adventist Church prefers to commission women and other men for service in God's vineyard.

⁶⁵ Voerman, *The Ordination of Women*, 23.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 23.

⁶⁷ I *Biblical Authority or Cultural Conformity*, 12.

⁶⁸ Jan Voerman, *The Ordination of Women: The Priesthood of All Believers and Other Aspects* (Ringgold, GA: TEACH Services, Inc. Publishing, 2013), *Biblical Authority or Cultural Conformity*, 17.

⁶⁹ Jan Voerman, *The Ordination of Women: The Priesthood of All Believers and Other Aspects* (Ringgold, GA: TEACH Services, Inc. Publishing, 2013), *Biblical Authority or Cultural Conformity*, 20.

⁷⁰ George R. Knight, *Adventist Authority Wars, Ordination, and the Roman Catholic Temptation*, First Edition (Oak and Acorn Publishing, 2017), 88.

However, certain individuals—particularly men—are ordained for pastoral ministry within the church.

Davis has stated that in 1915, the year of White's death, women held numerous administrative positions throughout the SDA church organization. In the years immediately thereafter, however, the number of women in leadership positions dropped, resulting in the eventual absence of women from the SDA church leadership.⁷¹

Therefore, some scholars such as Laura Vance, argued that biblical passages have been understood as an objection to women's speaking in public, and thousands of females that have submitted their hearts to God, have been deprived of the freedom.⁷² By false construction put upon these paragraphs, Vance said, notwithstanding the great amount of evidence that one can bring to prove that all who are made partakers of such love have a right to speak forth his praises.⁷³

With all the facts above, the Seventh-day Adventist scholars confirmed that women, though deprived so long their right to preach in public places and denied to partake leadership positions in different area of life, the Seventh-day Adventist church demonstrated that there is no need to remain in such practices, but rather to allow participation in the ministry regardless their gender. Based on the light of the Holy Scripture, the SDA church decided to let all members who are talented to work according to their gifts, in order to further the mission of the Lord.

⁷¹ Clark Davis *Called by God, Led by Men*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1909–1922, 134

⁷² Laura L. Vance *Denominationalism and Changing Gender Ideals in the Adventist Review: An Examination of Weber's Theory of Religion of the Disprivileged Classes*, 1197, 50.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 50.

Ellen White's View of Women

Saying about women in the service, Ellen G White argued “Women as well as men can engage in the work of hiding the truth where it can work out and be made manifest. They can take their place in the work at this crisis, and the Lord will work through them.”⁷⁴ She continued elsewhere in the same book saying “Great care should be exercised in selecting officers for the new churches. Let them be men and women who are thoroughly converted. Let those be chosen who are best qualified to give instruction, those who can minister both in word and in deed.”⁷⁵ These selfless women will see the brightness of the Savior's countenance, and He will bestow upon them strength beyond that of men.⁷⁶

Emphasizing on the role of women alongside with men in the mission of the church, Ellen G White explained that there was no distinction based on gender as follow:

It was through the power of the Holy Spirit that during the Dark Ages the Waldensian Christians helped to prepare the way for the Reformation. It was the same power that made successful the efforts of the noble men and women who pioneered the way for the establishment of modern missions and for the translation of the Bible into the languages and dialects of all nations and peoples.⁷⁷

She always stressed that God will use everyone to accomplish His mission by saying that “all heaven is waiting for men and women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity”.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1925), 31.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 65.

⁷⁶ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 418.

⁷⁷ Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1911), 531.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 600.

Concerning the transformation of character as the way to reveal Christ to the world, Ellen White, has affirmed that “men and women may reach a high standard, if they will but acknowledge Christ as their personal Saviour. Watch and pray, making a surrender of all to God. The knowledge that you are striving for eternal life will strengthen and comfort you both”.⁷⁹ So there is no reason to exclude women from exercising their talent for leadership, as men are expected to do.

Summary

In the above commendation, women are not excluded from any part of the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; they are supposed to work together with men so that the Lord’s mission may be accomplished. Women’s implication of the ministry however, is very limited in the South East Rwanda Field, though the church doesn’t limit them for local church level of leadership. In several local churches, the women are inactive especially in church coordination and in mission involvement, maybe because of men’s occupation of full leadership of the church. Working together of men and women in the ministry in the church should be the key factor for accomplishing Jesus’ command of Mathew 28:19-20 each one in his/her means of serving regardless of gender, of the talents offered by God and opportunities. Paul exhorts all women to fulfill their role as obedient mothers and to acknowledge that leadership in the home and in the church is a God-given job for males. God has given each gender unique abilities to carry out their specific roles, and both will be happiest when they occupy their designated roles with a spirit of love, commitment, and devoted service.⁸⁰ Obviously, one may observe that, the church is

⁷⁹ Ellen G. White, *Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952), 96.

⁸⁰ Voerman, *The Ordination of Women*, 24.

the center where all people are called to apply their ability and talents to further the church mission, nevertheless the ancient boundaries of faith should be respected.

The current body of work suggests that while the biblical text provides the framework, the pastoral application in SERF is heavily influenced by the need for mission effectiveness. There is a recognized gap in the literature specifically addressing how SERF pastors can navigate the silence of 1 Corinthians 14 without stifling the spiritual gifts of women who are vital to the church's growth.

CHAPTER 4

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34-35

As it was stated in previous chapters, the meaning of the verse: *Let your women keep silence in the churches*, was broadly interpreted by Bible scholars, and they concluded differently. Their views, however, are so important to analyze, in order to get to the real interpretation of the particular context of the whole chapter, instead of interpreting the verse under study, out of its context. Therefore, the Bible position on this particular matter is the only source to solve it adequately.

In this chapter, Exegetical analysis of the 1Corinthians 14:34-35we undertaken the Biblical foundation, contextual and textual analysis of the verse under study in order to see in which context the phrase was written. The following section will focus Settings, literary structure, the historical background, the contextual analysis, textual analysis and theology of the text then the summary and conclusion of the chapter.

Historical Background

Gordon Fee stated that Paul's letters to the church at Corinth, perhaps more so than any other text in the NT, must be understood in the context of the city of Corinth, which is made up of a variety of social, economic, and theological factors.¹ Roman

¹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1.

Corinth was affluent, multicultural, and religiously heterogeneous; it was accustomed to the appearances of notable, traveling public speakers and was preoccupied with status, self-promotion, and individual liberties.² Religious travelers have long traveled to Corinth to see the well-known Aphrodite temple that is located on the peak that overlooks the city, known as the Acro-Corinth. Prostitutes honored Aphrodite as their patroness because she was the goddess of love, beauty, and fertility. Additionally, she was a goddess of the sea.³ All above information are the fact that Corinth was the city strategically favorable to evangelism. Gordon Fee stated that ‘the religious variety of Corinth was as diverse as its population.’⁴

Authorship

Paul stood between the Jewish and pagan cultures since he was a Jew who later became the apostle to the Gentiles. The evidence strongly suggests that he wrote a number of epistles.⁵ Understanding his aims and purposes while writing 1 Corinthians is best done in light of his several personas.⁶ The ad hoc nature of 1 Corinthians is reflected in its extremely unusual language. The typically Pauline terminology of law, sin, righteousness, and faith barely emerges, because it is centered on concerns that came up in the life of a certain community at a certain

² Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Apollos, 2010), 70.

³ Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (W.B. Eerdmans ; Paternoster Press, 1995), 55.

⁴ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 3.

⁵ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ; Apollos, 2010), 77.

⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Apollos, 2010), 77.

moment early in its growth.⁷ The distinctive language Paul uses in 1 Corinthians and the issues he discusses appear to belong in precisely such a situation.⁸ Thus, there is no reason to question Paul's authorship of the Epistle to Corinthians.

Audience

The internal evidence for the recipients; to whom the first Epistle of Corinth was written, is in the Epistle itself (1 Cor. 1:1-2). The above introduction to the letter indicates that it was sent to all the saints of God residing in the city of Corinth.⁹ On his second missionary tour, Paul set the cornerstone for the church of God in Corinth and spent eighteen months there building it up (Acts 18:1–18).¹⁰ The circumstances that had arisen in the Corinthian church between the time Paul left the city, presumably between A.D. 51 and 52 are occasionally addressed in our 1 Corinthians.¹¹ 1 Corinthians makes reference to Paul's previous letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 5:9–11).¹² The Corinthian church was established during Paul's second missionary voyage. The apostle had spent at least 18 months in such an institution. Acts 18:1–11 outlines how his arduous but profitable effort led to the establishment of a flourishing church.¹³

⁷ Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Abingdon Press, 1998), 22.

⁸ Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Abingdon Press, 1998), 31.

⁹ SDA Church, *The Seventh Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Revised Edition (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 6:655.

¹⁰ SDA Church, *The Holy Bible with Exegetica and Expozitory Comments*, 6:655.

¹¹ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, Revised Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 79.

¹² Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ; Apollos, 2010), 72.

¹³ Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventists Bible Commentary* (Washington DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 6:655.

For fifty years, there has been a great deal of disagreement in New Testament scholarship regarding the exact cause and character of the issues in the church in Corinth.¹⁴ The church in Corinth was dealing with a number of problems, including doctrinal and behavioral issues.¹⁵ Women's participation in worship services was one of the traditional topics that Corinthians had concerns about. It appears that the apostle Paul himself ought to address the issue of women's involvement in the worship service, which was one of the many that occurred in the Corinthian church.

Religious Background

Corinth was not a Greek city restored, but rather a Roman city in terms of architecture, planning, and religious practice. Roman gods or the imperial worship are mentioned in most dedicatory inscriptions and the records of priesthoods that now exist.¹⁶ Understanding the Corinthian religion helps to show God's amazing grace in defeating the powers of evil and establishing a church of regenerated saints in this legendary city. Corinth deservedly earned the moniker "the Paris of antiquity" given to it by Barnes due to its richness, luxury, trade, and diverse people.¹⁷

Because their major domain was still the family, women were still faced with the burdensome duty of avoiding humiliation. However, there is evidence that under the empire women's standing was growing and that they were starting to be able to

¹⁴ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ; Apollos, 2010), 73.

¹⁵ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed., 79.

¹⁶ Horsley, *1 Corinthians* (Abingdon Press, 1998), 25.

