

**Towards the flourishing of Women Ministers in Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa: An African Women's Theological engagement with the lived experiences and systemic realities faced by Women Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese.**

**BY  
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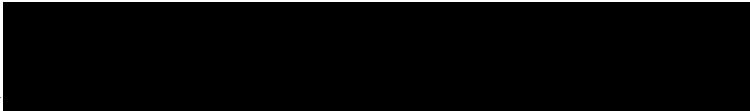
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## DECLARATION

Following the university policy on plagiarism, I, Nondumiso Ngcobo declare that the work contained here has been composed by myself and has not been for any other degree or at any institutions other than the University of KwaZulu- Natal, Pietermaritzburg. Except where stated and specified by reference or acknowledgement, the work presented is my own.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Towards the flourishing of Women Ministers in Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa: An African Women's Theological engagement with the lived experiences and systemic realities faced by Women Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese. A phenomenological study of lived experiences of women ministers and how they are influenced by systematic patriarchy in their ministry and career growth. The study listened to seven (7) women ministers of ELCSA in their ministerial journey from pre-ordination to ordination and working the field to discover lessons that could be derived from the environmental inhibitors/enhancers of the flourishing of women in ministry. The study looked at processes, acceptance of women and policies and programmes that support flourishing and further sought recommendations from these women on what could be done to enhance women's flourishing. The study used phenomenological approach and held interviews to collect data to understand these lived experiences. Interviews were either face to face or virtual depending on the availability of participants. Engagement with participants enabled the study to draw some conclusions on factors such as heteronormativity, enculturation and absence of gender affirming policies as inhibiting the flourishing of women ministers in ELCSA. The study unveiled an unexpected theme of how sexual reproductive rights as a "sin" has inhibited the flourishing of unmarried young women ministers and remains even a regret for some. Lastly, based on the conclusions drawn, the study brought forth recommendations that may influence or enhance the flourishing of women ministers in ELCSA. The study asserts that should ELCSA leadership engage with gender equity policies, employment policies and clear disciplinary processes that foster a Human Rights advocating space, ELCSA can become an empowering safe space where the flourishing of women ministers can be enhanced and achieved.

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Lastly, my daughter would surely love to see her name here and she deserves to be, she has been supporting my late re-entry to academia since she was 10 years old. I acknowledge you little Miss Ngothando Ngcobo for your support and challenging me to go all the way to the top.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this to the late Reverend Zamagosa Lethukuthula Zikode, may her beautiful soul rest in peace, she may have passed away before I submitted my final report but her valuable input as a participant in the study will live on and contribute to transforming ELCSA to make it a safe space for women ministers to flourish and all other ELCSA Women Ministers who participated in this study.

## **ACRONYMS**

ELCSA – Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa

ELCSA- SED – Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa-South Eastern  
Diocese

LWF – Lutheran World Federation

AWT – African Woman’s Theology

LUCSA – Lutheran Communion In Southern Africa

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCING THE STUDY

### Introduction

*Recently in the depths of my soul, a dream did arise of a young widow, raising her young family in a sacred space, a church where grace embraced her faith. I dreamt of a little girl curious and bright, gazing upon her mother's steadfast faith, I dreamt of a happy little girl laughing with assurance as her mother's prayers manifested. I dreamt of a happy little girl in church, surrounded by a divine array of black women adorned in white dresses and veils, how beautiful and saintly they looked queuing towards the only men in the room. The old wrinkled white men of the pulpit, the only men in the room.*

*Recently I dreamt of a happy little girl marveling at these black women, Graceful and saintly, they went about their days, cooking, gardening, driving, and teaching in countless ways, busy yet their dresses pristine and forever white.*

*Years passed, and the girl became a woman, still finding solace in a sacred space, a church full of black women in black and white clothes and white hats, how beautiful and saintly they look queuing towards black men in the front serving them. I dreamt of a young woman marveling at the black men as they went about singing liturgy, preaching the word, administering sacraments and collecting offerings. I felt the confusing pain in that dream, as she...*

*Dreamt of seeing women in front, singing, preaching, administering sacraments and collecting offerings. Suddenly, as if overnight the world shifted and her church changed, she saw women singing, preaching, administering sacraments and collecting offerings but these women were no longer beautiful and saintly, something was different, a painful strain, the dream shattered, leaving behind a stain. Now the women sang, preached, and led, their voices wounded, their spirits bled. The scars of adversity silenced their cries, And the dream turned into a haunting guise.*

*She longed for the strength and support enjoyed by those black men she saw, what had happened? What went awry? In their wounds and scars, their voices did die, but deep within this young woman's core, a powerful voice echoed, longing for more. It was not just her voice, but a chorus of pain, of wounded and scarred women, crying*

*in vain, who now seek to break free from the chains that bound, their voices lost, in a patriarchal sound.*

*Now the woman stands tall and strong, Her voice echoes defiance against the injustices. She carries the burdens of those who came before, the wounded, the scarred, their voices she'll restore. In her journey, she found a sacred space. Ordained as a priest, defying every trace, of adversity and patriarchy's hold, to bring forth a future, compassionate and bold.*

*She seeks to dim the noise of the past, to amplify the voices, no longer outcast, for she knows in her heart, and her soul, that when women are seen and heard, they'll truly flourish. So, let the dream live on, in the hearts of the few, who strive for equality and justice anew. For the little girl with a voice so strong, embodies the hope for a world that's not wrong. (Ngcobo, N., 02/02/2024)<sup>1</sup>*

Journey with this African Intersectional Woman Theologian seeking to expose unspoken social, psychological, cultural, and economic gender injustices observed and, at times, self-experienced in the religious space in which she has been brought up in her church of birth, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA). Accompany this newly ordained Black Woman ELCSA Minister in studying, telling, and exposing untold othering stories of African women of faith who continue to be “othered” in their faith space just for being black and women in ministry. These untold stories of Black Women Ministers, whose rich narratives echo pain, sexism, discrimination, and oppression from patriarchal faith spaces that remain unjust and heteronormative, Join this research venture as it exposes, un-silence trauma, pain, and exclusion endured by us women ministers of ELCSA.

The thesis intends to shine a spotlight on the hidden and unspeakable experiences black women ministers encounter daily in their ministry. It is hoped and wished that this project contributes to the church by fostering the understanding of the ministerial landscape and institutional context of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa-South Eastern Diocese (ELCSA-SED), their experiences in ministry, and identifying themes or structures that could enhance or enable their flourishing within the church so that women are seen, heard, and can flourish in ministry and their personal lives.

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<sup>1</sup> Introduction and Conclusion are Original poems written by Nondumiso Ngcobo for this Masters Report

Having grown up in the ELCSA faith space, one has been able to journey alongside the changes that emancipated us, the black people in our country, from the oppression and othering brought by Apartheid. However, one has not seen alongside these changes in our country an alignment that sees the emancipation of Black Women Ministers from the oppressive cultures and traditions that have been wrongfully brought into the church space to advance the “god syndrome” and superiority of men through religious narratives. The hetero-patriarchal oppressors of African culture, underlined by toxic masculinity, continue to inhibit the ministry work of women ministers. Through engaging their lived experiences, the study hopes to challenge this toxicity, which uses religion to shield the subjection and subjugation of women as inferior, and then foster solutions geared to allow a change in mindset aligned to flourishing. Despite all the life-affirming, gender-empowering, and human rights-advocating policies in our country, it has been observed that ELCSA has vacuumed and exempted itself from the precepts of these great strides of our post-democracy.

### **1.1 Project Title**

Towards the flourishing of Women Ministers in Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa: An African Women’s Theological engagement with the lived experiences and systemic realities faced by Women Ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa—South Eastern Diocese (ELCSA-SED).

### **1.2 Background to the research problem**

When examining the history of the ordination of women clergy, one would be tempted to believe that women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) had long since triumphed over patriarchal gender constructs. While it is true that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) has been ordaining women as ministers since the seventy, a different story emerges when flourishing into executive leadership positions is contrasted against other churches, like the Anglican Church, which only ordained their first woman minister in the early nineties. Compared to the Lutheran church, the Anglican church's first female clergy to advance to executive leadership, which is the bishop, was in 2012. (Pillay,2017). Only “in May 2021, Naledzani Josephine Sikhwari was consecrated as the first female bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) and the ninth bishop of the ELCSA Northern Diocese.”<sup>[1]</sup> “ This is only one of many instances of how the Lutheran church still bears the scars of patriarchy. Men who are young and just ordained move quickly

beyond women who are more seasoned to executive leadership, such as that of the Pastor in charge or Dean. What are the underlying, recurring patterns that maintain this narrative? What gender and power constructs predominate in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa—South Eastern Diocese (ELCSA-SED) environment? ELCSA-SED has 80 ministers in fulltime ministry and only less than 15 of those are women. Out of the 10 positions for Deans in ELCSA-SED only 2 positions are held by women and out of the 10 positions for Dean's deputies only 1 position is held by a woman. The position of the bishop as well as that of his deputy are both held by men. The roster for the fulltime clergy is attached as an annexure. The researcher's honors research revealed that there are no legal or constitutionally human rights-aligned systems or policies in place to ensure gender equality in ELCSA-SED. How then does a woman minister navigate to flourish in an environment with Zulu cultural and patriarchal undertones when not supported by systems or policies? These are the gaps that informed this study. But, to begin to interrogate them, one needs to first understand gender and power constructions and their influence on women.

According to Connell and Thatcher, Gender is a social construct that categorizes persons as either male or female or a boy or girl based on their biological distinctions. It gives children roles deemed suitable by mass media, sports, families, and social limitations enforced by those in power and authority. Language context and words used have an impact on gender, as they can put what is being said into performance or action. (Connell, 2009) (Thatcher,2001). Tolbert (1995) focuses on the two schools of thought when looking at the definition of gender. Modernists typically view gender as a collection of fundamental social characteristics that naturally go along with biological sex. The modernist perspective holds that it is a universal and crucial correlate of binary biological differentiation. Postmodernists challenge this viewpoint by claiming that it is a socially created set of behaviors with strong political roots that are enacted differently depending on the historical and local context. (1995:99) Additionally, they claim that it is performative through gender-appropriate behaviors that are socially acceptable, causing it to change under cultural and societal constructs. The feminist movement's discoveries served as the foundation for the postmodernist gender concept. (Adam,2000:98) The fundamental goals of the feminist movement are to achieve full equality and human dignity for all women while also putting an end to the violence, discrimination, and oppression against them. Women continue to face sexism and discrimination everywhere in the globe. They are still treated as second-class citizens and even actively repressed by

men. The goal of feminism is to make all women's lives better. If one looks at the UN "Declaration of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women" of 1947, it would appear that more work still needs to be done to bring attention to the intersectionality of issues influencing the oppression of women, especially Black women. (Clifford,2001) Even though my research focuses on the flourishing of female ministers, it is impossible to ignore the widespread issues of violence against women, such as assault by intimate partners, rape, murder, infanticide, brutal neglect, trafficking, and job harassment. These are violations that women ministers also experience, whether directly or indirectly, and which at times results in their apathy towards their agency.

Most of the oppression that women face is due to their lack of power, meaning that gender cannot be looked at without acknowledging its intersectionality with power dynamics be they political, economic, or perceived. When a man in authority decided it was appropriate to redefine how women should dress, talk, live, and look, as well as what they can and cannot do in the ministry of God, this is an example of how gender has always been influenced by power, whether economic, positional, or class dynamics. This is similar to what happened in 1 Timothy 2:18–15. Even now, religion continues to exploit biblical passages to validate and defend repressive gender norms. Gendered education flourishes in the church. (Connell,2009) (Thatcher,2001).

According to this background, one can see why understanding these concepts is important when the study seeks to investigate factors in the ELCSA-SED environment that inhibit or promote the flourishing of a gender group that historically and theoretically faces such vast socially constructed challenges.

### **1.3 Audience**

By the term "audience" I refer to the group of individuals who may find the findings of this study to be educational in furthering their knowledge and who may also be in a position to act or contribute positively to changing the situation. They can be divided into two groups: primary audience, who are the intended target audience and can effect change or have agency; in my case, this includes Gender and Religion scholars as well as the ELCSA-SED bishop, ELCSA executive laity and clergy leaders, and all priests of ELCSA; and secondary audience, who may read for interest

but are not in the field or in a position to influence any change. Considering the above-mentioned, this research aims to address 3 primary populations.

The first populations consist of academics, scholars, or students who are interested in or wish to conduct studies in the same field i.e. flourishing, women's ministry, or research within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa.

Although this study was specific to ELCSA-SED the second population that can benefit from this study are churches interested in women's ministry in Southern Africa because this study is also about the feminism within churches and it has drawn from such frameworks.

Last, the third population is Women in church leadership, African Women Theologies tells us that sharing stories and experiences amongst one another as women keeps agency alive and agency is much needed within the church spaces as women especially Black Women in ministry continue to experience an intersectionality of “unspoken” abuse and oppression.

#### **1.4 Contextual Setting**

As mentioned in the above section this study should draw interest from audiences within the ELCSA and other churches in Southern Africa, because it is carried out with participants in that context. What context is this? Post- Apartheid South Africa gave all of us Human Rights which are protected by the constitution and it also introduced legislation that was to redress gender inequality and empower women in workplaces. Sadly, this does not hold in all spaces across South Africa. Journey with me in this context which is sacred and allegedly safe for all, let us see if the above narrative holds. The study location was the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa – South Eastern Diocese (ELCSA – SED), focusing only on women ministers. The study was of case studies/lived experiences of 7 Women Ministers within ELCSA-SED as per the recommendation of a phenomenological study sample size.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa owes its historical development and tradition to the German Protestant Reformation movement. It is therefore important to keep this in mind as understanding the past helps to shape and illuminate the present. Its origins make it a member of a global structure called the Lutheran World Federation, whether this is good or not is not part of the study. The church exists in the Post-Colonial and Post-Apartheid Free South Africa. It was constituted in Rustenburg - South Africa in 1975. It is led episcopal by a Presiding Bishop and in

its dioceses by Bishops. Full-Time Ministry: Those who have received training and ordination from the Church, have been assigned to a Parish, and are paid by the Church. Secondment Ministry - Individuals who have received training and ordination from the Church but are sent to other Church-affiliated organizations for pastoral duties. These organizations will pay their salary. Self-Supporting Ministry: Individuals who have completed theological education and have been ordained by the Church to serve in a certain congregation, but who do not receive compensation from the Church and who are not included in the clergy roster for election purposes. Deaconesses and Deacons Ministry - Individuals allocated to a Parish for Diaconic work and aiding the Pastor(s) in charge and who have been trained and ordained by the Church. The Diocesan hierarchal structure of ELCSA-SED from ordination starts from (1) pastor/assistant-pastor, (2) senior-pastor, (3) parish pastor, (4) assistant dean, (5) dean, (6) deputy bishop and (7) bishop, (8). ELCSA has ordained women ministers since the early 80s but their progression to senior leadership structures has not been happening even in the Post-Apartheid South Africa. (Mashiane.2018)

### **1.5 Background to Research Question and Sub-research Questions**

It has taken a while for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) to get its first female bishop. Mashiane (2018) stated that It was unfortunate that since the female ordinations started in the early 80s, no female dean or bishop had been elected in the early 2000s. This was not a result of the church rules or principles but it is because the delegates i.e. other ministers and laity who form the school of elections have not yet voted one lady in high church positions. Although under the circumstances one could not subject the situation to discrimination since there were full-time female pastors who were running parishes in the church, so what could this be attributed to? As the study journeys with these 7 women ministers sharing their own lived experiences against this background, let's all find out what could it be. ELCSA has since made some progress/strides in the inclusion of women in ministry compared to similar/mainline churches as it opened its ordination of women ministers as far back as the early 80s.