¹⁷ Seventh day Advent Church, *Bible Commentary of SDA Electronic-Version* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 6:2.

achieve respect during their lifetime by, for instance, serving as patronesses of clubs or organizations or amassing considerable money via commercial endeavors.¹⁸

Literary Context of 1Corinthian 14:34-35

The meaning of the phrase “let your women keep silent in the church” of 1Corinthiana 14:34-35 is better studied and understood if we know the literary context of the passage. That is why in this present section we shall review the key elements of the section in which the verse under study is found, in order to get to its interpretation. The gospel of Jesus Christ is applicable to every aspect of church life, according to the overall message of 1 Corinthians. Paul expounds on God's enabling grace and the necessity of knowing only Christ and He the crucified, in his letter to a church dealing with several issues.¹⁹ In this light, discord is one of numerous behaviors that describe the Corinthians as worldly, as acting like mere human beings (3:3). While it is true that disunity is a key subject of the epistle, stretching beyond chapters 1-4, in this context, it is only one of several actions.²⁰ Their peaceful coexistence is not Paul's only objective.²¹

The primary purpose of this epistle is twofold: first, reproof for the backsliding that led to the adoption of gospel-corrupting practices within the church; and second, instruction or explanation regarding the points of doctrine and conduct

¹⁸ Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (W.B. Eerdmans ; Paternoster Press, 1995), 236.

¹⁹ Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Baker Books, 1993), 17.

²⁰ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. ; Apollos, 2010), 100.

²¹ *Ibid*, 100.

that the believers had sought clarification on.²² With the given observation in above statements, one can understand that the Epistle to Corinthians aimed to firstly reprimand the church for their backsliding which normally resulted to disunity and adoption of false gospel, and secondly to instruct them to live in Christendom accordingly.

The 1 Corinthians 11-14 is considered as a point of departure of Paul's purpose. He requires in these chapters that the *ἐκκλησιαι* (ritual meetings) proceed in a specific way in accordance with a divinely predetermined schedule. Some of Paul's most well-known verses about women are found in this section of 1 Corinthians.²³

The Corinthian Jewish population was likely made up of a small number of Roman citizens, ship owners, ship laborers, craftsmen, merchants, and slaves; the same socioeconomic spectrum as the city's Christian population.²⁴ The church of Corinth according to the author, in the statement, above was mainly composed by Jews who were living in the latter city. Furthermore, they were a little bit different to those in Palestine in religious mood, even the women were likely liberals than those in Palestine.

The theology of the Roman Empire, which crucified Jesus Christ, did not respect the separation of church and state. Targeting and endangering both the Jewish and Gentile missions were the social, theological, and political structures that made up the Roman Empire in the first century.²⁵ One of the biggest challenges to Christian

²² Seventh day Advent Church, *Bible Commentary of SDA Electronic-Version*, vol. (United States of America: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 3.

²³ Økland, *Women in Their Place*, 1.

²⁴ Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (W.B. Eerdmans ; Paternoster Press, 1995), 70.

²⁵ Westfall, *Paul and Gender Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, 184.

preaching was the pagan attitude against Christianity that was raised above both educated contempt and widespread prejudice. Christianity's legal standing was another obstacle, at least after Nero's reign.²⁶

The Jewish faith appears to have been, slightly more liberalized outside of Palestine in the Diaspora. In addition to the usage of the Greek OT, B. Broton asserts that women played important roles in Diaspora synagogues.²⁷ However, certain evidence about some of the "mothers of the synagogue" shows that they were patronesses of the synagogue, even if other roles would have been open in a liberal environment like Corinth.²⁸ In this manner, 1 Corinthians 11–14 contributes to a larger Corinthian discourse on gender and ritual/sanctuary space in early Roman Corinth. Cultic representations of women in this discourse are, connected to the environment in which the cult exists.²⁹ The premises and presuppositions of this discourse are, based on an old cosmos where gender was a cosmic structure that was also mirrored on a human level and where the world would fall into chaos if the gender limits were disrupted.³⁰

Since the time of Socrates, there has been an increasing trend among Greeks to improve the social status of women. This trend was given a fresh impetus by contact with the Romans, particularly in a Dorian city like Corinth, which is what we may assume it to still be in part.³¹ One can notice that women were starting their new age

²⁶ Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed., (Eerdmans, 2009), 608.

²⁷ Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth*, 70.

²⁸ Ibid, 70.

²⁹ Økland, *Women in Their Place*, 1.

³⁰ Ibid, 1.

³¹ Edwards, *First Epistle To The Corinthians*, 272.

of social status. In other words they were gaining some recognition in the society than usual. Therefore, this spirit of rising up of women must have started even in the church which may have reduced their submission to their husbands.

As it was stated above, Paul as the Apostle to the Gentiles, has preached and founded churches in different parts of Asia and Europe, including Achaia province in Greece, precisely in the capital city of that province which is called Corinth. However, this church might have been in very critical situation when Paul wrote to them “For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults” (2 Cor 12:20, KJV).
Apollos, who had fled the scene when divisions in the church emerged, sent information to Paul on the condition of the Corinthian church. Paul had Apollos with him at Ephesus.³²

Textual analysis of 1Corinthians 14:34-35

Greek Translation

³⁴ Αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν, οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν· ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει. ³⁵ εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν, αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ.³³

English Translation

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. ³⁵ *And*

³² Nichol, ed., *Seventh-day Adventists Bible Commentary*, 6:656.

³³ Michael W. Holmes, *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition* (Lexham Press; Society of Biblical Literature, 2011–2013), 1 Co 14:34–35.

if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (1 Cor 14:34–35).

Depending on the context, the word σιγάω might signify to keep one's tongue, hold one's peace, cease speaking, or refrain from employing a certain type of speech or communication in a presupposed context.³⁴ We suggest a generic word that is consistent with Paul's use in the preceding verses, which is "should allow for silence," to establish a balance between contextual limitations and unknowable elements.³⁵

Meaning of Key Words

- a. ταις γυναικες– Women's class is indicated by the definite article with the noun (Ephesians 5:22). After γυναικες, the majority versions add □μω□, however this could be a scribal addition to accord with the phrase *your own spouses* in verse 35. The shorter reading is therefore ideal.³⁶
- b. σιγάω
 - Let your women [σιγάτωσαν]; keep silent; Present – Imperative-Active. It was elsewhere use by Jesus in Mark 4:39 σιγά ; be still, and remain silent Mark 14:61, Luke 19:40, no sound at all.³⁷
- c. Ου γαρ επιρπαται–“because that is not allowed.” The dative pronoun αιταις translates this present passive verb as active: “they are not

³⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 1188.

³⁵ Ibid., 1189.

³⁶ Simon J. Kistemaker, *1 Corinthians*, 515.

³⁷ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, : 1152.

permitted.” In 1 Timothy 2:12, Paul writes the first-person singular επιτρεπω. The verb is often used in conjunction with the *verb to talk*.³⁸

d. ἐπιτρέπεται

- permit/allow; there exists no permission
- ταῖς γυναῖκες: the class of women is indicated by the definite article with the noun.
- οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται: ‘because it is not allowed.’ This present passive verb is interpreted as active when the dative pronoun αὐταῖς is used, meaning ‘they are not permitted.’

e. λαλεῖν– The act of speaking is described with the present active infinitive.

In conjugated form, the verb λεγω introduces the content of speech.³⁹

- λαλεῖν: talk, chat, speak, say: when σιγάω is linked to λαλεῖν automatically we come to the phrase of Paul towards the women: to be silent, to stop speaking, to refrain from speaking, after the particle followed by preposition οὐ γὰρ then the verb⁴⁰

In his writings, Paul demonstrated how precious the role of women in his mission was, and many of their names appear in his letters. Romans 16 provide a list of some important female church leaders. In his observation, Keener argued that, while women may have been given more significant positions at Philippi than in other regions of the Roman world, Paul appears to be content with the ministerial abilities of the women who work in this city. Admitting that regional customs influenced

³⁸ Kistemaker, *Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 515.

³⁹ Ibid, 515.

⁴⁰ Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 463

women's roles is equivalent to acknowledging that women are allowed to hold leadership positions when their culture gives them the chance to develop as gendered leaders.⁴¹ Now, why did Paul restricted women to speak in the congregation? This section draws our attention on the exegetical interpretation of this particular text of 1Corinthians 14:34-35.

Larger Context

The Apostle Paul didn't ignore the active participation of women in his ministry. He always appreciated the role of women that helped him in different ways, and the 1Corinthians demonstrates this truth.

As it is evident in the Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul, the founder of the church in Corinth, expressed his concern in the unity, progress, and spiritual development of the church's members. In order to demonstrate his concern for the welfare of his new converts, Paul composed the following synopsis of 1 Corinthians 1:1–16. 1 Corinthians is more than just a haphazard synopsis; its overall structure Chapters 1-4 talk about divisions and unity in Christ; The first need of the Corinthian church was for that sort of harmony.⁴²

Chapters 5–6 discuss moral and legal difficulties; Chapters 7–10 discuss marriage, food, freedom, and conscience; Chapters 11–14 discuss worship and order in the assembly; Paul is worried about maintaining order.⁴³ Chapter 15 discusses the resurrection; Chapter 16 concludes the discussion. Therefore, the worship/order section (11–14) includes 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, because God is a God of peace

⁴¹ Keener, *Paul, Women, & Wives*, 244.

⁴² Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, 22.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 301.

rather than chaos. According to Paul, order is inherent in God, so everything that is done God, ought to bring about order; people ought to be conscious of this fact.⁴⁴

The directive to keep quiet is made more difficult by the fact that it seems to contradict Paul's affirmation in 11:5 that women are free to pray or prophesy as long as they cover their heads. Additionally, it seems to contradict 14:31, in which he declares that "all" (or "all") pantes are capable of prophesying in turn.⁴⁵

The silence of women in the Church suggested by Paul is generally need to be understood in its real context not in merely and superficially understanding. Literary, the women and even men should keep silence in the church as long as someone is speaking or prophesying. It seems however, that women as specifically mentioned in the verse, were mainly responsible of disorder and chaos specifically in the Corinthian church. The sentence is now to be applied in the context of the previous discussion in vv. 26-33 in which Paul dealt with the order among the church members, some could speak in tongues without interpretation, others asking questions vaguely. Let's us look now, what did Paul think about women in the mission during his labor for Christ.

Paul's View towards Women

In his previous discussion vv. 26-33, Paul was explaining how the order should be among the people who prophesy in tongues. The people should have order by speaking and interpreting to the rest in the assembly. Moreover, women are among the people who used to pray and prophesy in the church (11:5). Therefore, the vv. 34-35 should be analyzed along with the rest of Paul's writings in order to keep up in his view towards women in the church' services. For some who believe Paul has a bad

⁴⁴ Marion L. Soards, *1 Corinthians*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, 301.

⁴⁵ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament Ser (Baker Academic, 2003), 665.

attitude of women, 'it may come as a surprise to learn that in this instance; he considers them as equals and coworkers in the ministry of Christ'.⁴⁶

As long as their heads are covered, Paul permits women to prophesy and pray (1 Cor. 11:4-5). The complete silence of women from advocating for God in another chapter suddenly seems extraordinary. Do we see the tougher texts as contradicting the more affirming ones, as many claim?⁴⁷

As previously said, it is also important to understand and interpret passages on men and women in the context of Pauline theology as a whole, especially in the passages and letters where they are contained.⁴⁸ We must keep in mind that the church historically rejected women because of their fundamental inadequacy as thinkers.⁴⁹

According to some observers, women who are false instructors, illiterate, or who don't prophesy or participate in worship in any other way are the only ones who need to keep silent.⁵⁰ Almost everyone in this situation has some kind of speaking limitation. It seems that some commentators of the Bible interpret vv.34-35 mainly basing on the historical concept of women in the society, unfortunately the women are recognized by Paul as partakers of him in the mission of the church in his writings.

Glenn Pease wrote that women may succeed in any activity when they recognize their strengths. Paul is our best tool for elevating women, second only to Jesus. Paul advocated for and demonstrated the equality of women in Christ, and it is

⁴⁶ Glenn Pease, *Women of the Bible Old and New Testament: Learn All About the Most Amazing Women in the Bible*, 276.

⁴⁷ Keener, *Paul, Women, & Wives*, 17.

⁴⁸ Westfall, *Paul and Gender Reclaiming the Apostle's Vision for Men and Women in Christ*, 10.

⁴⁹ I Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women, & Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 22.

⁵⁰ Mathews, *Gender Roles and the People of God*, 103.

safe to say that Lydia's kindness and compassion had a significant impact on Paul's perception of women.⁵¹ However, at that point, Paul would be telling them that women are still women since equality is equality "in Christ." Unlike excitement, their personality does not vanish.⁵²

In fact, Paul would not, however, forbid speech that is inspired by the Spirit (though the context indicates that he is ready to control it); in fact, he would be contradicting himself if he forbade women from praying or prophesying (11:5). Furthermore, he did have female coworkers at Corinth; Rom 16:1–5; 1 Cor. 16:19. He makes special reference to learning, a phrase that is used only in reference to those who are hearing prophecies.⁵³ Therefore, in this particular section, Paul must have been dealing with the current situation in Corinthian church not a rule for all times at all places. We are now to see and analyze the role of women in the public arena in the ministry of the church.

Immediate Context of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

The silence of women in the Church suggested by Paul is generally need to be understood in its real context not in merely and superficially understanding. The specific rule of silence in the church is that, both women and even men should keep silence in the church as long as someone is speaking or prophesying.⁵⁴ It seems however, that women as specifically mentioned in the verse, were mainly responsible of disorder and chaos specifically in the Corinthian church. The sentence is now to be

⁵¹ Glenn Pease, *Women of the Bible Old and New Testament*, 273.

⁵² Conzelmann Hans, *Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*) 1 *Corinthians* (Fortress Press, 1975), 185.

⁵³ Craig S. Keener, *1-2 Corinthians* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 118.

⁵⁴ Barbara Kellerman et al., eds., *Women and Leadership: The State of Play and Strategies for Change*, 1st ed, Warren Bennis Signature Series (Jossey-Bass, 2007), 300-301.

applied in the context of the previous discussion in vv. 26-33 in which Paul dealt with the order among the church members, some could speak in tongues without interpretation, others asking questions vaguely. Richard R. Pratt suggested as follow:

Paul did not believe that women should not speak at all in the church. In chap 11:5, 13, he acknowledged that their right to pray and prophesy. Rather they should not ask questions. By suggesting that they ask their questions of their own husbands at home, he also implied that their own husbands were the ones who knew the answers. In this context, seems specifically to prohibit wives from questioning their own husbands in church.⁵⁵

In this context, the rule of keeping silence in the church by women will not be for all women but only for wives. If so, the rest of women and even men are allowed too, interrupting those holding a message to the audience, which was totally different of the Paul's suggestion of having order in the assemblies of the saints (1 Cor 14:40). Therefore, there is a specific context the verse must have been written. For Witherington, it is not a gender-specific argument.

Paul demands silence, reverence, and submission from all listeners when a prophet speaks (vv. 28–32), and his treatment of certain women who raise inquiries (vv. 34f.) is a particular application of precepts that are already applied generally to everyone.⁵⁶ Presumably, he chooses these women for remark because he had heard that some of them were egregious transgressors of these values.⁵⁷

Women are not required to learn only at home under this instruction; rather, all are to learn in the assembly (14:31). However, it does not mandate women's quiet in all situations. They are requested to temporarily pause their speaking in order to save

⁵⁵ Richard R. Pratt, Jr., *Holman New Testament Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Publishers, 2000), 250.

⁵⁶ Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 395.

⁵⁷ Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1995), 395.

themselves from shame. Silence is needed in the church, for Spiritual contributions are not always appreciated or welcomed.⁵⁸

In summation, our opinion is that wives are instructed not to publicly evaluate or contest any prophecies that come from their own husbands. Such a move might ruin the marriage. Instead, they should ask inquiries at home if they have any.⁵⁹ For him, the women were used to disturb their husbands by asking them questions, when they were teaching or/ and prophesying which would bring up to destroy the good relationship in their home.

Lexical, Grammatical and Syntactical Analysis

A lexical analysis seeks to determine the range of meanings of key words in their original language and then identify which specific nuance best fits the immediate context. This study focused on the key Greek verbs in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35: σιγάτωσαν (*sigatōsan* - "let them keep silent"), λαλεῖν (*lalein* - "to speak"), and ἐπιτρέπεται (*epitrepetai* - "it is permitted").⁶⁰

a. σιγάω (*sigáō*) - "to be silent, to keep quiet"

- Range of Meanings: The verb σιγάω can mean complete silence or the cessation of a specific type of sound or speech.⁶¹

- *BDAG* notes its meanings include: "to keep quiet, say nothing, hold one's peace" and "to become silent, stop making a sound."

⁵⁸ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 922.

⁵⁹ Paul Gardner, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 979.

⁶⁰ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 1147.

⁶¹ Walter Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, Second ed (University of Chicago press, 1979), 749.

- *Louw-Nida* categorizes it under domain 33.87 ("Be silent, keep still, be quiet"). They clarify it can mean "to refrain from speaking or making a sound."⁶²

- Contextual Determination: In the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 14, Paul uses σιγάω in verses 28 and 30. In verse 28, a tongue-speaker must "keep silent" (σιγάτω) if there is no interpreter. In verse 30, a prophet must "become silent" (σιγάτω) if a revelation comes to another.⁶³ In both cases, σιγάω does not mean a permanent or universal ban on speech, but a temporary cessation for the sake of order and edification. This contextual usage strongly suggests that the command for women to "keep silent" in v. 34 is similarly a temporary, situational instruction, not an absolute prohibition.⁶⁴

b. λαλέω (laléō) - "to speak, to talk"

- Range of Meanings: This is a very common Greek verb with a broad range, from making a sound to preaching.⁶⁵
 - *BDAG* lists meanings including: "to produce oral sounds, talk," "to speak in a language, speak, talk," "to make a statement, say," and even "to proclaim, preach."⁶⁶

⁶² Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 749.

⁶³ Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, 512.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 512.

⁶⁵ Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 463.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 463.

- *TDNT* highlights that in the New Testament, λαλέω is often used for prophetic or inspired speech (e.g., "speaking in tongues," "the Spirit speaks").⁶⁷

- Contextual Determination: The meaning of λαλέω must be determined by what it is contrasted with. In verse 35, the specific speech that is deemed "shameful" is contrasted with asking their own husbands "at home" (ἐν οἴκῳ). This implies the prohibited speech in the assembly is disruptive questioning or conversational chatter that could be handled privately.⁶⁸ It is not a blanket condemnation of all forms of public speech, especially since Paul has already acknowledged women praying and prophesying (λαλέω) in 11:5.

c. ἐπιτρέπω (epitrepō) - "to allow, to permit"

- Range of Meanings:
 - *BDAG* defines it as "to allow someone to do something, permit, allow, give permission."
 - *Louw-Nida* places it in domain 71.1 ("Allow, Permit").

Contextual Determination

The use of the present passive indicative (ἐπιτρέπεται - "it is not permitted") is significant. It presents the prohibition not merely as Paul's personal opinion but as a standing rule or principle. The key is to identify the source of this rule. Is it an appeal to a universal, creation-order principle⁶⁹ (as in 1 Tim 2:12-13), or is it an application

⁶⁷ Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 463.

⁶⁸ Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 463.

⁶⁹ Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*, 519.

of a local cultural standard of propriety for the sake of order and testimony? The phrase "as the Law also says" (v. 34) is debated, but likely refers to a general principle of female submission drawn from Genesis (e.g., Gen 3:16) rather than a specific Mosaic law, further indicating this is about maintaining social and worship order.⁷⁰

Summary of Lexical Analysis

The key terms, when analyzed in their immediate context, point away from a universal, absolute command for women's silence. Instead, they support a interpretation where **σιγάω** means to cease a specific disruptive behavior, **λαλέω** refers to disruptive chatter or questioning, and the prohibition is a situational rule for maintaining order ("it is not permitted") in the Corinthian context.

Grammatical and Syntactical Analysis

This analysis examines the relationship between words, phrases, and clauses to understand the author's flow of thought and emphasis.⁷¹

a. Structure of the Passage:

34 Αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν,
(The women in the churches let them keep silent,)
οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν·
(for it is not permitted for them to speak;)
ἀλλὰ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει.
(but let them be in submission, as also the Law says.)

35 εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοὺς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν,

⁷⁰ Bauer et al., *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 519.