The question, however, remained about their flourishing. Contemporary scholarship on flourishing, based on Aristotle's work, asserts that it is the ultimate goal for humans to achieve a decent life through interpersonal collaboration. Anand (2016)

supports this, stating that every good contributes to or promotes flourishing. Aristotle acknowledges disagreement on what flourishing entails and defines it as gradually gaining knowledge and resources for a happy existence, developed through cultivation, nurturing, and support from family, friends, and communities. Therefore, flourishing does not only imply seeing a few faces of women in senior Clerical posts whilst the church is made up of a majority of women but rather ensuring that the environment within which they do their ministry has necessary resources as well as opportunities that are conducive to fostering decent living. In agreeing with this definition of flourishing it is also imperative to highlight that the study does not assert that flourishing is a women's phenomenon, the church should be an enabling safe space for all ministers to access and function successfully and be supported equally. However, it is a conscious endeavor of the study to make visible the plight and the voiceless of the pain and suffering experienced by women ministers as the plain field has always favored men in ministry. Their voices should be heard, ideas accepted, implemented, and credit given. From word of mouth and observation, one cannot conclusively make a statement about these questions. For these reasons, this is why it was important to conduct a study that would give women ministers a platform to answer for themselves based on their lived experiences. The study does not intend to provide verdicts or solutions but it is to report the realities as the study found them and voice out women's wishes for a flourishing space. So what questions should be asked to get the answers we are looking for? The next section presents these questions and sub-questions.

## **1.6 Research Question**

A study's or research project's goal is to provide an answer to a research question. This question frequently refers to a concern or issue that is addressed in the study's conclusion by way of data analysis and interpretation. It pinpoints precisely what you're trying to learn in your task. The study and thesis must be guided by a strong research question. Below is the main research question followed by the sub-questions.

1.6.1 What insights could be drawn from the embodied lived experiences of women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that could inform enable and enhance the flourishing of women in ministry?

## **Research Sub-Questions**

- a. What constitutes the ministerial landscape of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese and what is the institutional context of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese?
- b. What is the experience of women in ministry in Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that informs/inhibits flourishing?
- c. What are the themes/structures/issues identified by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese?

## **1.7 Research Objectives**

The purpose of research objectives is to specify the goals of the research study. They serve to focus the study by providing an overview of the project's methodology and goals. The objectives of this study are:

1.7.1 The study seeks to explore the institutional context of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese.

1.7.2 The study investigates the experiences of women in ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese, examining factors that inform or inhibit their flourishing.

1.7.3 The study aims to identify themes, structures, and issues highlighted by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese.

### **1.8 Delimitation of the study**

The research will focus exclusively and wholly on the ELCSA - SED and therefore does not reflect on other denominations nor other ELCSA dioceses. This research is focused on women ministers only in the ELCSA-SED.

### **1.9 Importance of the study**

To put my study into context and show why it was important to me, the researcher literature review needed to begin by clarifying what is meant by flourishing i.e. definition, and how it is maintained and measured. Furthermore, since this was a theological study it was also important to frame the study with some biblical context on the status of women and their flourishing, for this a reference to the text from Proverbs 31 was used. Proverbs 31:10–31, reveals that the periscope was and still is used to judge women and their conduct, not only personally but also professionally. Readers can have a deeper knowledge of the context, culture, and society in which the Book of Proverbs developed by putting Proverbs inside the wisdom *genre* and taking into account the Book of Proverbs' potential. The book of Proverbs allows readers to discuss life's true meaning. She is portrayed as a perfect archetypal figure in the Wisdom Literature. She should urge women to imitate these admirable qualities and ideals by inspiring others to do so. It is appropriate to think of the woman in Proverbs 31:10–31 as a role model for other women.

Particularly in South Africa, women represent a variety of racial, socioeconomic, and cultural groupings. Women should still collaborate to improve the lives of all women despite this. Instead of competing with one another or males, women can achieve shared goals by banding together as a "sisterhood." She represents what women should aspire to and is a personification of wisdom theology. This woman exemplifies how women ought to live while pursuing a connection with God. (Jansen, 2020) This is done to deconstruct the narrative of women being gatekeepers of patriarchy and also empower victims to support each other as the study exposes lived experiences that might be similar but have never been given a platform to be shared.

As the province of KwaZulu Natal leads in the flourishing of women in high leadership positions, with the highest position of Premier being held by openly Christian women, it was also important to draw on various contextual levels within

which women's ministry can be located. We marveled as we watched the premier and various women MECs celebrate Easter in various Christian denominations adorning respective Women's Leagues (*Umanyano*) uniforms. They were made up of Christian women who lead in the world and whose potential is acknowledged professionally, but who must "dumb" down in church lest they be criticized for being haughty, disrespectful, and lacking in understanding of their role.

According to Claassens, Proverbs 31:10–31 aims to empower women by giving them the space, opportunity, and support to be able to make wise decisions for themselves and other women. The bravery of the 20,000 women who marched to the Union Buildings in 1956 in Pretoria, South Africa, was demonstrated by them (SAHO 2012), and this is what Claassens, 2015 means by "courage, bravery, and wisdom." They stepped up and stood together to offer other women the space, opportunity, and support they needed to be able to speak up for themselves as equals in their own right. (Jansen, 2020) I hope the results of my study can provide the same opportunity to the women ministers who have been brave enough to speak to me.

### **1.10 Possible Constraints to the Research**

Fieldwork is partly controlled by the willingness and availability of participants in the study. Time constraints and Road Infrastructural challenges may be the main issues that the study needs to acknowledge and have alternative plans to counter to finish the study but not compromise the integrity of the study. This is especially important because of the sensitivity of the study. Therefore, interviews need to be mostly physical to build rapport and trust. This may pose challenges as recent floods as well as continuing heavy rains in KwaZulu Natal have damaged bridges and roads limiting access to certain areas or posing driving dangers. In these cases, the study will be open to having online interviews but only with those ministers that have been engaged and rapport as well as a relationship built before the study. This comes as an advantage of the study being conducted with subjects that might be known or know of the researcher.

### **1.11 Research Methodology**

Qualitative research is conducted outside of laboratories, in natural environments, which is one of the most obvious distinctions between it and quantitative methodologies. Numerous social science and humanities fields, such as psychology, sociology, political science, and anthropology, employ qualitative research. Open-

ended interviews, direct observation, focus groups, and document analysis are some of the methods used in qualitative research to collect experiential data. Other methods used in the analysis of the associated qualitative data include phenomenology, ethnography, narrative analysis (such as biographical and life story studies), case studies, and grounded theory. Qualitative research is distinguished by its ability to get statistical validation of the results without the necessity for huge sample numbers that quantitative research requires. approach entails dealing with a small number of examples and making representativeness less crucial. ([Barbour and Barbour, 2003](#))The type of qualitative research methodology for this study was the Empirical Phenomenology using purposive sampling and it enabled the formation of ideographic descriptions, individual convictions, and meanings, addressing the subjects' experiencing processes. Empirical research is referred to as qualitative research in the context of this study. Empirical Phenomenological study allows a researcher to study multiple individuals with a common lived experience of a common phenomenon.

Purposive sampling of individuals and interviewing of 7 ministers was carried out as follows:

1.11.1 Women who are in full-time ministry

1.11.2 Women who have left full-time ministry but continue to serve Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese in Self-Support ministry

1.11.3 Women whose seniority levels are Deans, Assistant Deans, Parish Pastors, and Pastors with 5 years or more of service in ministry.

## **1.12 Sample design**

The participants were selected from Women Ministers within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese. They were in full-time ministry, self-support ministry, and retired women ministers, working or who have worked in Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese.

No attempt was made to generate a statistically representative sample. The sample size was going to depend on the number of willing subjects as the study participation is voluntary.

## **1.13 Measuring instruments**

Participants were recruited from the list of women ministers within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa-South Eastern Diocese who met the sample

criteria as described above. They were approached telephonically for introductions where the study was briefly introduced. This was followed by an email with the gatekeeper consent letter, participant consent form, background, and approach to the study. This was followed by another call to establish and confirm consent after which an interview date was set, time and venue agreed upon. The communication approach was through personal interviews, telephone, and virtual platforms or sometimes a combination of these (called hybrid studies). The measurement instrument was a questionnaire that was done mainly in person during verbal face-to-face interviews. The desired response rate was around 70 - 100% and was driven through telephonic follow-ups to assist in increasing the response rate. The interest and motivation to participate were awakened by creating awareness of what was flourishing.

### 1.14 Chapter Outline

In light of what I have discussed above, I envision the chapters of my research report to cover the issues as outlined in the summary of chapters below:

**Chapter 1: Introducing the Study.** The purpose of this chapter is to explain and introduce the context of the study, problem statement, and research question briefly, this will be followed by a brief highlight of the objectives, framework, and research methodology. It will also outline the research design, methods, and approaches used during the research.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review.** The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature covering the topic of flourishing and how it can be achieved and measured, then move on to the Church and Women Ministry and narrow it down to Women Ministry in ELCSA.

**Chapter 3: Theoretical Frameworks.** The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the theoretical framework chosen for the study by exhaustively presenting perspectives of different pioneer scholars in the fields of African Women's theology and Ecclesiology.

**Chapter 4: Methodology.** The purpose of this chapter is to give a thorough justification of the fieldwork research methodology, the qualitative technique, and the purposeful sampling of 7 women ministers is appropriate.

**Chapter 5: Data Presentation** The goal of this chapter is to present, analyze, and interpret data collected during fieldwork. The presented data is looked at, and documents are looked at to help with the research questions. This increases the credibility and dependability of the Study Point. Utilizing the data that has been gathered—which is still considered raw data and needs to be processed before being used in any application—is essential.

**Chapter 6: Data Analysis.** This chapter's purpose is to find linkages, patterns, and correlations between the data by considering the outcomes to see if they confirm the research hypotheses, putting study results in the context of earlier research and theory, describing unexpected outcomes, and assessing their importance taking into account potential competing theories and advancing the study's thesis

**Chapter 7: Conclusion.** In this chapter, the findings of the study will be presented against the research problem and questions. And it will conclude by making the central argument or outcome of the study.

### 1.15 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have given in summary of how the study took shape as well as how the report of the study will be carried out. I have also presented African Women's Theology and Ecclesiology as frameworks for the study by so doing I am aware of other intersectional themes that underlie them such as feminism and gender equality. I have also given and justified the choice of phenomenology as the research methodology of choice that allows for in-depth interviews that provide thick descriptions of lived experiences. As Mkhize (2020) concurs phenomenological approach also has the capability of providing participants an opportunity to personally account for their experiences. Now allow me to present what various scholars say about the topic under study through the review of literature in the chapter that follows.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores literature on Flourishing, Feminism, Church and Women's Ministry, Lutheran Theology on Ordination into Priesthood, Lutheran Women's Ministry in other Southern African Countries, Women's Ministry in the Ecumenical Space, and Women's Ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. With these topics, the research aims to analyze scholarly data that address concerns, focusing on understanding the lived experiences of women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa-South Eastern Diocese, and identifying themes that could enhance their flourishing.

### 2.2 Flourishing?

Many contemporary scholars attribute the concept of flourishing to the work of Aristotle. Anand (2016) corroborates this notion, asserting that flourishing represents the ultimate objective for humans, signifying the attainment of a decent life. Anand builds on Aristotle's perspective, highlighting that human beings, as socio-political creatures, inherently seek interpersonal collaboration. Anand argues that a well-lived existence necessitates participation in a political society, as it offers opportunities for richer and more complete lives than what is attainable in isolation or within family groups. Therefore, according to Anand (2016), Aristotle posits that every other good is desired because it contributes to or facilitates flourishing

"Aristotle acknowledges that there is disagreement regarding the definition of flourishing, and he dismisses several potential candidates, including pleasure. He posits that human flourishing occurs gradually throughout an individual's lifetime as they acquire the necessary knowledge and resources to lead a happy life, supported by those around them. Aristotle contends that the qualities required for flourishing are not innate abilities but attitudes developed over time with the assistance of family, friends, and communities through deliberate cultivation, nurturing, and support.

Anand (2016) builds on Aristotle's ideas by referencing the work of Aquinas, who argues that the obligation to love one's neighbor is grounded in rational, rather than merely sentimental, reasons. Aquinas suggests that one primary justification for this obligation is the potential for others to experience and contribute to the common good simply by their humanity. However, crucially, these interactions are not viewed

as purely instrumental; rather, they are essential for supporting the social and material conditions necessary for both their own and others' flourishing.

Anand defines human flourishing as encompassing bodily health, social connectedness, rationality, and freedom. While he equates human flourishing with well-being and happiness, he acknowledges the term 'human flourishing' as widely accepted and used. Anand argues that human flourishing encourages us to consider the ultimate goals of well-being that we aspire to pursue and achieve. Therefore, our actions and relationships are crucial to our daily comfort and flourishing (Anand, 2016)."

Helen Oppenheimer (1969) outlines four phases in the evolution of Christian flourishing philosophy. The initial phase involves a fundamental but robust understanding that morality revolves around the pursuit of flourishing for all individuals. The second phase, already underway and increasingly evident, emphasizes the afterlife, where doing good in the present leads to flourishing not necessarily in the present but in the afterlife. In the third phase, there is a move beyond simplistic correlations between righteousness and material prosperity, rejecting facile explanations to discover joy and blessings. Finally, the fourth phase entails recognizing the glory of God not only in the hardships and tribulations of earthly life but also in the world to come. Anscombe (1958) critiques the notion that a person experiencing agony, hunger, poverty, and isolation is "flourishing," as described. This critique suggests that while Christianity acknowledges the path of hardship preceding glory, enduring perpetual suffering is as fallacious as disregarding it entirely.

"Claassens (2016) examines human flourishing within the Christian paradigm by conducting a critical analysis of the portrayal of the "Woman of Substance" in the Proverbs 31 text. This critique utilizes Nussbaum's (2016) listed capabilities, which are deemed critical and essential for determining human flourishing. Nussbaum's capabilities include life, physical integrity and well-being, the five senses, the mind, emotions, the practical mind, affiliation with other species, play, and control over one's environment. Drawing from the capabilities approach, Nussbaum argues that a life lacking any one of these capabilities, regardless of other attributes, falls short of being a truly flourishing human life.

While the Proverbs 31 woman has often been upheld in many pulpits as the narrative of an ideal, desired superwoman, the analysis in Claassens' critique suggests that she lacks the capabilities necessary to be considered flourishing or to have achieved happiness and fulfillment according to Nussbaum's (2016) criteria. Firstly, the absence of freedom of speech and the right to participate in politics is notable in the Strong Woman's existence. Secondly, the crucial component of the right to leisure, as outlined in Nussbaum's (2016) list of capacities, is missing. Thirdly, her feelings about her work are not depicted, and while her relationships with employees and customers are mentioned, their nature remains ambiguous. Some feminists argue that she may have been financially exploited by her husband and may have also exploited her employees to attain her superwoman status. Therefore, concerning the concept of gender and human flourishing, it is crucial to question when one's right to flourish infringes upon another's right to live a good life (Alexander and Peñalver, 2012)."

The law plays a crucial role in promoting human flourishing by facilitating the acquisition of specific essential skills and creating a fair and just society where everyone has equal opportunities to succeed. By utilizing the law as a tool, efforts can be directed toward building a society that fosters human flourishing. While the primary objective of the law is to positively contribute to human flourishing, it often achieves this indirectly due to practical constraints. Legal interventions can also serve to clarify social obligations and coordinate collective actions necessary for promoting human flourishing (Alexander and Peñalver, 2012)

The problem of applying flourishing indicators encompasses several dimensions. For indicators to be effective, they must be protected against manipulation by dishonest individuals. One comprehensive list, created by political theorist Martha Nussbaum, closely aligns with ideals espoused by institutions of the United Nations and philosophical concepts advocated by Aristotle and John Rawls (Nussbaum, 1997). This list serves as a dashboard of well-being and flourishing metrics conducive to meaningful analysis. Anand, in determining indicators for flourishing, prioritizes experience and expertise. The human flourishing method diverges from presuming that the link between well-being and consumption of goods and services is absolute, instead considering resources like income as inputs to activity development and thereby experience. Assessing whether individuals have had access to equitable opportunities to engage in activities deemed valuable in society involves directly questioning them on four aspects of their experiences. Firstly, individuals are queried about their satisfaction with their current circumstances, akin to age-old

psychological inquiries increasingly utilized in economic analysis. Additionally, individuals are asked two questions regarding their emotions the previous day—one about happiness and the other about worry. Furthermore, respondents are asked about their perception of the worthwhileness of their life activities, addressing the meaning and purpose derived from chosen activities. These experiential questions complement dimensional assessments. Secondly, Anand examines resources, typically assuming them to be financial, though social resources are also deemed vital for flourishing (Anand, 2016). Rather than being an isolated or strictly personal pursuit, flourishing is inherently collaborative. Even with a desire for individual liberty, flourishing necessitates interaction. Lastly, human flourishing entails the ability to make wise choices among various life perspectives, discerning key distinctions and carefully considering worthwhile options (Alexander and Peñalver, 2012)

While Nussbaum and other scholars have outlined external indicators to measure flourishing, it is undeniable that certain subjective elements can only be captured through individuals' narratives of their lived experiences. Therefore, it is crucial to consider how these subjective aspects can be effectively measured. To assess psychological well-being and emotions, including both positive and negative feelings, well-being measures have been developed. These scales were tested in a sample of 689 college students from six different locations. The Flourishing Scale provides a concise assessment of the respondent's self-perceived success in key areas such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism, comprising only eight items. The scale yields a single psychological well-being score and demonstrates strong relationships with other psychological well-being measures, exhibiting good psychometric properties. Additionally, the Scale of Positive and Negative Experiences generates scores for positive feelings (based on six items), negative feelings (based on six items), and a combined score. Furthermore, an eight-item Flourishing Scale, designed to measure social-psychological prosperity, complements existing subjective well-being measures by capturing essential features of this form of "prosperity." Drawing from humanistic psychology theories, which posit various fundamental psychological needs shared by all individuals, including competence, relatedness, and self-acceptance, this flourishing scale assesses some of these qualities.

Marais (2015) asserts that the study of human flourishing has emerged as a significant area of focus across academic disciplines, marking a deliberate shift from happiness studies to an emphasis on the rhetoric surrounding human flourishing.

Within theological circles, scholars approach this exploration from various perspectives, with an evolving focus from soteriology to the proclamation of the good news inherent in the gospel. Marais further contends that contemporary discussions on flourishing within theological studies can be categorized into three distinct discourses.

The first discourse presents salvation as reconciliation, emphasizing a forensic interpretation and the soteriological logic of faith as central themes. The second discourse portrays salvation as liberation, highlighting an ethical interpretation and apocalyptic logic of hope. Lastly, the third discourse depicts salvation as transformation, intertwining an aesthetic interpretation and a creative logic of love with this discourse.

These three logics operate in a ternary form to address the questions and challenges of the contemporary world. Contemporary discourses of salvation in all three forms seem to be interconnected with human flourishing, encompassing aspects such as piety, joy, comfort, fulfillment, healing, and dignity. Additionally, salvation is perceived as a blessing or good fortune that contributes to human flourishing.

Marais (2015) further contends that contemporary society is deeply fixated on the pursuit of happiness, driven by aspirations for fulfillment, meaning, abundance, and living life to its fullest. This preoccupation is evident in both religious and secular marketing campaigns that promote salvation through health and wealth. However, the pursuit of happiness does not necessarily bring good news to everyone, as it often benefits only those who are willing to be consumers. Theological critiques of this happiness trend underscore the dangers of equating true happiness solely with health and wealth.

Believers, theologians, churches, and faith communities are actively exploring the concept of flourishing within Scripture, doctrine, tradition, custom, and public life. It is imperative to engage theologically with the expanding discourse on human flourishing to prevent the rhetoric from being monopolized by religious and secular prosperity gospels. Human flourishing encompasses both prosperity and thriving, serving as an expression of the glory of God.

The richness of our relationship with God lies in its context, specificity, gracious giving, relational nature, responsiveness, and uniqueness. However, the relationship

between human dignity and human flourishing is intricate. Human dignity has gained prominence in public discourse, featuring in founding documents and constitutions worldwide. The modern understanding of human dignity as the cornerstone of human rights is based on the premise that human dignity is derived from a broad array of rights, which contrasts with the Christian perspective, particularly the belief that humans are created in the image of God (Soulen & Woodhead, 2006, as cited in Marais, 2020).

Based on the insights from various scholars, the working definition of flourishing for this study entails the achievement of a holistically balanced, decent human life within the Christian paradigm. Anand (2016) emphasizes that flourishing represents the ultimate goal for humans to live a decent life, where interpersonal cooperation within a political society is essential for richer and more complete lives. Helen Oppenheimer (1969) outlines Christian flourishing philosophy's evolution through four stages, highlighting the pursuit of flourishing for all people, the emphasis on the afterlife flourishing, the rejection of simplistic explanations, and the glorification of God. Claassens (2016) contributes to this understanding by critically evaluating the depiction of the "woman of substance" in Proverbs 31, drawing from Nussbaum's (2016) capabilities to determine human flourishing. This perspective emphasizes that a life lacking essential capabilities such as physical integrity, senses, and emotional well-being cannot be considered truly flourishing.

Therefore, Christian Human Flourishing encompasses the achievement of a holistically balanced decent human life where personal, social, psychological, economic, and environmental needs are met in an ethical, moral manner that glorifies God. Upholding the human rights of ministers as stipulated by constitutional laws is crucial for achieving flourishing. When ministers' needs are met by the church as their employer, they have the opportunity to grow in all areas of their lives and find happiness in their ministry, thus experiencing flourishing

### **2.3 Feminism, The Church and Women Ministry**

The oppression of women within the church has historically been perpetuated through the misinterpretation of biblical teachings, which have been used to uphold patriarchal norms, gender inequality, cultural biases, and political agendas. This interpretation, often termed Essentialism, roots gender roles in the biblical narrative of creation in Eden, assigning specific roles based on biological and reproductive

capabilities. Consequently, women have been systematically excluded from various spheres of public life, including church leadership, under the guise that men are inherently suited for leadership while women are relegated to caregiving roles (Wood and Eagly, 2002).

Gender dynamics have always been intertwined with power dynamics, whether economic, positional, or class-based, and these narratives have evolved, reflecting shifts in power dynamics, as seen even in biblical texts such as 1 Timothy 2: 8-15. Despite societal progress, religion continues to use scriptures to legitimize and perpetuate oppressive gender practices (Connell, 2002; Thatcher, 2011).

As a Christian African Feminist, there is a vested interest in reexamining women's capabilities through the lens of how God views them, employing a Trinitarian/Theological approach. Scholars like Leene & Hendriks (2013) advocate for viewing the leadership abilities of men and women as equal yet diverse, complementing each other and providing a successful formula for collaborative work. Additionally, Young (1994) suggests that women, despite their diverse ethnic backgrounds and lived experiences, should unite as a collective to combat global and common forms of oppression, particularly their marginalization in leadership roles and society as a whole.

Dreyer, 2002 argues that the disempowerment of women out of positions of power and authority is a result of sexism perpetuated by negative messages about womanhood that have been internalized by society. Dr. Martin Luther the Reformist also held a view of women in a stereotypical way of childbearing and rearing and their education to be limited to domestic skills and if any biblical to assisting in educating the children (Knibbe and Bartelink, 2019). Ruether, 1997 argues that because Christian tradition was inherited from the Hebrew and Greco-Roman cultures that viewed women as inferior, it too inherited that view as biblical and this resulted in what is happening in the church today.

Nadar, 2009 points out how systemized and naturalized patriarchy has prevented women from pursuing their preferred interests thus creating a landscape that incorrectly portrays that certain careers are for men and others for women and this list includes ministry. She goes on to argue that it is the role of feminist theologians to advocate against conservative Christian backgrounds that promote such gendered roles of women both in religion and the domestic sphere. The advocacy should

challenge the men-dominated liberation discourses, so-called second and third waves of feminism, and the Western Malestream Scholarship's socially and culturally constructed gender roles. Neo-"Biblical Pentecostalism's Values," which restrict and confine women inside the church and society only because "the bible says so," shouldn't put women's lives in jeopardy. Liberation, Black, and African Woman Theologies are crucial weapons that can be utilized to hold forces that work together to uphold the existing *status quo* that dehumanizes the poor, stigmatizes them, and discriminates against them to account for and reform them, according to Nadar, 2007.

Dreyer (2002) posits that the disempowerment of women from positions of power and authority stems from entrenched sexism, perpetuated by negative societal messages about womanhood that have been internalized over time. Even influential figures in Christian history, such as Dr. Martin Luther, held stereotypical views of women primarily as child-bearers and caretakers, limiting their education to domestic skills and assisting in children's education (Knibbe and Bartelink, 2019). Ruether (1997) argues that Christianity's roots in Hebrew and Greco-Roman cultures, which traditionally viewed women as inferior, led to the perpetuation of such views within the Christian tradition, contributing to the gender dynamics observed in the church today.

Nadar (2009) highlights how systemic and ingrained patriarchy has hindered women from pursuing their preferred interests, perpetuating a landscape where certain careers are deemed suitable for men and others for women, including ministry. She contends that feminist theologians have a crucial role in advocating against conservative Christian ideologies that uphold gendered roles for women, both within religious and domestic spheres. This advocacy should challenge male-dominated liberation discourses, as well as the socially and culturally constructed gender roles perpetuated by the Western Malestream Scholarship. Nadar argues that Neo-"Biblical Pentecostalism's Values," which use biblical justifications to confine women within the church and society, endanger women's lives and must be challenged. Liberation, Black, and African Woman Theologies are vital tools that can be used to hold accountable and reform the forces that uphold existing inequalities, discrimination, and dehumanization, according to Nadar (2007).

## 2.4 Lutheran Theology on Ordination into Priesthood

However, we know that only God as the Creator has the authority over all human beings, all owe their respect, obedience, and gratitude to God and not community. The community has no right to claim rights before God over a person called by God. (Nurnberger, 2005). Luther and the reformers believed that the hierarchy was not important in the church as long as the Word of God was preached, therefore they never defined leadership positions in the church. Considering this stance, it is surprising that the current Lutheran church places so much importance and status on the bishops and deans versus the lower clergy, not a historical Lutheran approach but then the church is allowed to reform itself and the laity seems to welcome these developments. In light of these developments, the church reforming itself, why then does the church not explicitly clarify and align constitutionally with the changes they are implementing? They have moved away from the Lutheran approach of equality of all saints and flat structure yet there is no guide on the process and there is no protection of ministers.

In the Lutheran Church, the framework of Ecclesiology plays a significant role in understanding ordination and the authority of ordained ministers. Central to Lutheran belief is the concept of the priesthood of all believers, which emphasizes that all baptized individuals have a calling from God. However, ordination serves to differentiate certain duties, particularly the administration of sacraments, which are typically performed by ordained priests (Nurnberger, 2005:163).

Martin Luther promoted a democratic approach within the church, rejecting Catholic hierarchies and advocating for the community of faith to appoint its leaders/ministers. Nevertheless, historical evidence suggests that this democratic approach sometimes led to chaos, prompting Luther to seek intervention from government authorities in church matters.