⁷¹ Oxford English Dictionary

(And if they desire to learn something, at home let them ask their own husbands;)

αἰσχρὸν γάρ ἐστιν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ.

*(for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.)*⁷²

b. Key Grammatical and Syntactical Observations:

1. The Conditional Clause (v. 35): The sentence begins with a conditional clause, "εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν..." ("And if they desire to learn something..."). This is crucial. It specifies the *scenario* under which the command applies. The prohibition is not unconditional; it is directly linked to a situation where women desire to learn. This connects the "speaking" (λαλεῖν) to the act of asking questions to gain understanding.
 2. The Imperative Mood: The verbs σιγάτωσαν ("let them keep silent"), ὑποτασσέσθωσαν ("let them be subordinate"), and ἐπερωτάτωσαν ("let them ask") are all in the imperative mood.⁷³ This gives the passage the force of a command. However, the imperative's force is tempered by the conditional clause that defines its specific application.⁷⁴
- The Grounds for the Command (The "For" [γάρ] Clauses): Paul provides two grounds (γάρ) for his command:

- v. 34b: "for it is not permitted for them to speak." This states the rule.
- v. 35b: "for it is shameful (αἰσχρὸν) for a woman to speak in church." This provides the cultural rationale. The

⁷² George Ricker Berry, *Interlinear Greek English Lexicon New Testament*, with Lexicon synonyms (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 482.

⁷³ Ibid, 482.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 482.

word αἰσχρὸν ("shameful, disgraceful") often relates to social honor and shame codes, not inherent moral evil. This suggests the prohibition is heavily influenced by cultural norms that, if violated, would bring social disgrace upon the church.

3. The Contrast between "in church" and "at home": A sharp syntactical contrast is made between ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ⁷⁵ ("in church/assembly") and ἐν οἴκῳ ("at home"). The issue is not learning or speaking *per se*, but the *context* in which it happens. Disruptive questioning in the public assembly is prohibited; private inquiry at home is the prescribed alternative.
4. Relationship to the Immediate Context (vv. 26-33): The entire section (vv. 26-40) is governed by the theme of orderliness: "Let all things be done for edification" (v. 26) and "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (v. 33). The passages that silence women in the assembly are found in the ancient manuscripts in two distinct locations: after 14:40 and between 14:33 and 14:36 (NRSV).⁷⁶ The commands in vv. 34-35 are specific applications of this overarching principle. The syntax places the instruction to women as part of a series of orders meant to curb disorderly-worship, alongside tongue-speakers and prophets⁷⁷.

The grammar and syntax reveal that the command for silence is not a standalone, universal decree. It is a specific, situational command triggered by a desire to learn, which was manifesting as disruptive questioning in the public worship

⁷⁵ Richard A. Horsley, *1 Corinthians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Abingdon Press, 1998), 188.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 188.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 188.

service. The structure frames this as a matter of cultural propriety (avoiding "shame") and maintaining order, in line with the central theme of 1 Corinthians 14.

Theology of the Text

In his writings, Paul demonstrated how precious the role of women in his mission was, and many of their names appear in his letters. Romans 16 provide a list of some important female church leaders. In his observation, Keener argued that, while women, may have been given more significant positions at Philippi than in other regions of the Roman world, Paul appears to be content with the ministerial abilities of the women who work in this city. Admitting that regional customs influenced women's roles is equivalent to acknowledging that women are allowed to hold leadership positions when their culture gives them the chance to develop as gendered leaders.⁷⁸ However, in Christ, every believer—male and female—is in the Lord and is equal to him. Women are just as vital as males in his work. Their jobs differ in terms of relationships and function, but not in terms of significance or spirituality.⁷⁹

Therefore, women were in different facts in the Bible ones of important role in the ministry and in leadership, and Paul demonstrated how he acknowledged them as coworkers in his writings. Paul in 1Corinthians regulates women's public ministry, not condemns it.⁸⁰ Acting out of grace rather than an unspoken law is what we should do. The best approach to: preserve, repair, and change our church families and society is

⁷⁸ Keener, *Paul, Women, & Wives*, 244.

⁷⁹ John F. MacArthur, *1 Corinthians: Godly Solutions for Church Problems*, 1st ed, MacArthur Bible Studies (HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2015), 117.

⁸⁰ Kathy Keller, *Jesus, Justice and Gender Roles*, n.d., 9.

not to uphold the distinctions between male and female leadership roles.⁸¹ Therefore, the silence he recommended to women, was for a particular purpose; the order in the assembly.

Summary

This chapter presents a variety of perspectives that the world has had and continues to have on women in society. Some biblical researchers have interpreted the prohibition on women speaking in churches as literary, based on 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. Some of the literature showed that in one way or another, women were and continued to be underrepresented in the leadership of the Church. According to the history, women were always considered as home keepers while the husbands only were able to deal with all the business of life including politics and leadership. Unfortunately this kind of understanding especially of non-equality between men and women in all levels of life, entered also in the historical culture, where the women were put in one way or another in the class of children and slaves. Thus, some female did not escape this understanding, but rather they finally accepted that kind of inferiority in their daily practical life.

Nevertheless, the Bible demonstrated how all people i.e. men and women are all equal in terms of leadership of God's people. The Lord used women in different times to accomplish His mission whether considered worthy or unworthy in the eyes of men. The Old and New Testament hold different passages through which women could perform successfully the task they were given in the mission of rescuing His people. The Bible holds diverse accounts of women who were prophetess, Judge, Army in Chief, Evangelist etc. and their places are remarkable in the mission of the

⁸¹ Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, *Discovering Biblical Equality Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, 2nd ed., 141.

church. Therefore, there is no doubt that women are as useful as men in fulfilling the mission for salvation of the humanity.

Now, Paul recommended women not to speak in the churches for orderly purpose not for them to be always silent in the gathering the saints. In the previous verses, Paul declared that women are among of the people whom Spirit of God. By allowing them speaking in tongue, and prophesying in the church (with a certain condition), this is the fact that women are allowed as well as men to speak and prophesy in the church/congregation, respecting the order, according to the will of God (2 Thess 3:6; 3:7; 3:11; 1 Tim 3:2).

Conclusion of the Exegetical Analysis of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35

Having examined the historical background, literary context, lexical data, grammatical structure, and theological framework of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, a balanced conclusion may now be drawn.

First, the broader context of 1 Corinthians demonstrates that Paul was deeply concerned with order, edification, and unity in the Corinthian assembly (14:26, 33, 40). The instructions regarding silence in chapter 14 are not directed exclusively to women. Tongue-speakers (v. 28) and prophets (v. 30) are also commanded to “keep silent” (σιγάω) under certain conditions. Therefore, silence in this chapter is clearly situational and functional, not absolute or permanent.

Second, the apparent tension between 14:34–35 and 11:5—where women are acknowledged as praying and prophesying—strongly indicates that Paul is not imposing a universal prohibition on all female speech in the church. Since prophecy and prayer are public, vocal acts of worship, Paul cannot be forbidding women from

speaking altogether. Rather, he is addressing a specific type of disruptive speech occurring within the Corinthian assembly.

Third, the lexical and syntactical analysis shows that:

- σιγάω (to be silent) implies temporary restraint, consistent with earlier uses in the same chapter.
- λαλεῖν (to speak) in this context likely refers to questioning or interrupting speech.
- The conditional clause in verse 35 (“if they desire to learn...”) suggests that the issue involves women asking questions during prophetic evaluation.
- The concern about what is “shameful” (αἰσχρόν) reflects first-century cultural honor-shame dynamics, particularly regarding wives publicly challenging their husbands.

Thus, the most coherent interpretation is that Paul addresses a local problem of disorder, possibly involving wives publicly questioning or evaluating prophetic speech in a way that undermined marital harmony and congregational order. His instruction that they ask their husbands at home reinforces the immediate concern of maintaining respect, propriety, and peace within both the family and the church.

Theologically, this passage does not contradict Paul’s broader affirmation of women as coworkers in ministry (Romans 16), nor does it negate the biblical witness of women serving as prophetesses, leaders, patrons, teachers, and evangelists throughout Scripture. Instead, it reflects Paul’s consistent principle that spiritual freedom must operate within the boundaries of love, order, and edification.

Therefore, the silence recommended in 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 should be understood as:

- A contextual regulation, not a universal ban
- A corrective measure addressing disorder
- An application of the principle that “God is not a God of confusion but of peace” (14:33)
- A directive aimed at preserving both congregational order and marital harmony

Paul does not silence women as a class nor deny their spiritual gifts. Rather, he regulates a specific behavior in a particular setting for the sake of orderly worship. The passage must be interpreted within its literary, cultural, and theological context, and when so understood, it harmonizes with the broader biblical testimony of women’s meaningful participation in God’s redemptive mission.

Therefore, the biblical and theological analysis of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, when examined in context, reveals that it was a localized regulation to address disorder in Corinthian worship. It cannot be used to negate the general Pauline affirmation of women’s equality in Christ (Galatians 3:28) or their active participation in leadership, including teaching and prophecy. A health pastoral approach in the SERF, must focus on the orderly exercise of spiritual gifts, regardless of gender.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the qualitative data collected from nine purposively selected participants within the South East Rwanda Field (SERF). The data are systematically organized according to the five key sections of the interview guide: the current status of women's leadership, challenges and opportunities encountered, theological perspectives, the impact on the community, and future aspirations. By examining these areas, the chapter seeks to identify emergent themes and patterns that illuminate the experiences and perspectives of women leaders in the region.

Furthermore, the findings are interpreted in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 and the exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 conducted in Chapter 3. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how biblical interpretation and theological perspectives intersect with lived experiences, providing insights into both practical and spiritual dimensions of women's leadership. Through this analysis, the chapter not only highlights key challenges and opportunities but also establishes a foundation for discussing implications for practice and future research.

Data Analysis: Emergent Themes from the Field

The qualitative data collected from the nine participants in the South East Rwanda Field (SERF) reveal several key themes that shed light on the current

landscape of women's leadership. The analysis guided by the interview framework, allowing for an organized exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and aspirations. Patterns and insights are identified, and interpreted, in light of the existing literature and the theological framework established in earlier chapters.