To become ordained ministers in the Lutheran tradition, individuals undergo training to interpret and understand scripture. Once ordained, they are assigned to parishes away from their original communities and entrusted with a mandate over that parish. This entails being a servant and representative of both the church and God. However, this authority granted to ordained ministers also exposes them to vulnerability, abuse, and oppression.

This arrangement reflects an incomplete or one-sided democracy within the church, where the community acts democratically to appoint leaders but may also exert authority over them. The ordained ministers, while serving the community, may face challenges in balancing their roles as servants of the church and navigating the authority dynamics within their congregations.

## **2.5 Lutheran Women's Ministry in Other Southern African Countries**

Elitha Moyo's (2021) research on the rejection of women ministers in senior leadership within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe sheds light on broader issues regarding the treatment of women ministers in Southern Africa within the Lutheran church. One significant finding from her study is the historical exclusion of women's involvement in church leadership, dating back to the missionary era. Moyo notes that while male missionaries were praised and fully participated in missionary councils, their wives were not accepted and were denied the right to vote, despite their significant contributions to missionary work. Women missionaries played a crucial role in advancing the gospel, yet they were sidelined from decision-making roles within the church and mission.

Although there were later reforms that granted women missionaries the right to vote, this decision inadvertently introduced a new form of exclusion by limiting voting rights to the wives of missionaries from Europe, effectively excluding black women from participation. Moyo's research highlights how sexism remains prevalent in many African societies with patriarchal norms, perpetuated by colonial influences that spread beliefs about gender roles to religious institutions such as the church. Consequently, women came to internalize the belief that leadership positions within the church were reserved for men, perpetuating the cycle of exclusion and marginalization.

Therefore, the prevailing belief is that leadership positions are exclusively reserved for men, relegating women to marginalization and discrediting their capacity as decision-makers in society. This system perpetuates the legitimization of male oppression over women across all societal spheres, including the church (Haskins, 2003; Klingorova & Havlicek, 2015). Moyo (2021) underscores scholarly arguments suggesting that while women's participation in society has historically been challenged, their inclusion would greatly benefit society, with the church playing a

crucial role in fostering this change in mindset. Notably, Moyo emphasizes the interconnectedness of social culture and traditions with local religion, noting that in many parts of Africa, there is no clear distinction between culture and religion.

Moyo (2021) further attributes the exclusion or rejection of women from leadership positions in the church to the portrayal of women in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testaments. Women are often depicted as subordinate and lacking in the image and likeness of God. Moreover, influential figures such as Martin Luther, Augustine of Hippo, Plato, and Aristotle viewed women and their roles in a traditional, domesticated manner, primarily as homemakers, child bearers, and caretakers. Thomas Aquinas reinforced the subordinate position of women, suggesting that women's thoughts are inherently evil and describing them as composed of crooked ribs pointing in the opposite direction to men (Kasomo, 2010:129). Such perspectives have perpetuated the notion that women are the entry point to sin, disqualifying their image of God and reinforcing their rejection within the church. Consequently, within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA), women are often received and treated as inferior to men, reflecting deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes inherited from church forefathers.

## **2.6 Women's Ministry in the Ecumenical Space**

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) is affiliated with The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which is dedicated to promoting inclusivity and equal participation of women and men in church life and society. The LWF Gender Justice Policy, approved in 2013, serves as a pivotal tool in advancing this mission. This policy offers guidance for developing action plans and strategies that prioritize gender equality across different contexts. By emphasizing the importance of overcoming violence against women and supporting women in leadership roles, the LWF Gender Justice Policy underscores the organization's commitment to fostering inclusiveness and gender justice within the church and broader society.

Additionally, ELCSA is a member church of the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA), which seeks to empower its member churches and communities through reconciliation, transformation, and empowerment initiatives. Among its various programs, the Gender Justice Programme stands out, aiming to address gender justice issues prevalent in member churches and communities. Recognizing the influence of patriarchal systems rooted in African culture and traditions, the

Gender Justice Programme seeks to equip member churches with the tools and resources needed to challenge and overcome these dynamics. Through legislative advocacy and empowerment initiatives, both the LWF and LUCSA are actively working towards creating more inclusive and equitable environments for women within the church and society at large.

Moreover, LUCSA acknowledges that Christianity has been influenced by patriarchal systems, leading to pervasive gender-based violence (GBV) and the marginalization of women and girls. This relegation to secondary status leaves them vulnerable to harm. LUCSA recognizes the detrimental effects of patriarchy, including economic exploitation and gender inequality within communities and churches, hindering equitable socio-economic development.

While the LWF gender policy and LUCSA Gender Justice initiatives aim to empower women ministers within ELCSA and other member churches, their impact on the lived experiences of study participants has been limited. Despite their existence, these policies and programs have not significantly altered the challenges faced by women ministers in ELCSA, suggesting a gap between policy intentions and practical implementation.

The issue of environmental barriers hindering the flourishing of women ministers extends beyond the Evangelical Lutheran Church to other denominations like the Methodist Church of South Africa (MCSA), as highlighted by Mkhwanazi (2015). Despite the MCSA's decision to admit women to the full ministry in 1972, female ordained priests still face limitations, often referred to as "topdressing" or encountering a "glass ceiling" within the church.

Mkhwanazi (2015) observes that women ordained within the MCSA do not enjoy full membership and are marginalized within ordained ministry, despite their majority attendance at church services. This marginalization is attributed to factors such as patriarchy, cultural norms, and stereotypes that influence the interpretation of biblical texts.

Moreover, Mkhwanazi notes that rejection by male colleagues, derogatory cultural views of women, and interpretations of biblical accounts reinforcing gender stereotypes contribute to the challenges faced by ordained women pastors in the

MCSA. Consequently, many female pastors leave the church due to a lack of recognition and opportunities for advancement, despite their higher education levels. These findings raise questions about the reasons behind women ministers in ELCSA-SED engaging in self-supporting ministries, where they maintain other full-time professions while ministering part-time. It suggests that similar environmental barriers and challenges may exist within ELCSA-SED, impacting the ability of women ministers to fully flourish within the church.

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## **2.7 Women's Ministry in Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa**

The research conducted by theologians within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) has shed light on the inadequacies of gender equity-affirming policies and the lack of clarity in processes related to entering and navigating ministry. This insight, supported by personal experiences during the ordination process, has revealed instances of resistance, oppression, and the infringement of fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression and autonomy. These challenges directly contradict the characteristics identified by Nussbaum as essential for flourishing.

The absence of systems to challenge discrimination within the ELCSA-South Eastern Diocese suggests that the church may not be a safe space for women, raising questions about how women ministers have managed to survive or whether they are gradually succumbing to these adversities. This prompts further inquiry into how women in ministry navigate such a challenging landscape to foster their career growth and flourishing.

Furthermore, the research findings indicate a lack of legislative alignment with acts aimed at addressing gender inequality and promoting fair labor relations in South African workplaces. Scholarly literature, including studies by Chisale (2020), corroborates the presence of patriarchy within ELCSA, where women constitute the majority of church attendees but are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions. This imbalance is perpetuated by the socialization and internalization of gender ideologies, as evidenced by women's participation in voting men into leadership roles. Moreover, scholars like Seguino (2010) argue that religious institutions, including the church, play a significant role in shaping attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes related to gender inequality. Thus, addressing patriarchal

structures within ELCSA and promoting gender equity requires a multifaceted approach that considers both institutional policies and societal norms.

The church influences how people act and think as people learn and internalize the practices of the church thus becoming their secondary culture. Mashiane, 2008, studied the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa against that of the state, of South Africa and concluded that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa's constitution is inadequately written. This creates problems of understanding when the courts of justice are to adjudicate inequality and injustice disputes. Mathye, 2012 also conducted a study of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa's missional praxis and concluded that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa lacks the astuteness and intelligence to carry its mission as a missional church as it has abandoned its essence of being both a teaching church and a sending church "mission Dei". Mathye, 2012 argues that this has resulted in incongruence between ministers and congregants. On surveying the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa landscape through my honors desktop research, it was evident that men, especially those with financial power still systematically interfere with and influence the systematic patriarchy which oppresses the voice of women ministers. And as Abbas and Mama 2014 argue although African countries have policies and legal inroads to redress the oppression of women, there is still a lot of overt oppression and exploitation of women, making them head of state is just a hoax to pacify them and maintain them as consumers.

The influence of the church on individuals' behavior and beliefs is profound, as people often internalize the practices and teachings of the church, shaping their secondary culture. Mashiane (2008) examined the constitution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) in comparison to that of the South African state and found inadequacies in ELCSA's constitution, leading to challenges in understanding and adjudicating disputes related to inequality and injustice in court. Similarly, Mathye (2012) conducted a study on ELCSA's missional praxis and concluded that the church lacks the discernment and wisdom to fulfill its mission effectively as both a teaching and sending church. This abandonment of its essence has led to incongruences between ministers and congregants, contributing to organizational challenges within ELCSA.

Through honors desktop research, it became apparent that men, particularly those with financial influence, continue to perpetuate systematic patriarchy within ELCSA,

suppressing the voices of women ministers. This observation aligns with Abbas and Mama's (2014) argument that despite the existence of policies and legal frameworks to address the oppression of women in African countries, overt oppression and exploitation persist, with women often being tokenized in positions of power to maintain the status quo.

Overall, these studies highlight the institutional and cultural challenges within ELCSA that hinder the advancement of gender equity and the flourishing of women ministers. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort to reform organizational structures, promote gender-sensitive policies, and challenge ingrained patriarchal norms within the church.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

The literature review delved into the concept of flourishing, distinguishing it from happiness and prosperity. It explored various scholarly perspectives on flourishing, emphasizing the importance of human rights, freedom of expression, and autonomy in determining a flourishing life. Additionally, the review examined feminism and its intersection with patriarchy, culture, and religion, highlighting how these factors shape the experiences of women ministers within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA).

Key themes included the inadequacy of gender equity-affirming policies, the prevalence of systematic patriarchy, and the impact of cultural norms on women's ministry. Despite the existence of policies such as the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Gender Justice Policy and the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) Gender Justice Programme, women ministers in ELCSA continue to face barriers to their flourishing. The literature underscored the need for genuine engagement with the voices of women ministers and the implementation of policies that address gender inequality within ELCSA. It also highlighted the influence of patriarchal interpretations of religious texts and cultural norms on women's participation in ministry.

Overall, the literature review sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by women ministers in ELCSA and set the stage for further research into promoting gender equity and empowering women within the church. This is addressed through the study objectives which state that the study aims to delve into

the institutional context of women within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese (ELCSA-SED), exploring the specific factors that influence their experiences in ministry. It seeks to investigate these experiences comprehensively, examining both facilitators and barriers to the flourishing of women ministers within the church. Through this exploration, the study intends to identify key themes, structural elements, and underlying issues highlighted by women ministers, with the ultimate goal of enhancing and enabling their flourishing within the ELCSA-SED context.

## CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Introduction

The study's purpose and the environment in which it is carried out in ELCSA-SED have been established in the preceding chapter. After providing a brief overview of these frameworks' evolutionary history and demonstrating their applicability to the study, I will address the theoretical framework that serves as the study's foundation in this chapter. Moyo (2021) in her study of the exclusion of women in leadership in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe brought to the fore that Understanding of the Early Church Leaders, their teachings and statements had a major impact on the exclusion of women from leadership positions. I suspect this might be true as well when it comes to the experiences and acceptance of women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) because the ideas of the church forefathers, the community, and the Church are believed without question. The result of this approach is that women have been excluded from influential roles in the Church. Moyo (2021) further argues that culture is another concept that plays an important role in the space and role of women in the community and sometimes even in the Church. Culture has been defined by Oduyoye (1993) quoted by Moyo (2021) as an insight into the world and the way people live value, and the psychology that guides their thinking patterns. Sociology and social arrangements have shaped and nurtured humanity's environment to distinguish its way of life from that of others. Women in these culturally marginalized situations must negotiate their cultural identities in multiple and complex ways that take into account gender and other differences (Oduyoye, 1993 Moyo (2021). Life can only have meaning when the recognition of women between the sexes is accommodated through men. If ELCSA is to be destroyed and rebuilt, the patriarchal cultural beliefs that now underlie Christian traditions and which my honors desktop study indicated also exist in ELCSA must be challenged with a feminist voice. Additionally, this feminist voice must be framed within their setting, an African context, as the experiences of Black African women ministers, while similar to many others, differ from them in many other ways as well. Moyo (2021) further argues that the Church in Africa is further influenced by the cultural dimensions of women's views in society. While society harms the women in it, the churches have a more severe authoritarian view of women than any other

normal life today. And this, even though women are the majority in society and the Church. It is important to recognize that Black African women who were called to the ministry during the Apartheid era experienced these multiple forms of oppression.

They were Black, subordinate to white missionaries' men and women, subordinate to people of other races' men and women, and subordinate to other African men. Therefore, it is important to bring into the study the concept of intersectionality as coined by Ackerman to aid understanding and analysis of data to be collected. African Women Theologians like Dube (2016:10-12) quoted on Moyo (2021) argued that the only way women can overcome this is through alternative masculinities, furthermore alternative masculinity functions as a tool to critique how culture fosters patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. They called on people to liberate themselves from all forms of oppression; it is the right of everyone to live as they wish without cultural burdens. Most of their ideas have been deployed to combat certain oppressive practices in African cultures. For example, most African societies expect women to fetch water, and firewood, cook, and do all household chores. In cases where the lobola is paid in full, the woman must obey. African culture even tolerates wife beating in cases where it is considered disobedient to the husband. Hence I have chosen African Women's Theology as the framework for the study.

### **3.2 African Women's Theological Framework**

The frameworks I've chosen for this study aim to deconstruct, liberate, recreate, and unleash the feminist voice to help these people. Oduyoye, Phiri, Nadar, and other theologians developed these theoretical frameworks, which include African Women's Theology and Ecclesiology. What we have revealed is that women are raised to be weak and take second place in life, as opposed to men. Women are forced to accept this belief that they are second-class citizens, even by culture. Oduyoye (1990) emphasized that the cycle of oppression will continue to taunt women and prevent them from demanding their equal place. Women have a responsibility to unite for the liberation of all women around the world. Women need to challenge the Church's hierarchical structures that continue to undermine women's participation in the Church. However, women cannot end gender inequality on their own; the entire human race must unite in this fight. I have observed how readily fundamental human rights for women are violated in religious settings, primarily by men posing as "Christian leaders, Christian Men, and Christian Ministers," and I have come to believe that the African Women's Theology Framework's emancipatory and

collaborative position will be ideal for my study because in the discourse of gender equality, attention needs to be paid to how cultural and social contexts present differences based on culture, language and social realities without assuming that women's experiences are everywhere the same. When it comes to the oppression and exclusion of women in leadership positions in the Church and society, it is the Church that is at fault. Oduyoye challenged men in Africa for creating an unacceptable cultural and ethnic identity that excluded women from the kraal. African identity and authenticity, she said her main challenge was created by male writers, who had harsh attitudes and respect for women in their society. While they emphasize the fact that past events are not golden; Oduyoye (1995) is concerned whether this includes men's dehumanization of women. In other words, are men willing to tell the story of their continued mistreatment of women for centuries? Another important question is whether men are willing to eliminate this unacceptable behavior towards women (Oduyoye, 1995: 121).

The exclusion of African women from educational possibilities has caused them to lag, and their tales are presented in the manner that others choose, therefore Oduyoye emphasizes in this theology the value of allowing women to tell their stories. No matter how much my mother would have liked to, she was unable to bear the pain of my fight for ordination. She could cry and celebrate with me, but I had to cry my tears as I was experiencing it. In other words, let each person tell her tale and share her lived experience without judgment. Some numerous texts and tales continue to be preached against women today; these texts must also be preached by female pastors. Indirectly explaining that being a man is next to godliness and that, like God, men must be "worshipped," a woman pastor is supposed to present God as a man or male. The texts where Jesus gave women a voice, made women his apostles and evangelists, publicly interacted with them, heard them, and healed them are not elevated because of the language used in the liturgy and the lectionary arranged for services throughout the year.

Let's hear the voices of women as they reflect on their own experiences in the church where they practice their theology via their own stories. African Christian theologies take gender roles played historically in post-colonial and post-missionary Africa into account. African theologians have suggested that rather than the diversity of the Church that missionaries brought to the continent, the Church should be founded on African culture. African women theologians explore the effects of having an indigenous African church via the lens of gender. The advent of Christianity in Africa

brought a mixed bag of benefits for female Africans, according to African women's discourse. However, they lost their positions as leaders in the African faith when they converted to Christianity. (Oduyoye, 2002). Oduyoye (2001) extensively defended her dream of an ecclesial ministry concerned with the union of women and men. She published her revolutionary dream in the book "Introduction to African Women's Theology" (2001). Oduyoye's vision arose from various debates about whether women should become monks or not. This contributed to highlighting the importance of women's participation in the higher communal structures of society or the Church. "Egalitarian Discipleship" by Fiorenza (1994) and "Cooperation between Women and Men" by Oduyoye (2001) highlight the common issue raised in (Genesis 1:26). The Bible teaches that man and woman are to rule over all creation together. There is no place where God gives higher instructions only to men, which means that God's plan all along was for women and men to work together as equals.

In the article In her work on "Collaboration between Women and Men", especially in leadership, Oduyoye sought to encourage African women to have leadership characteristics similar to those of men. Therefore, they also have the necessary qualities to hold many different leadership positions in the Church and society. Oduyoye emphasized her view on the role of women and that women should take advantage of the "queen mother" space that already exists in African cultural practices in most communities. Queen Mothers were appointed based on age, older, experienced women served as advisors, and by nature, other younger women also served as advisors. Oduyoye attaches great importance to the issues of leadership and cooperation, and the issue of reciprocity that is so important to the bond between men and women in all cultural contexts of society.

There is an argument that Christianity transformed the shared power between men and women in African religion into a solely male domain. In African churches, women have been denied significant leadership positions. Theological frameworks in Africa are insufficient for recognizing and honoring women's gifts, dignity, and equality. A poor theological foundation prevents women in African churches from being recognized and honored for their gifts, dignity, and equality. Despite a considerable shift in the ordination of women, the majority of ordained women still have challenges getting accepted as pastors. They feel that they are putting more effort into surviving than into helping the church, but they have realized that given their difficulties, they must continue their advocacy work. (Phiri, 2012) Their economic inferiority as a result of economic servitude and exploitation is reminiscent

of earlier African societies' religious traditions. Because of this history, militarism, racism, and poverty are all on the rise. The proponents of religion still have an impact on how spirituality, religion, and society develop. (Oduyoye, 2002)

African women share their own stories, learn about the stories of other women on and off the continent, and accept storytelling as a source of theology. Given its importance to African culture and religion, women often use storytelling as a paradigm for their theological reflection. As they seek to add to their spirituality by sharing and meditating on their theological tales, they receive validation for their struggles and obstacles. African women's theology includes affirmations and statements of faith. African women theologians find it challenging to apply their understanding of African culture and biblical hermeneutics to their context/location's interpretation of the Bible and culture. Because it has pushed the need for the uplifting and empowering elements of the bible to the back of biblical and cultural hermeneutics, it has driven African women to look to tradition in their theologizing. Women can read the Bible from an African viewpoint and take the liberating passages for themselves by using cultural hermeneutics. African women approach the bible with caution because they are aware that it is based on other people's cultures and because they have knowledge of and experience with African culture, which has not all liberating elements. (Oduyoye, 2002)

Therefore, using culture as a tool, African women theologians oppose any interpretation that is hurtful to women, the voiceless, and the vulnerable. They also watch out for the tendency to view cultural norms and customs as unchanging to prevent the growth of latent racism and ethnocentrism. While learning strategies to change attitudes, beliefs, and actions is encouraged, coping is discouraged. How can domesticating myths, rituals, and symbolism that are used to shield oppressive practices be understood while also identifying those that are freeing and life-affirming? Other women have shifted their focus in their theological studies from using conventional interpretations of the Bible to recounting biblical stories that reflect the lives of African women. They are committed to improving the quality of life in their communities. By ensuring that oppressive behaviors like victimization and exclusion are handled by employing the liberating word of God through Jesus Christ, they are genuinely committing to improving lives in their communities. Sharing our stories exposes us to vulnerability, yet doing so is essential for developing a sense of community and solidarity. (Oduyoye, 2002).

This study's working definition of flourishing argues that it entails not just being present but also being seen and heard in other words active participation. Just as the AWT advocates for women to tell their own stories as was an African way of passing down knowledge and wisdom. These arguments do not end in the liturgical discourse for women ministers but are also drawn to the cultural and traditional discourse whereby they presiding over funerals and standing over coffins and graves are not allowed in Africa as one of the study participants commented "*In the Bible, verses that speak of women are one of the contributing factors to challenges faced by women ministers in that people have a specific understanding of a woman and the role of the woman in cultural and social spaces and thus women are always on the back foot when it comes to ministry since it is difficult for some males to be led by a woman*" (Culture -28 August 2023)

"The personal is political" has been used not only as a slogan in the struggle to overcome gender inequality but also as an analytic tool in gender discourse. African women's theologies" (Phiri & Nadar 2011:83). Religion is considered a universally pervasive force, influencing the political, social, economic, and spiritual experiences of individuals and the community as a whole. Indigenous African religion, characterized by holistic approaches, continues to significantly influence the practice of Christian faith among Africans today. (Phiri & Nadar 2011). Therefore, although the study investigates the personal experiences of these specific women, it is understood that their experiences do not take place in a vacuum but in a context that interacts and is affected by other factors. One that emerged as critical is the issue of African culture. Phiri and Nadar (2011) highlight the impact of African culture on AWT, leading to the development of feminist cultural hermeneutics by Mercy Oduyoye (2001:12) and Musimbi Kanyoro (2002). This theory acknowledges the importance of religion and culture in African people's lives but warns against blind acceptance of these aspects, particularly for women. It condemns harmful aspects and promotes the life-giving qualities of religion and culture. Kanyoro's feminist cultural hermeneutics allows for critical evaluation of religion and culture, particularly when it negatively impacts women. This critical thinking goes beyond theory and influences policy changes. A 2000 study in Durban found that 84% of Christian women surveyed experienced physical abuse, 76% experienced spiritual abuse, and 67% experienced economic, emotional, linguistic, and psychological abuse. The research, "Domestic Violence in Christian Homes," highlights the prevalence of domestic violence in Christian households. (Phiri 2000). Therefore, African feminist

theologians also adopt an activist stance, speaking out against injustices against women and girls and challenging societal mechanisms through media and legal systems. Transformation is achieved through these efforts. Research on African women's theologies is a valuable example of interdisciplinary and multi-faith approaches to religion and theology. It addresses social justice, equity, inclusion, solidarity, and gender equality, while also being both secular activists and theological prophets. (Phiri & Nadar 2011). This affirms that all women experience gender-based abuse at the hands of Christian men as one of the study participants narrated “*When I first arrived back at ELCSA-SED at the parish where I was appointed, I was chased away on arrival by a congregant, demanding that first there must be a council meeting to review the letter of my placement.* –(Ngane - 26 May 2023). The second framework to supplement the AWT is Ecclesiology because this is a Christian study looking at women whose labor is predetermined by institutions of the church.

### 3.3 Ecclesiology

Fiorenza's (1989) concept of “egalitarian discipleship” is based on her understanding of a God who calls all people into his vineyard through baptism. Fiorenza's belief in "egalitarian discipleship" was based on the work and active lives of women in early Christianity. Their role according to Fiorenza justifies the fact that all are called by God by baptism and not by gender. This concept was developed in his work “Discipleship of Equals A Critical Ecclesiology of Freedom” (1993). She then came up with the idea of titling the book questioning the hierarchy of her Roman Catholic church, which has a very patriarchal structure. The Latin term "*ecclesia*," which means "congregation" or "church," is descended from the Greek word "*ekklesia*," which is the root of the word "ecclesiology." The Greek word "*logia*" (pronounced "o") relates to the theological study of the Christian church. Significant topics of interest include the role of the church in salvation, its origins, and linkages to the historical Christ, discipline, baptism, the Holy Eucharist, doctrine, destiny, and leadership. The term "ecclesiology" is a compound of the Greek words: "assembly" and "word," and it designates the study of the church. (Bosch, 2010)

Many of the common problems facing the modern church could be solved with the help of a biblical understanding of ecclesiology (Husbands et al., 1998). Using feminist theory and feminist theological hermeneutics, feminist ecclesiology examines the ecclesial practices of Christian churches. Ecclesiology, as defined by

Oduyoye in 2005, encompasses more than only the study of and conversation about the church from an African perspective. Furthermore, it involves demonstrating and implementing the genuine meaning of "being church." Or, to put it another way, inclusiveness is the acceptance of everyone and the gifts that God has given to women, men, and kids. (Mulambya-Kabonde, 2014) (Rakoczy, 2004)

In the Protestant tradition, ecclesiology refers to a variety of theological viewpoints that are examined in the context of Martin Luther's views. Luther held that justification was a result of trust in God's work on his behalf, which was the gift of salvation. God extended his generosity by giving humanity the Church as a gift and provided Christ as the cornerstone of the new community. With the aid of his razor, Luther was able to evaluate the Church and point out its flaws while remaining faithful to the Bible. Luther was able to assess the Church thanks to the development of his "Luther's razor" understanding of justification. Although moral corruption is a serious sin, the worst evil is hubris.

Luther thought that by distilling the Gospel into a doctrinal formula, the Renaissance Church was imitating God. This is the same as teaching the existing Christian body the depth of the Church's eschatological reality. Because Christ constituted it apostolic, Luther contended, there must be some connection to the Church of the Apostles. The inner vitality of the Church and the unity of the Twelve's theology, he insisted, must be the source of this. Additionally, he contended that the basic fact of Christendom is spiritual and interior rather than physical and external, which is a fabrication of humans. (Holtzen, 2019)

Is it not absurd that the ELCSA-SED has become so hierarchical that there has been a clear transfer of power from ordained clergy to laypeople, and not just any laypeople, but those who have political and economic means/power? However, I ask this because "for Luther, the idea that the church was based on the authority of the hierarchy was spurious" (Nurnberger, 2005:130). Of course, God uses all of His people to proclaim His gospel, ordained and laity. This allegation by Luther was founded on his personal experience living under the catholic dogma of episcopacy, where he saw the abuse of authority, opposition to preaching the gospel, and the development of faith believers. (Nurnberger, 2005)

The community of believers, who were all striving toward the same objective regardless of gender or rank within the church, was what mattered to Luther. Luther

also saw the necessity of an organized external institution of the church where fellowship will occur and where believers will formally devote themselves to God and the body of believers institutionally, financially, physically, spiritually, and in other ways. Therefore, we are not saying that those who are wealthy are not Christians or that they need to be kept out of the church or denied roles within it. But Luther is stressing a dedication to God, God's fellowship caring, and not abusing one another, as well as what he did while in the catholic church. (Nurnberger, 2005)

He wanted every Christian to have dignity, freedom, and duty toward one another and not to be in charge of anybody else, which is why he rejected the papacy. Luther's utopia was short-lived since all of his ideas emerged in a setting where the government had hierarchies of authority and the state and church were closely entwined. When disorder ruled the church, Luther himself requested that the government step in. When I compare this to the situation in South Africa, where the government has put policies, laws, and human rights protected by the constitution in place to ensure that such chaos does not occur but churches, including ELCSA-SED, do not abide by these, I find this to be particularly interesting and commendable of Luther. (Nurnberger, 2005) Unfortunately, real-life experiences show that basic human rights are not protected in the church while women minister as unpaid workers of the church.