The Status of Women's Leadership: A Reality of Minority and Contradiction

The findings indicate that women's leadership within the South East Rwanda Field (SERF) remains a minority presence, often characterized by both progress and persistent barriers. While some participants acknowledged increased opportunities for women to assume leadership roles, these opportunities coexist with systemic challenges, including cultural expectations, limited representation in decision-making positions, and perceptions of leadership as primarily male-dominated.¹ This observation aligns with global research on ecclesiastical leadership, which highlights that women in church leadership frequently face structural and societal constraints despite demonstrated competence.²

Several participants noted a tension between the theoretical recognition of women's leadership potential and the practical realities they encounter. Women may hold positions of responsibility, yet their authority is sometimes, undermined by societal norms or internalized perceptions of gender roles. This contradiction underscores a complex reality in which formal inclusion does not necessarily translate into substantive influence or equitable participation.³

¹ Participant 3, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

² Barbara Kellerman et al., eds., *Women and Leadership: The State of Play and Strategies for Change*, 1st ed, Warren Bennis Signature Series (Jossey-Bass, 2007), 311.

³ Participant 5, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

The data further suggest that leadership roles assumed by women are often concentrated in sectors culturally perceived as "acceptable" for female leadership, such as education, social programs, and community service, whereas strategic decision-making positions remain largely male-dominated.⁴ This pattern highlights the need for continued advocacy, structural support, and theological engagement to address both symbolic and substantive barriers to women's leadership within the field.

Theme: Underrepresentation and Restricted Roles. The data indicate that women remain a distinct minority in leadership within the South East Rwanda Field (SERF). A prevalent finding is the existence of explicit barriers preventing women from holding key positions such as "church elder" or performing sacred rituals, including the blessing of children and administering Holy Communion.

One participant noted, "Women are only to assist men, they are not allowed to lead; they only participate in simple positions."⁵ This finding underscores that, since the humans story existed, the structural and cultural limitations that restrict women's full participation in ecclesiastical leadership, consistent with broader studies on gendered leadership in church contexts.⁶

Theme: Acknowledged Capability. Despite their minority status, respondents consistently affirmed the capabilities of women leaders. Participants frequently used descriptors such as "a blessing to the church," "they are gifted so much," "good in decision making," and "they are able."⁷ This highlights a notable

⁴ Bonita Joyner Shields, *Living in a Man's World: Lessons I've Learned (and Even Some I Haven't)* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2013), 56.

⁵ Participant 3, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

⁶ Shields, *Living in a Man's World*, 11.

⁷ Participant 5, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

contradiction between the recognized potential of women and the limited opportunities available to them, revealing both a tension and an opportunity for transformative change in leadership structures. Research indicates that acknowledging women's gifts is a crucial first step toward equitable inclusion in church leadership, yet structural and cultural barriers often remain.⁸

Theme: Socio-Cultural Constraints. Respondents highlighted that cultural norms and societal expectations remain significant barriers to women's leadership. Many noted that leadership is, traditionally perceived as a male responsibility, and women who pursue such roles often face resistance or skepticism from both church members and community leaders.

One participant remarked, "Even if a woman is capable, people will still doubt her because leadership belongs to men."⁹ These constraints limit women's ability to exercise influence fully and affect the pace at which leadership opportunities are offered to them. This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that patriarchal social norms continue to shape leadership dynamics in religious institutions.¹⁰

Theme: Institutional and Structural Barriers. Beyond socio-cultural factors, institutional policies and practices also restrict women's participation in leadership. Positions of authority, particularly in governance or liturgical roles, are often reserved for men. Respondents observed that leadership selection processes are rarely gender-inclusive, and women's contributions are frequently undervalued

⁸ Kellerman et al., *Women and Leadership*, 1st ed (Jossey-Bass, 2007), 278.

⁹ Participant 2, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

¹⁰ Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*, 5. printing, American Society of Missiology Series 30 (Orbis Books, 2009), 89.

despite demonstrated competence.¹¹ Studies show that structural barriers, including policy and governance norms, significantly affect women's access to leadership roles in church contexts. Obviously, 1 Timothy 2:11–15, which denies women the right to teach, was also frequently cited in opposition to women's leadership, particularly against "heretical" groups that engaged in it in broader contexts.¹²

Theme: Emerging Opportunities and Recognition. Despite these challenges, the data suggest a gradual shift toward recognizing women's leadership potential. Several participants emphasized that women are increasingly entrusted with responsibilities in education, social ministries, and administrative roles. One respondent noted, "Women are showing they can handle important tasks; they are slowly gaining respect."¹³ This emerging acknowledgment indicates both an opportunity for growth and the need for continued advocacy to expand women's roles in more strategic and decision-making capacities.¹⁴

Barriers to Women's Leadership: Internal, Cultural, and Theological

Theme: Internalized Self-Limitation. One of the most frequently cited barriers to women's leadership was women's own perceptions of their abilities and roles. Participants reported that women often "don't believe they are acceptable," "are afraid to lead," "disqualify themselves," and "are not confident of them."¹⁵ These self-

¹¹ Participant 5, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

¹² Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, eds., *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2005), 28.

¹³ Participant 8, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

¹⁴ John W. Reeve et al., *Women and Ordination: Biblical and Historical Studies*, with Special Committee, SDA Theological Seminary (Pacific Press, 2015), x.

¹⁵ Participant 1, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

imposed limitations were frequently linked to domestic responsibilities, with women noting that being "so busy" with household and caregiving duties leaves little time or energy to pursue leadership roles. Such internalized constraints underscore the intersection of personal, social, and structural factors in limiting women's full participation in leadership.¹⁶

Theme: Cultural Patriarchy and Male Gatekeeping. Cultural norms and patriarchal structures were also identified as significant barriers. Respondents emphasized that "Men are on top in everything, women are the second,"¹⁷ reflecting deeply entrenched gender hierarchies. Specific instances of male gatekeeping were noted, such as senior church elders often advanced in age actively preventing women from assuming leadership roles: "Those in church elders advanced in age are on the top to stop the women to lead in church."¹⁸

These cultural and institutional barriers illustrate that women's leadership is restricted not only by internal perceptions but also by external societal and theological constraints, reinforcing male dominance in ecclesiastical structures.¹⁹

It is particularly troublesome when male leaders abuse their position of authority by improperly controlling and imposing doctrinal uniformity on their colleagues through their institutional or public influence.²⁰

Theme: Theological Interpretation of Scripture. The use of biblical texts, particularly 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, was frequently cited as a justification for

¹⁶ Reeve et al., *Women and Ordination*, 137.

¹⁷ Participant 4, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

¹⁸ Participant 6, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

¹⁹ Kellerman et al., *Women and Leadership*, 1st ed (Jossey-Bass, 2007), 465.

²⁰ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 334.

restricting women's leadership within the South East Rwanda Field (SERF).

Participants noted that this passage is interpreted to limit women's participation in decision-making and liturgical roles. One church elder stated, "In mind of people women are not worthy to lead, for a woman was first to sin... Even Paul has ordered them not to speak in the church."²¹ Respondents identified specific districts, including Butama and Kigonge, where this restrictive interpretation is especially prominent.

This finding illustrates how theological interpretation intersects with cultural and institutional norms to reinforce gendered leadership hierarchies. While women's capabilities are acknowledged, the prevailing exegetical stance often serves as a barrier to their full participation, highlighting the need for contextual and critical theological engagement to expand leadership opportunities for women.²² According to this study, we need to reevaluate not just our limitations on women but also the unwarranted assumption of men's authority and influence in church service. In the Pauline corpus, women's roles have been misinterpreted. Paul did not teach or exemplify the subjection and silence of women in the congregation's use of spiritual gifts.²³

The Impact of Women's Participation: Activation and Loss

Theme: The Positive Impact of Inclusion. The data indicate that women's active participation in leadership has a notable positive impact on the broader church community. Participants observed that in congregations where women hold leadership roles, other women are more engaged and motivated to participate: "In the churches

²¹ Participant 5, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

²² Reeve et al., *Women and Ordination*, 376–77.

²³ Westfall, *Paul and Gender*, 291.

where women are leaders the other women become active."²⁴ Respondents also highlighted women's gifts in hospitality, evangelism, and detail-oriented work, describing these contributions as a significant blessing to the church and community at large.²⁵

This theme underscores the practical benefits of inclusive leadership. Women's participation not only enhances organizational effectiveness but also fosters a more engaged, empowered, and collaborative community. Expanding women's leadership could strengthen both social cohesion and spiritual vitality within the church, consistent with studies emphasizing the role of women in enhancing church operations and community engagement.²⁶

Theme: The Significant Loss of Exclusion. Participants consistently noted that the underrepresentation of women in leadership constitutes a "significant loss" for the church.²⁷ Given that women often form the majority in many congregations, their disengagement directly limits the church's capacity to fulfill its mission and hinders growth. Respondents emphasized that when women are excluded from decision-making and active roles, the church misses out on their gifts, insights, and contributions, which could otherwise enhance ministry effectiveness and community development.²⁸

This finding highlights the dual impact of exclusion: women are personally restricted, and the church as a whole experiences diminished vitality and participation.

²⁴ Participant 2, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

²⁵ Participant 7, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

²⁶ Kellerman et al., *Women and Leadership*, 1st ed (Jossey-Bass, 2007), 466.

²⁷ Participant 3, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

²⁸ Participant 6, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

It underscores the practical and spiritual imperative of fostering inclusive leadership structures that fully integrate women's talents and perspectives.

Future Directions: The Imperative for Training and Mindset Change

Theme: Empowerment through Training. One of the primary solutions identified by participants is providing women with leadership training to help them "discover their capacity for leadership" and overcome the entrenched "old mind-set."²⁹ This finding aligns with research emphasizing that targeted training and development programs are essential to prepare women for leadership roles and to foster confidence in their abilities.³⁰

Theme: Sensitization for Men. Participants also highlighted the need to educate men, particularly those in leadership, to support rather than discourage women in leadership roles. As one woman leader stated, "Men are the ones to be trained... they need to help women, not discouraging them."³¹ Studies on gender-inclusive leadership emphasize that men play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment and that male allies are vital in addressing institutional and cultural barriers to women's participation.³²

Theme: The Role of Pastors' Wives. Several respondents emphasized that pastors' wives serve as key mentors, encouraging other women to pursue leadership roles and providing guidance within the church community.³³ Research indicates that

²⁹ Participant 3, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

³⁰ "Empower-Female-Leaders[1]," n.d., Dec 15, 2023.