Ecclesiology enables the research to be framed in terms of what processes and structures exist within the church that can be examined critically to see if they are supportive of women. Luther's belief that the Church is a gathering of saints where the true Gospel is taught and the sacraments are administered is reflected in the Augsburg Confession. Luther's perspective is simpler to comprehend if one is familiar with four concepts: the assembly of the saints, the Bible, and the sacraments. Luther developed this difference to set the Church's historical organization apart from its devoted members. Though he was aware that the visible Church's organization was fabricated, he continued to seek the assurance of an unchanging, verifiable norm. The practice that most people agree on is undergoing the rite of baptism. Luther established a distinction between the Church's historical structure and its fervent followers. (Nurnberger, 2005)

Inclusive Ecclesiology as a new model for hospitality in the church is a religious endeavor, sociological, historical, and practical endeavor, examining how the church operates as a community. The biblical commandment to be hospitable, as seen in

Luke 14:13, encourages inclusive ecclesiology. Ecclesiology transcends the church, focusing on the gathering of three in the name of Jesus. Ecclesiology examines the church as a sign of God's promise for new creation, offering a space for individuals to dream bigger, strive for higher goals, and flourish. It addresses our identity and aspirations, making it an ongoing process rather than a static endeavor. Ecclesiology is a place where we can be who we are and who we want to be, a now and a not-yet. (Creamer, 2012). Creamer's work concurs with the work of Siwila (2015) an African Woman Theologian on the liturgy of the eucharist and the concept of a round table. Siwila (2015) argues that the women's liberation movement gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s, and prompted changes to the liturgy to take into account the power relationships that exist in places of worship. With an emphasis on the benefits of communal life, as it is derived from the Lord's table, she engaged in a feminist debate on the embodiment and disembodiment of gendered sacred space in the liturgy. And highlighted how the concept of the round table at the Lord's table whilst it is a representation of hospitality and gathering, can frequently breed marginalisation and isolation for those left out of social gatherings. I see this as a metaphorical expression for the women ministers who although have been ordained and are practicing their ministry are in many instances still questioned, doubted, isolated, and not accepted. One study participant brought this to light when she said "*Whilst administering Eucharist one of the men in the queue before receiving from me he first asked me if I was not on my period? In shock I answered NO that was because at that time I was new in my ministry if it was now, I would just skip him*" (Thrive 14 June 2023). I see the Lord's table as a necessary tool to illuminate their voices if the table can be restored to be as inclusive and equitable as Christ intended it to be. As Siwila (2015) asserts, it can serve as a reminder that the Eucharistic table, "metaphorically the church" is a symbol of a community's devotion to Jesus Christ and a mandate to provide hospitality to everyone who has been welcomed by Christ and should thus be a feministic voice that questions the patriarchy and promotes interpersonal relationships. Siwila (2015) draws on Rakoczy (2004) to make an important argument in support of the ordination and acceptance of women ministers in their ministry especially by the congregants they serve. She argues that Rakoczy (2004) has demonstrated that one reason used to oppose the ordination of women is the question of whether women historically presided over the Eucharist table in the early church. There are still proponents who contend that since Jesus ordained the 12 all men at the Last Supper, no woman is permitted to lead the liturgical liturgy.

He sought confirmation of a constant, verifiable standard, such as going through the baptismal ritual and taking part in the Lord's Supper. Taking into account the needs of the specific congregation, the visible Church is created from this natural environment. In churches, the word of God is preached, but it must be believed. Not the message itself, but understanding the message in the angelic Messenger is crucial. In the Church, the Bible must be the last authority. Luther maintained that just as Christ's humanity was not divine but rather that of the suffering servant, the humanity of the Church was never raised to divine status. He maintained that in situations where the ruling class had complete control and the sacramental objects were deified, Christ was unable to achieve all. In this aspect, the Incarnation provides a lesson. (Holtzen, 2019)

This is an interesting story to tell about a group of Lutheran priests, men and women on the eve of their ordination. Whilst discussing ELCSA's stand on marrying the LGBTQIA+ community, one amongst them blurted out and said "whilst we are discussing this issue, we should also discuss why ELCSA ordains women?". He shall remain unknown and the rest of the conversation did not continue in this direction as ELCSA has ordained women since the late 70s. The above story may seem irrelevant and out of place but it just gives a sneak peek of what men in ELCSA still think about women's ministry. More importantly, this statement was made by someone entering the ministry. To show the context in which these women ministers in the research operate, I have highlighted this statement, which is still unclear today. Is it conceivable for individuals with disparate goals to collaborate toward a common objective if AWT recommends that men and women work together to liberate women? The bulk of key ministerial positions in the ELCSA are held by male ministers, and there is no equity strategy or active drive for gender equality to forcefully confront this.

His belief that God rules on the right through His Word and on the left through institutions, the structure of society, and the church belonging to both realms forms the foundation of Luther's theological perspective. He held that regardless of their roles in the church or society, all believers are called to serve God in one manner or another in these realms, and that the only distinction is what they are called to do. For instance, according to Lutheranism, we are all called into ministry through the priesthood of all believers; the distinction between laity and clergy is that the latter administers sacraments through a calling and with the power granted to them by the community. Similar to this, while we are all members of society, our roles and

responsibilities as citizens vary. Luther does, however, provide a warning that it is sinful for anybody who is not called by God or the Community to preach or perform the sacrament. (Nurnberger, 2005)

Beyond the priesthood, senior ministerial positions like deans and bishops are, in principle, no more important than those of other ministers, according to the Reformers, who were among the first followers of Luther. They are merely there for institutional order, but they must first and foremost serve to proclaim the Word of God, uphold the constitution of the church to ensure that it always develops the community of devoted believers, and administer sacraments. According to reformers, "*Ecclesia semper reformationis*" (if a constitution is not built, it must be reformed) applies. (Nurnberger, 2005)

### 3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at two theoretical frameworks that form the basis of the study and in looking at them I have also shown that they also have intersecting frameworks from which they developed and from them other frameworks developed. For example, the African Woman's Theological framework developed from the gender and feminism scholarship, and from it developed the African cultural hermeneutics which is critical in understanding the context within which my study participant experience their ministry. The second framework I chose for the study and looked at was the Ecclesiological framework concentrating mainly on the doctrine of Lutheranism, however, this too could not be looked at without the underlying religio-theological hermeneutics. Therefore it was important to draw in the Inclusive Ecclesiology of Hospitality mainly because although women are already part of the church, we still needed to investigate if they are participating fully and accepted in those spaces. Women's ministry in the Church and society in Africa shows that there are still gaps that need to be addressed, especially in the contextual interpretation and use of biblical scripture to empower and fully include women in ministry.

Differences in gender roles mean that Women Ministers are not recognized or accepted in equal esteem as their Men counterparts in the Church and society. In the church, the various discussions mentioned above have clearly emphasized that women are not allowed/accepted to contribute to high-level decisions/meetings in religious and social ceremonies, as they are considered people weak and in a bad mood to complete these tasks. They were thus under human rule, which was emphasized by early Church leaders, according to several views presented in this

chapter. Again, from the discussions of Feminists and African theologians such as Elizabeth Fiorenza and Mercy Oduyoye, it is seen that the discrimination and oppression experienced by Women Ministers in the Church come not only from the teachings, preaching, and interpretation of the Bible but also from African Traditions and cultural practices, some of which are harmful and violate the rights of women. Accordingly, the authors suggest the “egalitarian discipleship” of Florence and the “cooperation between men and women” of Oduyoye; They all support sharing space in leadership positions for men and women.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the method engaged in collecting data to validate the findings. It also justifies the choice of method which was used. The method used was the Empirical Phenomenology using purposeful sampling as proposed and approved before the study commencement. The method was chosen as it allows a researcher to study multiple individuals with a common lived experience of a common phenomenon. The individuals of the study were the women ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA-SED). Phenomenology is a phrase that is frequently used without being fully understood. It has been said that phenomenology is a philosophy, methodology, and procedure. Confusion is increased by the interchangeable usage of the terms "phenomenology" and "hermeneutics." According to phenomenologists, people's personal experiences can reveal truth and a deeper comprehension of existence. However, Rene Descartes outlined a division between a person's mental and physical selves. The recommended approach for figuring out the significance of life experiences is therefore phenomenology. Edmund Husserl is generally referred to as the father of phenomenology. Phenomenology as a methodology connects a specific philosophy in the case of this flourishing of women ministers to the best research techniques and builds a bridge between philosophical ideas and useful and usable research methodologies. As both a member of (ELCSA-SED) and an ordained minister conducting the study, I had to be careful during my data collection to bracket my own lived experiences in order not to influence the responses of my participants. Bracketing makes it possible to characterize the phenomenon under research objectively. This approach to explaining the experience of human consciousness is rational. For example, in my study, I will bracket patriarchy and how it systematically influences the flourishing of women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese. (Byrne, 2001)

### **4.2 Ontology and Epistemology**

In research, it is suggested that strategies may include action research, empirical research, interviews, surveys, case studies, or systematic literature reviews. The strategy is chosen based on the data needed for the study and the purpose of the study. (Saunders et al., 2019). The methodology and design discussed in this chapter

answer the research questions addressed. The application of the methods should be consistent with the expectations of the questions listed below:

4.2.1 What insights could be drawn from the embodied lived experiences of women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that could inform enable and enhance the flourishing of women in ministry?

4.2.2 What constitutes the ministerial landscape of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese and what is the institutional context of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese?

4.2.3 What is the experience of women in ministry in Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that informs/inhibits flourishing?

4.2.4 What are the themes/structures/issues identified by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese?

Creswell (2009:74) noted that paradigms are basic belief systems that are generally based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. For Saunders (2015) ontology and epistemology form part of major techniques of thinking about research philosophy. Cohen et al (2011) emphasize the uniqueness of social realities. For them, these are constructed and interpreted differently by different people. The major assumptions considered in viewing social realities are based on ontology and epistemology. Cohen et al (2011) further argue social realities are also affected by covert and overt assumptions. The study deals with gender issues which are part and parcel of human behaviour and feelings created as part of the social realities of the church community. Hence, the issue of a philosophy that helps to reach out to the bottom of that intrinsic behavior is paramount. The view of an external and objective design carries the realistic ontology assumption that is influenced by outside dimensions of society. Ontological philosophy is also socially created and the understanding of the subject is regarded as a 'nominalist' assumption. This study adopted a nominalist assumption of the ontology. This study is aimed to gain an understanding of gender inequality which may have hindered the flourishing of women ministers in ELCSA not to gain opportunities to occupy senior positions in the church almost 50 years after its incorporation/establishment. Also, the study adopted methodology is an interpretive and constructivist method because constructionists argue that all knowledge, its meaning, and authenticity, depend on human practices being constructed and interacted with within them and communicated in context. their society. Whilst, the interpretive paradigm argues that

understanding participants' subjective meanings, the interpretation is that humans are different from other created beings because they can create meaning from whatever they behave. The interpretive paradigm was chosen for several reasons, one of which was the ability to use a phenomenological approach in data collection. Interpretive researchers, during the data collection process, gleaned what was important to the members surveyed. Different interpretive elements have slightly different importance, as is the case with phenomenologists, who study existence by focusing on the experiences of participants; that is, participants' memories and interpretations of these experiences. (Saunders et al, 2019 Moyo, 2021).

### **4.3 Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that examines people's experiences to understand the essence of their experiences. It aims to comprehend the fundamental truths of the experience, such as the experiences of women undergoing breast biopsies or family members waiting for a loved one to undergo surgery. Phenomenology is often used interchangeably with hermeneutics, which refers to analyses of written language. This column provides a synopsis of phenomenological philosophy, technique, and approach. (Byrne, 2001). According to Beyer (2022), Husserl introduced the epoché technique, which is a methodological requirement for phenomenological descriptions to be conducted from a first-person perspective. This requirement is present in Logical Investigations and is crucial for ensuring that the subject experiences the item accurately. From a first-person perspective, it is impossible to determine if an object is truly perceptually confronted, as it remains unchanged from a first-person perspective. Phenomenologists must describe items accurately from a first-person perspective to ensure they accurately represent the experience. While one cannot have a valid perceptual experience without falling prey to perceptual errors, such as illusions or hallucinations, the experience is the same as if one could perceive an external object. Therefore, the quality of a phenomenological description of a perceptual experience should not matter, as it should accurately describe the experience. Phenomenology means the study of events, predicted phenomena, circumstances, implications, or theories. The phenomenological process is a qualitative approach that assumes reality is often created by the individual. Phenomenological research does not necessarily provide definitive explanations but raises awareness and a better understanding of this phenomenon. In this study, the analysis focuses on the experiences of female ministers that hindered or promoted their development. Using a phenomenological approach in a parenthetical sense helps

avoid the possibility of misinterpretation and bias of phenomena. (Moyo, 2021). Religious phenomenology is based on the idea that religion is rooted in religious experience. People describe the religious element in their experiences.

Phenomenology of religion necessitates a certain style of analysis and judgment. According to religion phenomenologists, religious experiences are the only way to learn about some universal qualities, structures, and patterns. Phenomenology that deals with religion adheres to the notion of "intentionality." Intentionality draws attention to the reality that all experience is an experience of something and that all experience refers to some deliberate referential meaning. It focuses on language because we can never directly access another person's religious experiences. Instead, we always hear other people's attempts to communicate their experiences and their truths through their utterances. So, my study intends to give the women ministers their voice to express their experiences in the language and cultural context. (Heimbrock, 2005)

Phenomenology is qualitative and as such worries about the meanings that people attach to the issues around them. The idea is to understand people from their frame of reference. This is what qualitative research is used for to understand phenomena in a person's environment. Qualitative research is a complex, multifaceted field that is woven together by various worldviews and viewpoints, like a loom. Researchers use terms like constructivism, interpretivism, feminism, methodology, postmodernism, and naturalistic research to describe their frameworks. Methods like ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, narrative research, and case studies are observed through these lenses. The diverse individuals working in qualitative research have unique perspectives and skills, creating a textile with shared traits. The artistic creators are all working together to create a unique and valuable understanding of the subject. (Cresswell, 2007) Qualitative research, characterized by its situated nature, involves the observer placing themselves in the world through various actions such as field notes, interviews, conversations, photos, recordings, and memos. This approach takes a naturalistic, interpretive stance, aiming to explain or interpret phenomena in their natural environments based on the meanings assigned to them by individuals. This approach transforms the world into a series of representations, fostering a deeper understanding of the world. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) Qualitative researchers empathize with the people they study to understand how those people perceive things. One useful method is to "frame" assumptions in everyday life. This does not mean denying the existence of the world or even doubting it. To set aside the

researcher's attitude towards the world and allow for a clearer vision, we need someone who sets aside prejudices and presuppositions. (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The reason the study chose a qualitative research method is because its focus is not on measurement but on including and examining the understanding of the contributors to this study. It aims to discover and unlock the invisible meanings that humans use to create meaning from their experiences. In qualitative research, participants identify themselves as co-researchers, which is important because it contributes to ethical considerations. With qualitative research, participants own not only the project but also the research results, as they will be used to grow the community or church being studied under the study. This would therefore require the express consent of the participants and they did so voluntarily and would have been free to withdraw if one thought otherwise, fortunately, no one withdrew.