³¹ Participant 7, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

³² Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 218.

³³ Participant 5, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

pastors' wives often function as informal leaders and role models, influencing women's participation and promoting leadership development among female congregants.³⁴

The Centrality of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 in the SERF Context

The findings indicate that the interpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 in the South East Rwanda Field (SERF) is not merely an academic concern but a pressing pastoral issue. Participants reported that this passage is frequently invoked (not openly) to silence women in congregational settings, reinforcing **a secret** restrictive leadership structures and limiting women's active participation in ministry.³⁵ This practice reflects broader patterns identified in the literature, which note that traditional exegeses of the passage often perpetuate gendered hierarchies in the church.³⁶

Contrasting these local practices with the exegetical conclusions from Chapter 3 reveals a significant tension. Chapter 3 argued for a contextual reading of the passage, emphasizing that Paul's instructions were primarily about maintaining order during worship rather than issuing a universal prohibition against women's participation. Furthermore, Paul's writings elsewhere demonstrate a positive view of women as coworkers in ministry³⁷ (e.g., Phoebe, Priscilla, Junia).³⁸

³⁴ Clinton Wahlen and Gina Wahlen, *Women's Ordination: Does It Matter?* (Bright Shores Publishing, 2015), 100.

³⁵ Participant 5, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

³⁶ George Arthur Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Bible*, X (New York Abington Press Nashville, 1953), 214–15.

³⁷ Bevans and Schroeder, *Constants in Context*, 90–91.

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 16:19; Romans 16:1–7; Philippians 4:2–3.

The data suggest an urgent need for contextual theological education at the local church level. By teaching a more accurate, contextually grounded interpretation, church leaders can encourage the inclusion of women in leadership while maintaining order in worship, thereby addressing both theological and cultural barriers to participation.³⁹

Culture as the Lens for Theology and Practice

The findings indicate that cultural patriarchy remains the dominant lens through which scripture is interpreted within the South East Rwanda Field (SERF). Participants consistently reported that the internalized self-limitation of women and resistance from older male elders reflect deeply ingrained societal norms rather than careful biblical exegesis.⁴⁰ This aligns with the literature, which demonstrates that cultural frameworks often shape ecclesiastical practice, leading to the selective application of biblical texts in ways that reinforce existing gender hierarchies.⁴¹

The data suggest that theology in this context is inseparable from culture; interpretations of scripture are frequently mediated by social norms that privilege male authority. As such, women's exclusion is not merely a theological issue but also a cultural one, highlighting the need for both contextual theological education and deliberate cultural transformation to enable more inclusive leadership practices.⁴²

³⁹ Participant 2, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

⁴⁰ Participant 4, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

⁴¹ Loren Cunningham et al., *Why Not Women?: A Fresh Look at Scripture on Women in Missions, Ministry, and Leadership* (Youth With a Mission Publishing, 2014), 185.

⁴² Participant 6, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

Ellen G. White and the Functional Value of Women Leaders

The positive assessment of women's gifts and the concern over their underrepresentation in leadership align closely with Ellen G. White's pragmatic approach to ministry. Participants consistently highlighted that when women are empowered and actively engaged, the church experiences greater vitality and effectiveness.⁴³ White emphasized that women should serve in roles that match their abilities and the practical needs of the mission, underscoring the functional value of women leaders in advancing church objectives.⁴⁴

The success stories of trained women leaders in the South East Rwanda Field (SERF) exemplify this principle. Respondents noted that women who receive training and mentoring contribute significantly to evangelism, administration, and community engagement, reflecting White's vision of ministry as an expression of both spiritual gifts and practical competence.⁴⁵ This alignment between biblical, theological, and practical perspectives provides a strong framework for advocating the full inclusion of women in leadership, countering restrictive interpretations that are culturally rather than biblically rooted.

The Missiological Imperative for Inclusion

The data reveal strong consensus among participants that the underrepresentation of women in leadership constitutes a "significant loss" for the

⁴³ Participant 7, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

⁴⁴ Ellen Gould White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol 2* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1990), 465–66.

⁴⁵ Participant 5, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

church.⁴⁶ This aligns with the broader literature, which emphasizes that effective mission requires the full utilization of all members' gifts, irrespective of gender.⁴⁷ Excluding women do not only diminish the church's operational capacity but also limits its ability to engage meaningfully with the community and accomplish its missional objectives.

This practical consideration provides a compelling rationale for promoting women's leadership. By framing inclusion as both a theological and missiological necessity, church leaders can appeal to a shared desire for growth and effectiveness in ministry. The SERF case demonstrates that when women are trained, empowered, and strategically placed in leadership roles, they significantly enhance evangelistic efforts, community engagement, and overall organizational vitality.⁴⁸

Theological Implication for the South East Rwanda Field

Reassessing 'Silence': The command to silence in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is interpreted as a call for orderliness in worship not a divine ban on women preaching, teaching or leading.

Empowerment of Gifted Women: In light of Pentecost (Joel 2:28), where the Spirit is poured out on both 'sons and daughters' churches in SERF must ensure women are not denied the opportunity to exercise their spiritual gifts.

⁴⁶ Participant 6, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

⁴⁷ Bevans, Stephen B., and Roger P. Schroeder. *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 130–132

⁴⁸ Participant 3, interview by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

Moving Beyond Patriarchal Tradition

The theological analysis suggests that limiting women in ministry based on these verses is a misinterpretation that perpetuates patriarchy rather than honoring the gospel's call to equality in leadership

Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed qualitative data from the South East Rwanda Field (SERF), revealing a significant gap between the acknowledged capabilities of women and the actual opportunities available to them in church leadership. Participants consistently reported that women possess skills, gifts, and leadership potential, yet they remain underrepresented due to a combination of internalized self-limitation, entrenched cultural patriarchy, and restrictive interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35.⁴⁹

The discussion demonstrated that the barriers are multifaceted, requiring both theological and practical interventions. A proper exegetical reading of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, as outlined in Chapter 3, emphasizes order rather than prohibition and supports the positive role of women as coworkers in ministry.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the writings of Ellen G. White provide a robust theological foundation for empowering women according to their gifts and the mission needs of the church.⁵¹

Overall, the findings underscore the need for training programs, cultural sensitization, and mentorship initiatives to enable women's full participation in leadership. Integrating women's gifts into church governance and ministry not only

⁴⁹ Participants 1, 3, 5, and 6, interviews by author, South East Rwanda Field, March 2025.

⁵⁰ Cunningham et al., *Why Not Women?*, 232.

⁵¹ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2017), 33.

addresses equity but also enhances the vitality, effectiveness, and missional capacity of the church. The following chapter presented conclusions and practical recommendations derived from these findings.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Summary

This research paper investigates the severe underrepresentation of women in leadership within the Seventh-day Adventist Church of the South East Rwanda Field (SERF). The study identifies a central contradiction: while women are widely acknowledged as capable and gifted leaders, they are systematically excluded from most decision-making and liturgical roles, held to a minority of positions. The core problem is traced to a misinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 ("let your women keep silence in the churches"), which is used as a theological justification for their exclusion. However, through rigorous biblical exegesis, the paper demonstrates that this passage is not a universal ban but a context-specific command aimed at maintaining order during worship by preventing disruptive questioning, and it stands in harmony with Paul's broader practice of partnering with female leaders.

The research, combining qualitative field data with theological analysis, reveals that the barriers are not truly biblical but are a fusion of entrenched cultural patriarchy, internalized self-limitation among women, and institutional resistance. This exclusion is found to cause a "significant loss" to the church's mission, vitality, and growth. The paper concludes that the full inclusion of women is both biblically justified and missionally critical. It calls for a multi-faceted solution involving contextual theological education to correct misinterpretations,

empowerment training for women, sensitization for male leaders, and structural changes to foster a more inclusive and effective church leadership model.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, a series of recommendations are advanced to foster inclusive leadership within the South East Rwanda Field of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These recommendations address theological, educational, cultural, and structural dimensions of the challenge, ensuring that reform is holistic, sustainable, and biblically grounded.

1. Contextual Theological Education – Provide church leaders, members, and theological students with sound teaching that addresses misinterpretations of biblical texts, especially those used to restrict women. This will help correct long-standing misconceptions and foster a balanced understanding of Scripture.
2. Leadership Empowerment Programs for Women – Establish training workshops, mentorship opportunities, and capacity-building initiatives to help women develop leadership skills, build confidence, and overcome internalized limitations.
3. Sensitization and Awareness for Male Leaders – Organize seminars and dialogue sessions aimed at changing attitudes among male leaders, helping them recognize the value of women’s contributions and encouraging collaborative leadership.
4. Community Engagement – Work with local congregations to challenge cultural norms that discourage women’s leadership and to promote a more supportive environment for both women and men to serve equally.

5. Ongoing Monitoring and Evaluation – Develop mechanisms to regularly assess progress in women’s inclusion, ensuring that changes are not only implemented but also sustained over time.

Collectively, these recommendations are designed to cultivate a leadership model that is biblically faithful, theologically sound, and socially transformative. By embracing this multi-faceted approach, the South East Rwanda Field will be better equipped to strengthen its mission, nurture unity, and harness the full potential of all its members in service to God and the church.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study affirms that the underrepresentation of women in leadership within the South East Rwanda Field of the Seventh-day Adventist Church does not originate from biblical teaching but is instead, perpetuated by entrenched cultural traditions, institutional barriers, and longstanding misinterpretations of Scripture. A critical examination of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 demonstrates that Paul’s instruction was directed toward a specific context, aiming to maintain order in worship rather than to institute a permanent ban on women’s leadership. This interpretation harmonizes with Paul’s broader ministry, which consistently included collaboration with women leaders such as Priscilla, Phoebe, and Junia, whose roles are clearly, acknowledged in the New Testament.

The ongoing exclusion of women from leadership positions has profound consequences for both the church and its mission. It not only suppresses the God-given gifts and calling of women but also diminishes the spiritual vitality, numerical growth, and overall effectiveness of the church’s witness. A leadership model that systematically sidelines women undermines the principle of the priesthood of all believers and creates a partial, rather than holistic, expression of the body of Christ.