#### **4.4 Research Design**

Research can enhance scholarship in any discipline through contemplative instruments. Different research designs, including qualitative and quantitative methods, can be employed. The term "phenomenology" was first used by German philosopher Husserl about qualitative research approaches. Some academics believe that phenomenology is more relevant to philosophical fields. Transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on the universe as it appears to humans, is centered around the phenomenological method of knowledge derivation. According to Husserl, it is possible to transcend presuppositions and biases and experience a state of pre-reflective consciousness, allowing us to describe phenomena as they present themselves. Phenomenology is a qualitative research design that involves studying participants to understand their experiences and viewpoints. It allows researchers to see the social world through their eyes, using participant observation and interviews as data-gathering techniques. The term "phenomenology" was first used by German philosopher Husserl and is considered more relevant to philosophical fields. Transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on the universe as it appears to humans, is largely centered around the phenomenological method of knowledge derivation. (Thani, 2012). This is a framework that helps define the methods and processes used to collect and analyze that data. In other words, the research design serves as a guide for the research. Kothari (2004) argues that research design is a tool for understanding how to collect, manage, and analyze data to produce desired results. Therefore, in this research, phenomenology serves as a blueprint for how to conduct the research. In these lived experiences of women ministers, the primary

form of data collection method was interviews both face-to-face and virtual due to challenges experienced when setting appointments with other participants. The interviews were useful for investigating contemporary phenomena to search for answers about inappropriate behavior. Interviews could give an idea of the limits of the context and phenomenon under study which in most cases are not delineated.

Phenomenology allowed for data collection techniques that can be used in combination. This study used interviews, observations, document reviews, and semi-structured questionnaires to collect data. Furthermore, multiple methods were used including reviewing documents, observing the environment as well as communicating questions in body language and art. These promote data analysis which allows for thick descriptions of the essence through observing significant as well as themes in the statements made by the interviewees. It is also reflective thus allowing for a review of common experiences in other contexts. I employed these sub-methods where plausible as they allow for holistic analysis. (Cresswell, 2007) Data collection is the act of acquiring and measuring information on variables of interest in a systematic and defined manner. To ensure that this is achieved there was an interview schedule was utilized for all participants. It is important to ensure accurate and truthful collection to preserve the integrity of any study, regardless of the subject of study or preferred method for defining data. This was ensured in two ways, first on consent the interviews were recorded and where it did not consent the responses were only recorded in writing. To preserve the integrity of any study, the aforementioned methods were used for data collection in the study to answer specified research questions, test hypotheses, and assess results, data collection is the act of acquiring and measuring information on variables of interest in a systematic and defined manner. Although techniques differ, the importance of ensuring accurate and truthful collection does not change. The aim is to gather high-quality evidence, which can then be used to conduct extensive data analysis and create a solid case for answering the phenomenon in question.

Qualitative approaches used in the study were: in-depth interviews, observation, and document evaluation. Face-to-face interviews were mostly used as they gave advantages such as the ability to ask detailed questions, probe further, collect non-verbal data, explore complex issues, and have higher response rates. In cases where on reviewing data, information was found to be short in answering the question, follow-up clarity-seeking questions were asked via WhatsApp. Second, the observation method was used and it allowed learning about the context around

participants, it was more than just looking or hearing. Stenhouse (1975) states that research is essentially a "systematic inquiry made public" and that observation needs to be selective to become systematic. To be "public," what we see or hear must be captured in some way so that it can be analyzed and evaluated. This is a methodical strategy for gathering data. Finally, documents used as secondary data are often easier to access due to the cost of electronic media and the Internet. Research publications, books, and journals were all secondary sources. They were more significant in terms of gathering data due to their current material and specific subject matter. (Kabir,2016)

This method was relevant to my study of the lived experiences of 7 women ministers within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese with a shared lived experience such as ministering in a common environment/landscape. Empirical Phenomenology helped in understanding the essence of the experience by describing a lived phenomenon which in this study is the flourishing of women ministers. I used this method to be able to draw the essence of what is it that these women at Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa-South Eastern Diocese have in common as an experience that influences whether or not they flourish in ministry. As a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese recently ordained as a woman minister, I bracketed my own experiences, to eliminate ethical issues by describing my personal experiences with the phenomenon and set them to focus on the participants in the study.

#### **4.4 Research Population**

Phenomenology is a research method that focuses on the study of small, purposively selected, and thoughtfully positioned participants. Although smaller sample sizes can be limiting, they provide a deeper level of analysis and can be transferred to other studies. The transferability of results and participant recruitment may also pose challenges. However, the reader should be able to judge the research account's appropriateness if it is detailed, transparent, and connected to recent literature. Transcendental phenomenology, which focuses on the universe as we perceive it, is largely centered around the phenomenological method of knowledge derivation. (Smith et al., 2009) The researcher's first step in selecting a population involves finding a subject or location to observe. They must consider various stages in data collection, including finding subjects, gaining access to them, and building

connections. High-quality data is ensured through these steps. A closely connected step is developing a deliberate sampling plan, which intentionally samples a group of people rather than a probability sample, allowing for statistical conclusions about the population. This deliberate sampling ensures the study's validity and reliability. A phenomenological study requires participants who can describe their lived experiences and have experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Finding similar experiences, themes, and the event's core for all participants becomes more challenging for researchers due to the diversity of their traits. (Cresswell, 2007 ) In this study, the population identified as ELCSA female ministers, there were 7 female ministers within the recommended number of participants for a phenomenological study. The selection included decisions about who and why to participate, what the context was, what events, and what behaviors were observed to collect data, as the study applied qualitative research methods. Sampling in this study refers to the representation of certain groups of people on which the survey focuses and targets to draw conclusions. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is a notion that is applied. This is a somewhat more constrained selection of sampling techniques for phenomenological research. Every participant must have firsthand knowledge of the topic under investigation. Criterion sampling is most effective when the participants in the study are all actual users of the phenomenon being examined. (Cresswell, 2007) This indicates that the researcher chooses subjects and study locations based on their ability to specifically contribute to understanding the study's main phenomenon and research challenge. It is necessary to make decisions regarding what or who should be sampled, how the sampling will be done, and how many individuals or locations should be sampled. In addition, the researchers must determine whether the sample will match the data required by any of the five inquiry methodologies. Participants were selected with a focus on exploring the intended purpose and goals of the research area. Therefore, purposive sampling was used in choosing participants of the study and it is relevant for qualitative research as it allowed me to select individuals who can purposefully inform or articulate an understanding of the research problem central to the phenomenon in the study. Also, because the sample size does not need to be representative as long as it serves the purpose. In this study, the method requires only between 5 and 25. (Cresswell, 2007) The sample size of my study was 7 ministers from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa-South Eastern Diocese

My sample selection consisted of the categories listed below:

1. Women who are in full-time ministry

2. Women at all levels from Deputy bishops, Deans, Assistant Deans, Parish Pastors, and Pastors new in ministry.

Research study effectiveness is dependent on effective recruitment and retention of study members. It involves identifying potential research participants and providing them with the information to establish their interest in joining a proposed research study. Participants were recruited from the list of women ministers within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa-South Eastern Diocese who meet the sample criteria as described above. They were approached either physically or telephonically depending on when I was able to make contact with them. I should state that it was not as easy as I thought it would be to coordinate times according to my and their availability so much that I had to decide to drop some and do virtual interviews with others. After the introductory contact with potential participants, I followed by either an email or WhatsApp with the gatekeepers' consent, participant consent, and background and approach to the study. This was followed by confirming an interview date, time, and venue.

The interview schedule was in English to not compromise the integrity of the questions, however, participants were encouraged to respond in either English or Zulu depending on which they were comfortable with. The whole interview responses were captured in writing and where consented were also voice recorded. Translation and transcription were done soon after to take advantage of fresh memory. Monahar et. al,2018

The inclusion criteria:

1. The participants were Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese (SED) members
2. They were women in ministry full-time at ELCSA-SED

ELCSA- The exclusion criteria:

1. The person who was not a member of ELCSA-SED
2. The person who was not a woman minister and was never a woman minister in ELCSA-SED

Having gained consent from the gatekeeper who is the bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese (ELCSA – SED), I also got written consent from the participants of the study. The interview process involved setting up interviews, agreeing on a suitable venue, and conducting actual interviews.

I posed open-ended questions centered around broad questions on experience, context, situation, and influences during in-depth face-to-face interviews which were audio recorded and written notes taken. (Cresswell, 2007) These allowed observation of body language as a form of communication and to dig deep for thick descriptions but also being in the context of the interviewee it allowed for observation and interaction with the context under study. (Crenshaw, 2007) Ethics are central in research and data must always be truthful. Research should aim to improve lives and society, not only ask and mitigate harm. To mitigate risk and unethical behavior, all participants were informed of their withdrawal options if at any stage they felt they no longer wanted to participate. They were also informed of the available Psychosocial support on request.

#### **4.6 Sampling and Selection Process**

Qualitative research involves sampling techniques that are not as strictly regulated as quantitative research. The principle of adequate representativeness and appropriateness required in purposeful sampling is to select participants who are reflective, articulate, and open to sharing. Sample selection in qualitative research significantly impacts the study's final quality. The terms "purposeful," "selective," and "theoretical" sampling are frequently used in literature, but they are defined differently in dictionaries and are viewed synonymously and interchangeably. "Purposeful sampling" emerged from Chambers Dictionary (1983) and is defined as having or exercising the power of selection and ability to, while "selective sampling" means "to pick out" or involve specific items or persons. Purposeful sampling gives the researcher the ability to discriminate, while theoretical sampling is "pertaining, according to, or given to theory, not practical, speculative."

I used purposeful sampling based on my knowledge and amicable relationship and access to women ministers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa and of the South Eastern Diocese. I requested their cellphone numbers during church events that brought all ministers together and followed this by making an initial call to explain the reason I needed their contact numbers. In these initial calls, I introduced myself and that I am a student at the University of KwaZulu Natal, mentioned my studies, my area of research, how I intended to collect data through interviews at their convenient location and time and also mentioned that I had already gotten the bishop's consent to conduct the study and then asked if they will be interested in being part of the study. I was fortunate that all I approached except one

who straightforwardly refused agreed to be part of the study. However, one participant although she had agreed ended up not being able to interview her due to conflicting schedules and later on learned she was also seriously sick. I replaced her later on in the study with another new participant. After these introductory calls, I then followed up with calls to set up my interviews, dates, locations, and times. There were face-to-face interviews that did not materialize and these were changed to virtual interviews as will be evident in the data presentation chapter. The purpose of selecting the specific ministers was because they met the criteria in that they were:

- Women who are in full-time ministry
- Or Women who have left full-time ministry but continue to serve the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese in Self-Support ministry
- And Women whose seniority levels are Deans, Assistant Deans, Parish Pastors, and Pastors with 5 years or more of service in ministry.

#### **4.7 Ethical Consideration**

The research study obtained ethical clearance protocol reference number HSSREC/00005551/2023. Ethics are central in research and data must always be truthful. Research should aim to improve lives and society, not only ask and mitigate harm. To mitigate risk and unethical behavior, all participants will be informed of their withdrawal options if at any stage they feel they no longer want to participate. Psychosocial support will also be available on request. All participants were assigned pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality during the dissertation writing process; nonetheless, it is interesting that all except one felt comfortable using their real identities and interacting. Anonymity was sought by using pseudonyms.

#### **4.8 Validity and Reliability**

Since naturalistic research methods are used in qualitative inquiry, the study's goal was to comprehend and interpret. Since the research environment is dynamic, participation and immersion in the study serve as a means of discussing potential changes. Maxwell (1992: 14) states that in qualitative research, "the researcher is the instrument." Therefore, I established reliability by maintaining consistent communication with participants throughout the data collection period. Gendered Silencing, I had to draw on my own lived experiences to challenge the level of validity without invalidating the data because the liberation and suffering of women

in ministry are personal, political, and contextual. These intersectionalities cannot be ignored by each participant, and we cannot step outside of our own experiences to obtain observer-independent accounts of our experiences. Additionally, in addition to assessing the raw data, participants' reflections on comparable life experiences across the various themes that emerge were examined for consistency in tone and language.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

This chapter discusses the methodology used to collect data to conclude the questions posed by the research. Through engaging with these women ministers in a systematic approach of interviews the study was able to uncover the challenges faced by women ministers in ELCSA-SED, a predominantly patriarchal South African context. They face rejection and unacceptance from congregations and lack protection from ELCSA as administrators, church leaders, or colleagues. Their resilience is a testament to their strength and transcends patriarchy and heteronormativity. The chapter employs two theoretical frameworks to explore the lived experiences of seven Black Women ministers in environments still influenced by African culture. African Woman Theory is used to give them a voice and challenge patriarchal heteronormativity, which focuses on granting power to men. Phenomenology is used to bring these experiences to life, challenging the church to listen and transform. The chapter highlights the unique resilience of these women in a heterosexist world. The next chapter will present data collected during the research.

## **CHAPTER 5 : PRESENTATION OF DATA**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In the two preceding chapters, I have elaborated on the theoretical frameworks forming the basis of the study which are the African Woman Theology and the Ecclesiological framework as well as the methodology used to acquire the data which is to be presented in this chapter. The frameworks allowed the exploration of women's experience from the feminist scholarly viewpoint whilst also illuminating the importance of hearing the African woman's voice from her context or lived experience. They further allowed for the exploration of the church culture, doctrines and systems within which these women have to navigate within. As the African Woman's theological framework is largely based on hearing the woman's voice through storytelling, it followed suit that the phenomenological method be used to collect data. This chapter is focused on the presentation of data obtained through the study. These are presented in tabular form and will demonstrate what transpired during the data collection phase. As mentioned in the methodology chapter the study targeted women ministers in full-time ministry at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern (ELCSA-SED), in sampling, there was no age or service limit or whether they were married or not was not an exclusion. Men ministers were purposefully left out to illuminate the experiences of the women ministers and avoid obscuring their voices from the oppressive patriarchal voices. This was intended to draw out what could be learnt to inform, enable and enhance the flourishing of women in ministry.

### **5.2 Data Presentation**

The information in this chapter will be presented as follows: The first part will provide in detail the profile of the 7 interview participants. These will be presented individually by first giving insight into the interview ambience and the feel as well as the process which it took. second, each interview will be concluded by my reflection on the interview. Last, the responses to the questions asked during the data collection process which were an attempt to answer the main research question and their sub-research questions will be tabled.