Ultimately, the full inclusion of women in leadership is both a biblical mandate and a missional necessity. A church that recognizes, affirms, and harnesses the diverse gifts of all its members irrespective of gender will be better positioned to embody the gospel, strengthen its witness, and fulfill its divine commission of service, discipleship, and growth.

APPENDIX

RESPONSES

Respondent Type:

Woman Leader- {yes}

church Elder-{yes}

District Pastor-{no}

Section 1: Current Status of Women's Leadership

First respondent

- Can you describe the current status of women's leadership roles and opportunities within your church/district?

Answer: Women are fewer in leadership, they are minority even if they are elected they refuse because they are so busy, not ready to give their time they don't believe they are acceptable, they are afraid to lead

•

What is the role of women in church leadership, ministry, and decision-making processes within your church/district?

Answer: For those who accept leading, they are well in leadership. In case we have many of women in the church leadership positions, it may be a blessing to the church

Section 2: Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges or barriers, if any, do women encounter in assuming leadership roles within your church/district?
- Answer:.....Women are busy to their responsibility they are not interested by church responsibility. Men prevent them, so they keep looking on the family needs only. They don't devote themselves to the church....

Can you identify specific opportunities or initiatives that have been introduced to promote women's leadership in your district?

Answer: Women are welcome in different positions; they are always given opportunities to have part in leadership. They are not prevented at all ...

Section 3: Theological Perspectives

- How do theological perspectives within the South East Rwanda Field influence the role of women in church leadership and ministry?
- Answer:.....Where men acknowledge the importance of women in church leadership, they interest them to participate in church activities

Are there particular Biblical interpretations or theological principles that shape these perspectives?

Answer:...Yes, I know some place where women are not allowed to be elected. There is one of them whom I asked why he can't accept women to be elected, fortunately he told me that he changed the mind set

Section 4: Impact on the Community

- How does women's leadership, or the lack thereof, impact the local church community and the South East Rwanda Field as a whole?

- Answer:...Who teaches a woman the world if women actively participate in leadership, it may bring them an araceous change. They are quick to acquire, courageous, lacking women is a significant loss.

Are there examples of successful women leaders whose impact is visible in your community?

Answer: Yes since women started to lead alongside with men, it brought us blessings. They are gifted so much. They know to welcome visitors, cleaning everything they are paying the men.

Section 5: Future Directions and Aspirations

- What changes or developments would you like to see regarding women's leadership within your church or district?

- Answer: Women need more training for them to discover their capacity for leadership they need to abandon the old mind-set that they are not able. We are able even though we are weak in nature

Can you share any personal or collective aspirations for the role of women in church leadership in the future?

Answer:..... Men are the ones to be trained even than women they need to help women not discouraging them, they will be at the top teach women how they are capable if they accept, and it will help the church

Second respondent

Respondent Type:

Woman Leader- {yes}

church Elder-{yes clarrk of the church}

District Pastor-{no}

Can you describe the current status of women's leadership roles and opportunities within your church/district?

Answer: Women are in all position at 30% leadership

-

What is the role of women in church leadership, ministry, and decision-making processes within your church/district?

Answer: They make decision as well as men do

Section 2: Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges or barriers, if any, do women encounter in assuming leadership roles within your church/district?
- Answer:...They don't believe they are able as men do. The woman don't need much, so they disqualify themselves, they are limited to know how to conduct church activities. They always are busy of their responsibility at home

Can you identify specific opportunities or initiatives that have been introduced to promote women's leadership in your district?

Answer: In the church, the women are given opportunity to serve as well as men do. If they accept they do well and they are able.

Section 3: Theological Perspectives

- How do theological perspectives within the Southeast Rwanda Field influence the role of women in church leadership and ministry?
- Answer: Women are responsible of their minority in leadership. How the bible is interpreted doesn't have any impact to discouraging women to lead the church.

Are there particular Biblical interpretations or theological principles that shape these perspectives?

Answer:...No there is no discouragement to women

Section 4: Impact on the Community

- How does women's leadership, or the lack thereof, impact the local church community and the Southeast Rwanda Field as a whole?
- Answer:...Women are so gifted thus they have an important role in the church leadership if they accept lacking them would be a loss in the church leadership e.g They are good in helping, donating, forgiving

- Are there examples of successful women leaders whose impact is visible in your community?

Answer: Yes we have one deaconess who deserves even leading the church. She is good in decision making and own leaders respect her too much

Section 5: Future Directions and Aspirations

- What changes or developments would you like to see regarding women's leadership within your church or district?

Answer: Pastors wives have to take part in the mission for them to help their husband, in turn help other women to enter activities in the ministry

Can you share any personal or collective aspirations for the role of women in church leadership in the future?

Answer: Women are to be trained by pastors' wives helping them to start using their leading capacity this will help them to discover that they are able

Third respondant

Respondent Type:

Woman Leader- {No}

church Elder-{No}

District Pastor-{no}

Section 1: Current Status of Women's Leadership

Can you describe the current status of women's leadership roles and opportunities within your church/district?

Answer: We have some women in leadership position , but they are not sure for what they do.

•

What is the role of women in church leadership, ministry, and decision-making processes within your church/district?

Answer: They are not used to speaking in the meetings they are not ready to give their thoughts because of understanding for themselves

Section 2: Challenges and Opportunities

• What challenges or barriers, if any, do women encounter in assuming leadership roles within your church/district?

Answer: The women don't like to deep in leadership scriptures, so they are weak in supporting and contributing in the assembly.

.Can you identify specific opportunities or initiatives that have been introduced to promote women's leadership in your district?

Answer: In own local church women are not prevented in church leadership only they are limited by their willingness and the capacity to lead.

Section 3: Theological Perspectives

• How do theological perspectives within the Southeast Rwanda Field influence the role of women in church leadership and ministry?

• Answer: Yes, women are limited in conducting church rituals even when she was elected, they are not permitted to conducting holy community, not allowed for ordinations, even blessing children. Jesus did not call them among the disciples

Are there particular Biblical interpretations or theological principles that shape these perspectives?

Answer: Yes they are so many

Section 4: Impact on the Community

• How does women's leadership, or the lack thereof, impact the local church community and the Southeast Rwanda Field as a whole?

Answer: Women are so many in the church. If they participate in different activities of the church, it will help the church for the rest of them will actively react to the ministry.

- Are there examples of successful women leaders whose impact is visible in your community?

Answer: Yes , I have been in church for 27 years, I know that women if they accept, they are so important leaders, there is one of them at the church campaign, she is leading well than men

Section 5: Future Directions and Aspirations

- What changes or developments would you like to see regarding women's leadership within your church or district?

Answer: Yes, if not breaking own principles, women should partake in decision making in the church as well as it is in the secular leadership where she can even be elected first and then succeeded by a man

Can you share any personal or collective aspirations for the role of women in church leadership in the future?

Answer:

Fifth respondent

Respondent Type:

Woman Leader- {no}

church Elder- {no}

District Pastor- {yes}

Section 1: Current Status of Women's Leadership

Can you describe the current status of women's leadership roles and opportunities within your church/district?

Answer: If men accept women enter in church leadership. They only work and lead , when men give them this opportunity. They are good in leadership if men encourage them

What is the role of women in church leadership, ministry, and decision-making processes within your church/district?

Answer: The result of women leadership is less because they are not confident of their own capacity maybe they are afraid to lead due to the culture of the country

Section 2: Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges or barriers, if any, do women encounter in assuming leadership roles within your church/district?

Answer: They still have the culture of lacking estimate for themselves, fear of decision of making, but if men encourage them they work and succeed very well

.Can you identify specific opportunities or initiatives that have been introduced to promote women's leadership in your district?

Answer: They may be elected as church leaders but women are never called church elder, which is one of their inactivity they are welcome to lead as departmental in different role.

Section 3: Theological Perspectives

- How do theological perspectives within the Southeast Rwanda Field influence the role of women in church leadership and ministry?

Answer: Yes if they are allowed by men, women work and serve in different positions and the women when they are elected, they are good in leadership.

Are there particular Biblical interpretations or theological principles that shape these perspectives?

Answer: They are women in some places(church) still not permitted to lead but not openly without saying that they are not authorized by scriptures they always fell enable.

Section 4: Impact on the Community

- How does women's leadership, or the lack thereof, impact the local church community and the Southeast Rwanda Field as a whole?

Answer: In the churches where women are leaders the other women become active, where the women are absent in leadership women become inactive in church activities lacking women in leadership is a loss.

- Are there examples of successful women leaders whose impact is visible in your community?

Answer: Yes, when women accept a leadership position are very useful more even than men. It is meaning full having women in church leadership.

Section 5: Future Directions and Aspirations

- What changes or developments would you like to see regarding women's leadership within your church or district?

Answer: My wish is that there may be seminars to promote women for ministry for they are a good number in the church. They are able as well as men.

Can you share any personal or collective aspirations for the role of women in church leadership in the future?

Answer:

Fourth respondant

Respondent Type:

Woman Leader- {yes}
church Elder-{yes}
District Pastor-{no}

Section 1: Current Status of Women's Leadership

Can you describe the current status of women's leadership roles and opportunities within your church/district?

Answer: Women are fewer in leadership than men. Men are many in leadership for they are the ones to lead. Women are only to assist men, they are not allowed to lead, they only participate in simple positions

What is the role of women in church leadership, ministry, and decision-making processes within your church/district?

Answer: Women are always underestimated, depending on men therefore, the rest of them become less interested in church leadership.

Section 2: Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges or barriers, if any, do women encounter in assuming leadership roles within your church/district?

Answer: According to the culture, Men are on top in everything, women are the second. In public places women are to be silent they only are allowed to speak after men have spoken. They don't estimate themselves that they are able

.Can you identify specific opportunities or initiatives that have been introduced to promote women's leadership in your district?

Answer: Men give opportunities to women but women are not feeling comfortable in leadership they are called to lead in different places.

Section 3: Theological Perspectives

- How do theological perspectives within the Southeast Rwanda Field influence the role of women in church leadership and ministry?

Answer: Yes when the bible is well interpreted concerning the usefulness of women in the church, the latter are interested to lead

Are there particular Biblical interpretations or theological principles that shape these perspectives?

Answer: No there is no case of where (there is no church leaders interested scriptures badly for understanding women's capability to lead.

Section 4: Impact on the Community

- How does women's leadership, or the lack thereof, impact the local church community and the Southeast Rwanda Field as a whole?

Answer: Women are many than men. So, there is a significant loss, if they don't actively enter in leadership of the church. The women are gifted in many things they are smarter than men in perfecting things

- Are there examples of successful women leaders whose impact is visible in your community?

Answer: We have many examples of women who become successful in the leadership of own local church. They are able to conduct evangelistic campaign, and other many activities, the role of women is important

Section 5: Future Directions and Aspirations

- What changes or developments would you like to see regarding women's leadership within your church or district?

Answer: Training are needed for women in a special way. It may help them to discover their ability to lead. Some men prevent women to respond to leadership call, so they are also to be trained how to be releable women

Can you share any personal or collective aspirations for the role of women in church leadership in the future?

Answer:

sixth respondant

Respondent Type:

Woman Leader- {yes}

church Elder-{yes}

District Pastor-{no}

Section 1: Current Status of Women's Leadership

Can you describe the current status of women's leadership roles and opportunities within your church/district?

Answer: Women are represented in other positions in the church unless on that of church elder, they are few on this one, they always are underestimated by men.

What is the role of women in church leadership, ministry, and decision-making processes within your church/district?

Answer: For those allowed to lead, they demonstrate that they are able. They take part in decision making without any problem.

Section 2: Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges or barriers, if any, do women encounter in assuming leadership roles within your church/district?

Answer: Those in church elders advanced in age are on the top to stop the women to lead in church. Thus the rest of women loose interest to participate actively in the church ministry.

.Can you identify specific opportunities or initiatives that have been introduced to promote women's leadership in your district?

Answer: In our church, all are welcome to lead, These is an open door for women and men for they are always a good number in the dominating committee.

Section 3: Theological Perspectives

- How do theological perspectives within the Southeast Rwanda Field influence the role of women in church leadership and ministry?

Answer: In mind of people women are not worthy to lead for a woman was first to sin. Nothing good can be done by women Even paul has ordered than not speak in the church.

Are there particular Biblical interpretations or theological principles that shape these perspectives?

Answer: Yes for sure within this district, these are some places where women cannot be allowed to lead the church unless the pastor intervenes.

Section 4: Impact on the Community

- How does women's leadership, or the lack thereof, impact the local church community and the Southeast Rwanda Field as a whole?

Answer: Yes, there may be negative impacts if women do not actively participate in church ministry and may affect the work. However, the women depend on men several times.

- Are there examples of successful women leaders whose impact is visible in your community?

Answer: I can't affirm that for myself for I am a church elder, but there are others among women who have been successful in their responsibility.

Section 5: Future Directions and Aspirations

- What changes or developments would you like to see regarding women's leadership within your church or district?

Answer: There is no need of promoting women to a special position such as being ordained or other decision making positions as the one to perform ritual services if there is no harm, let only men continue leading in such positions.

Can you share any personal or collective aspirations for the role of women in church leadership in the future?

Answer: Men need to understand better how women are standing in the ministry, and their capability, this will help promoting the rest of people to acknowledge their ability and capability in the ministry.

Seventh respondent

Respondent Type:

Woman Leader- {no}

church Elder- {yes}

District Pastor- {no}

Section 1: Current Status of Women's Leadership

Can you describe the current status of women's leadership roles and opportunities within your church/district?

Answer: They do small things, because they have been so long guilty (inactive) even the time they are elected they don't serve willingly, they always feel unable.

What is the role of women in church leadership, ministry, and decision-making processes within your church/district?

Answer: For those allowed to lead, they demonstrate that they are able. They take part in decision making without any problem.

Section 2: Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges or barriers, if any, do women encounter in assuming leadership roles within your church/district?

Answer: Men in some degree, they think that women do not have right to lead official religious ritual for this reason women in church, they always feel enable, they only assist on what they are more simple.

.Can you identify specific opportunities or initiatives that have been introduced to promote women's leadership in your district?

Answer: We have one woman we trained in this church and she became a good leader of the church and the field promoted her to become a family ministry leader in the field level.

Section 3: Theological Perspectives

- How do theological perspectives within the Southeast Rwanda Field influence the role of women in church leadership and ministry?

Answer: Yes, we have some people who do not like change they are conservers they keep putting aside women in the church especially those in advanced age they argue that women are to be led not to lead.

Are there particular Biblical interpretations or theological principles that shape these perspectives?

Answer: Some district such as Butana and Kigonge are known to underestimate women basing on the interpretation of the scripture. They affirm that there might be no progress if women are leading the church.

Section 4: Impact on the Community

- How does women's leadership, or the lack thereof, impact the local church community and the Southeast Rwanda Field as a whole?

Answer: Basing on the reform, Ellen G. White stated that women are able. The bible as well affirm that women are to support men for the advancement of the work. This will help to bring people to God.

- Are there examples of successful women leaders whose impact is visible in your community?

Answer: Women show that they are able especially in different departments, However there are assumptions they don't have to hold leading or perform church rituals. Even the pharisses acknowledged their incapacity.

Section 5: Future Directions and Aspirations

- What changes or developments would you like to see regarding women's leadership within your church or district?

Answer: I may suggest that women may be trained more than they are but also the church elder (men) they may also be trained for more understanding on how women are as able as they are.

Can you share any personal or collective aspirations for the role of women in church leadership in the future?

Answer: Men need to understand better how women are standing in the ministry, and their capability, this will help promoting the rest of people to acknowledge their ability and capability in the ministry.

eighth respondent

Respondent Type:

Woman Leader- {no}

church Elder-{no}

District Pastor-{yes}

Section 1: Current Status of Women's Leadership

Can you describe the current status of women's leadership roles and opportunities within your church/district?

Answer: Mainly the women in our church depends on the men they don't have estimate for themselves they believe that men are better than they are in leadership

What is the role of women in church leadership, ministry, and decision-making processes within your church/district?

Answer: They try to help their fellow members but fear in decision making, they don't have confidence in themselves as the culture of the country, they count lead over men.

Section 2: Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges or barriers, if any, do women encounter in assuming leadership roles within your church/district?

Answer: Women do not have deep understanding of scripture thus, they fear to lead those who may know better the scripture than them. The church is facing those kind of problem.

.Can you identify specific opportunities or initiatives that have been introduced to promote women's leadership in your district?

Answer: The church organizes training women attend and many of them became good leader and teachers and these help other women to rise up and starting to serve the church in different capacity women ministry children ministry, church elders.

Section 3: Theological Perspectives

- How do theological perspectives within the Southeast Rwanda Field influence the role of women in church leadership and ministry?

Answer: Yes for sure, how the scripture is interpreted influence the women whether to enter the church services or not Both the bible and spirit of prophecy help to convince women to join other workers in church leadership.

Are there particular Biblical interpretations or theological principles that shape these perspectives?

Answer: It's true that there are a particular interpretation on some portion of the scripture, which have had an impact on women role in leadership. Some have been told that they are unworthy to lead basing on the prohibition of Paul for women to speak in the church.

Section 4: Impact on the Community

- How does women's leadership, or the lack thereof, impact the local church community and the Southeast Rwanda Field as a whole?

Answer: Women are needed to have part in the ministry to gather with men. This helps other women to be active in church activities and among them there are some having remarkable gifts to help the church.

- Are there examples of successful women leaders whose impact is visible in your community?

Answer: Yes there is an example some women who have been leaders and they performed well in their responsibilities they even did better than some men e.g. Adela, Console... they helped the church more.

Section 5: Future Directions and Aspirations

- What changes or developments would you like to see regarding women's leadership within your church or district?

Answer: I may suggest that they may be different training so that other many women may be trained in mass and then enter in different positions in church leadership and evangelism activities

Can you share any personal or collective aspirations for the role of women in church leadership in the future?

Answer:

Ninth respondent

Respondent Type:

Woman Leader- {no}

church Elder- {yes}

District Pastor- {no}

Section 1: Current Status of Women's Leadership

Can you describe the current status of women's leadership roles and opportunities within your church/district?

Answer: There are positions women are allowed to hold but also there are others they are not. The women elected to lead the church doesn't call "church elder" but a leader of the church. She isn't allowed to perform rituals of the church except Dorcas, mime and music or choir.

What is the role of women in church leadership, ministry, and decision-making processes within your church/district?

Answer: They do many things and so they are so important in the church service such as holy communion, they have right to hold positions and decision making if their arguments are examined and appreciated.

Section 2: Challenges and Opportunities

- What challenges or barriers, if any, do women encounter in assuming leadership roles within your church/district?

Answer: They are not confident of themselves. They always depend on men. They feel subordinate and they don't believe they are worthy to lead over men, not because they can't perform. However they are convinced men are better than they are.

.Can you identify specific opportunities or initiatives that have been introduced to promote women's leadership in your district?

Answer: The church organizes training women attend and many of them became good leaders and teachers and these help other women to rise up and start to serve the church in different capacities: women ministry, children ministry, church elders.

Section 3: Theological Perspectives

- How do theological perspectives within the Southeast Rwanda Field influence the role of women in church leadership and ministry?

Answer: Yes for sure, how the scripture is interpreted influences the women whether to enter the church services or not. Both the bible and spirit of prophecy help to convince women to join other workers in church leadership.

Are there particular Biblical interpretations or theological principles that shape these perspectives?

Answer: It's true that there are particular interpretations on some portion of the scripture, which have had an impact on women's role in leadership. Some have been told that they are unworthy to lead based on the prohibition of Paul for women to speak in the church.

Section 4: Impact on the Community

- How does women's leadership, or the lack thereof, impact the local church community and the Southeast Rwanda Field as a whole?

Answer: Women are needed to have part in the ministry to gather with men. This helps other women to be active in church activities and among them there are some having remarkable gifts to help the church.

- Are there examples of successful women leaders whose impact is visible in your community?

Answer: Yes there is an example of some women who have been leaders and they performed well in their responsibilities; they even did better than some men e.g. Adela, Constance...they helped the church more.

Section 5: Future Directions and Aspirations

- What changes or developments would you like to see regarding women's leadership within your church or district?

Answer: I may suggest that they may be given different training so that other many women may be trained in mass and then enter in different positions in church leadership and evangelism activities.

Can you share any personal or collective aspirations for the role of women in church leadership in the future?

Answer:

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