The interviews took place over three months, four (4) face-to-face interviews (FTFI) and three (3) virtual interviews (VI) were conducted. Some of the face-to-face interviews were also followed by telephonic, WhatsApp messages or voice-note questions of clarity.

The interviews took place around KwaZulu Natal as well as virtually seeking to find answers to the following research sub-questions:

5.2.1. What constitutes the ministerial landscape of ELCSA and what is the institutional context of Women in ELCSA?

5.2.2. What is the experience of women in ministry in ELCSA that informs/inhibits flourishing?

5.2.3. What are the themes/structures, and issues identified by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in ELCSA?

### **5.3 Interview Schedule**

To answer these overarching study questions, the following interview questions were asked of the participants:

#### **Introduction**

1. Name or Preferred pseudonym:
2. Age
3. Marital status
4. Where were you born?
5. Highest level of education attained: (grade 10, matric, diploma, undergrad degree, MA, PhD):

5.3.1. What constitutes the ministerial landscape of ELCSA and what is the institutional context of women in ELCSA?

1. What is your understanding of ministry, what does it entail?
2. In your context what does it take to be a minister?

3. In ELCSA what is ministry like?
4. What is the estimated percentage of women ministers in–SED?
5. As a woman minister in ELCSA, please share your journey in becoming a minister.
6. Did you encounter any challenges in becoming a women minister in ELCSA?
7. Do you think that those challenges still exist for women entering and in ministry in ELCSA-SED?
8. In your (experience)or understanding, what do you think are the contributing factors to the challenges mentioned above?
9. What are the effects of these challenges on women ministers, congregants and ELCSA-SED?

5.3.2. What is the experience of women in ministry in ELCSA that informs/inhibits flourishing?

1. Does the ministerial environment in ELCSA-SED allow ministers to concurrently do what they ought to do as well as what they want to do?
2. In your experience as a woman in ministry in ELCSA-SED do you feel that you are continually being developed towards your optimal potential?
3. Are ministerial activities and relationships that you have with congregants and ELCSA-SED meaningful and aligned with your values?
4. Are efforts and inputs to enhance your development supported and valued?
5. Please give scenarios for your response above.

5.3.3. What are the themes/structures/issues identified by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in ELCSA?

1. Is ELCSA-SED safe and courteous in its engagement with women ministers?
2. Does ELCSA-SED have an intentional ethos of care and congregational openness to new approaches that contribute to the growth?
3. As a women minister in ELCSA-SED, what do you think needs to be done by ELCSA-SED to encourage and support the thriving of women ministers?

## 5.4 Research Objectives

Furthermore, this chapter will accentuate the key conclusions of the study and present them concerning the research objectives, which are as follows:

5.4.1. The study seeks to explore the institutional context of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese.

5.4.2. The study investigates the experiences of women in ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese, examining factors that inform or inhibit their flourishing.

5.4.3. The study aims to identify themes, structures, and issues highlighted by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese.

Below are the summarised descriptive data responses from the participants' demographics followed by the summary of comments in terms of themes that are connected to the study topics. Table 1 illustrates the profiles of the volunteers who participated in the study, how old they are, their marital status, level of education and number of years in ministry. They were all selected because they aligned with the criteria.

**Table 1**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Children</b>	<b>Highest Qualification</b>	<b>Years in Ministry</b>	<b>Location</b>
FTF-1	45	Single	None	Bachelor of Theology	15	ELCSA-SED
FTF - 2	39	Single	None	Honours in Theology	8	ELCSA-SED
FTF -3	31	Single	1	Bachelor of Theology	1	ELCSA-SED
VI - 1	37	Married	1	Diploma in Theology	5	ELCSA-SED
FTF - 4	50	Married	None	Bachelor of Theology	13	ELCSA-SED
VI - 2	30	Married	2	Diploma in Theology	5	ELCSA-SED
VI -5		Single	None	Bachelor of Theology	26	ELCSA

**Table 2** illustrates in percentile the result from data of participants' profiles and also illustrates the level of their leadership positions. The leadership level has the power to influence change but also bring women challenges.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Married Vs Single Status %</b>	<b>Married with Children VS without Children %</b>	<b>Single with Children %</b>	<b>Level of Position Executive (1), Senior (1), Middle(4), Junior(1)</b>
FTF-1	45	Single	14.29%	N/A	25%	14.29%
FTF - 2	39	Single	14.29%	N/A	25%	14.285 of 57.14%
FTF -3	31	Single	14.29%	N/A	25%	14.29%
VI - 1	37	Married	14.29%	33.33%	N/A	14.285 of 57.14%
FTF - 4	50	Married	14.29%	33.33%	N/A	14.285 of 57.14%
VI - 2	30	Married	14.29%	33.33%	N/A	14.285 of 57.14%

**Table 3** Pseudonyms chosen for each participant

<b>Name</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Pseudonyms</b>
FTF-1	Single	Ngane
FTF - 2	Single	Thrive
FTF - 3	Single	Doek
VI - 1	Married	Makoti
FTF - 4	Married	Flourish
VI - 2	Married	Culture
VI- 3	Single	Dress code

### **5.5 Description of the Research Study**

Participants were first approached by telephone to be informed about the study and were requested to voluntarily participate. After agreeing to participate communication through WhatsApp started to set convenient interview dates and times. This was difficult as the Ethical Clearance was received just at the beginning of the conference season for all leagues in ELCSA-SED. This meant that some of the targeted participants got very busy with their work commitments at conferences. However, I was able to work around mine and their availability as I was also busy with conferences.

The choice of where to meet for the interviews was the participants' choice as I wanted them to be comfortable. The first face-to-face interview was held at a mall in a private and quiet corner of a restaurant as was requested by the participant. The three other face-to-face interviews were conducted at the participants' parsonages i.e. pastor's homes within the church. The three ended up being virtually due to conflicting engagements and last-minute changes. At the beginning of each interview,

I introduced the study and asked if participants still consented to go on with the interviews. This was followed by the signing of the consent form and the request to record the proceedings. In the first interview which was done at the mall, the participant did not consent to being recorded, the reason she gave was that ELCSA-SED was not safe, and that, at that moment there were recordings of her being shared amongst congregants. She appeared to be reluctant about the interview but yet needed someone to vent to, she also appeared to be very nervous, suspicious, wounded, and still not healed from her afflictions. She also expressed being very unhappy in her ministry and said she was even pondering thoughts of leaving the ministry if she had a better alternative. She spoke about feeling trapped because of her ill-health status requiring understanding and thus not easy for her to leave the ministry or even change to a new parish.

*amakhosi akhuluma into ebuhlungu kabi emva kokuhona kukaMfundisi uXXX, athi kungcono nina ushone engakafiki kuthina wahlala iminyaka egula engasebenzi, ehola Ngane - FTF 1(26 May 2023) (translated and paraphrased to say congregants uttered something very painful at the funeral of a certain woman minister who passed away soon after a transfer saying others are lucky that she passed away before she resumed work in their parish unlike when she was with them where she stayed years sick and not working but getting paid).*

The other three face-to-face participants consented to being recorded and they were free during their interviews. Two out of four face-to-face interviews wanted their names hidden and the other two did not mind but for ethical reasons and pushback, I decided to give all participants Pseudonyms and codes.

A similar process was followed with the three virtual participants, the reason for having virtual participants was that the meetings we had arranged for the interviews which were going to be held during conferences did not materialize when I arrived as they got very busy with the pastoral work of their conferences. However, going to them gave me a chance to reacquaint and build rapport with them. As we are all ELCSA-SED women ministers, we know each other from various other churches as well as ministers' activities that bring us together. I am also friends with them on Facebook which I think is an advantage of them knowing and trusting what I stand

for me. The study was introduced and consent was sought, this was followed by an interview schedule sent on WhatsApp for them to complete, this was followed by verbal exchange to clarify and get more details on their responses.

The virtual participant who holds the most senior position held by a woman minister at ELCSA, her interview was at first going to be a face-to-face time during a conference and she had already been briefed about the study on WhatsApp, however, due to a delayed return from an overseas trip it ended up not happening and became virtual. I had never met her in person but we had been introduced remotely by people in ministry who commonly knew us. I was first introduced to her by one of the study participants who are together in one of the church leadership structures. The reason I chose to approach a woman minister holding the most senior position as a participant is that her position, coupled with her lived experience has exposed her both to operational as well as strategic positions in ELCSA/ELCSA-SED. Her lived experience can shed some light on what ELCSA does or has planned that will inform, inhibit, or enhance the flourishing of women ministers. Another senior woman minister kept canceling meetings after signing and consenting to participate and as the study is voluntary I decided not to put any pressure on her.

### **5.5.1 General Demographical Information**

In presenting each interview, I will begin with a short bio that will speak to calling and ministerial experience. In terms of age, marital status, placement, job title/position, and years in ministry, I purposefully looked for volunteers who were diverse and represented various levels of leadership/management positions of ministry within ELCSA as long as they aligned with the criteria. The levels can be seen in the ELCSA structure and organogram attached as annexures 1 and 2 which were provided by the incumbent acting general secretary of ELCSA. This diversity allowed for the inclusion of a range of experiences in the debate. The above tables are a small illustration of this diversity and participant makeup and participants' demographic composition. As shown the participants are all black women ministers. As an ordination requirement for all ELCSA ministers in full-time ministry, they all have a tertiary qualification in Theology ranging from a Diploma up to post-graduate degrees.

## 5.5.2 Face to face Participants Interviews

**5.5.2.1. Ngane - FTF 1** is a 45-year-old female with a Bachelor's Degree in Theology. She is single and has no children of her own. She was 30 years old when she was ordained. She does not think she was called into ministry but growing up sickly, and seriously ill with a heart condition and epilepsy, she could not play any sport and was morally discouraged about life in general. Her grandmother encouraged her to continue with school at least to finish matric which she completed in 1996. She started doing odd jobs but was crippled or limited by illness until one day she prayed to God and promised that if she got better and was able to work, she will serve God. She says, she did not necessarily mean as a minister. She first explored being a nun as there were sisters in the area she grew up in. She joined the convent but was not happy so she went back home and opted to go into ministry. She says the process of application was not an easy journey. At first, her application letter was held up in the congregation without any explanation, until the bishop who was aware of her intentions intervened and asked about it. It was then actioned but not without negativity and discouraging words.

### **Personal Reflection:**

*I was sceptical when she opted to be interviewed in a public space when I had offered to come to her in her parsonage but it became very clear when I met her as to why. The interview started very uncomfortably, I felt like the participant wanted to opt out but at the same time wanted her story to be heard. I felt that she was very unhappy in ministry and regretted doing it. I also felt like she is unhappy that what she thought it took to be "ministry worthy" is not what she sees in her fellow ministers. I think according to her a minister is a pure and perfect person. When I probed further on this although uncomfortable to speak she indirectly criticized having children out of wedlock and alcohol consumption. Another observation that I made was that generally, she does not speak up for herself and always consults for support to voice out her opinion. This is strange for me because the position she holds is that of middle management, which in my opinion requires that she does not only speak up for herself but for those that she leads as well. Having said that I ask myself if the criteria currently used to put ministers in senior positions is empowering, window-dressing, or arranged to set up women ministers for failure.*

**5.5.2.2. Thrive - FTF 2** is a 39-year-old female with an Honours Degree in Theology and currently pursuing her master's in Theology. She is single and has no children of

her own. She was 31 years old when she was ordained. She was born and raised Lutheran. After maturing, she studied, qualified, and worked in a different industry here in South Africa and overseas making a good income and living very well. While working overseas and attending a different church and being very active in it, she felt that she was supposed to do God's work and not chase money. Also, whilst at this church a visiting pastor prophesied that she was called to minister. She started studying theology part-time and upon hearing that her father called on the bishop to let him know of her calling. From there fairly easily arrangements were made for her to start her theology studies full-time. This was not easy for her to accept that at some point she was depressed.

### **Personal Reflection:**

*I travelled more than 2 hours out of Durban to meet this young minister and as I was driving I noticed and reflected on the rural nature and under-resourced as well as the lack of social amenities for a young person in the area. I thought about the sacrifice that these young ministers make leaving their homes, city life, and lights to serve the church, and wondered if congregants ever think about that. When I arrived it was early evening and dark because it was winter and there was no street lighting in the area. When she came out from her parsonage to open the locks in the gate which is a bit far from the house, I saw vulnerability, I thought about all the gruesome things we read about that happen to women and I felt sorry for her. She lives alone in this modest church house and has running water and lights, I am not sure if it was load shedding or what but it felt cold, lonely, and scary but she looked comfortable in her space. I thought to myself "I will never do this". She has lived in big cities and even overseas and left it all for ministry. Once we started talking all went well as a master's student herself her responses were clear, and I could easily identify agency in her. After the interview, as I was leaving in the dark I felt for her, how she expressed her desire to have children and how hard it is to date in such an environment and my heart sank thinking how having a child has brought joy in my life and how she might not have that opportunity because of the double standards society places on women.*

**5.5.2.3. Doek - FTF3** is a 31-year-old female with a Bachelor's Degree in Theology. She is single and has a child. She was 30 years old when she was ordained. When she felt the calling her parish priest who was a man was very supportive. She also received support from her local congregation who passed on the resolution of support to the parish. The problem was at the parish level, there was resistance. Questions were raised about being a woman, being young, and even coming from a very humble

home background. She felt that others resisted because they did not believe that her family was worthy to have a priest. There were also talks and suspicions that she was going to drop out and they would lose their money. She felt that even at college male students looked down upon them as women although the lecturers treated them equally and sometimes to an extent favoured them as women by giving them opportunities. She feels they did this to assure them and give them confidence that they were worthy to be there. Other general people around the college also looked down upon them because of their young age.

***Personal Reflection:***

*This interview was light-hearted and very positive considering in my opinion that this young woman has faced gender-based discrimination from the church and as a result, her ordination got delayed from that of her peers. She was suspended without any income for falling pregnant out of wedlock while doing her ministerial training. Although she mentioned this in her interview I could tell that she has no ill feelings and is moving on in her ministry. But this means that she is now very junior to her peers in position and pay. I asked if there was a policy that she was privy to or which was referred to when she was suspended and there was none.*

**5.5.2.4. Makoti- FTF 4** is a 50-year-old female with a Bachelor's Degree in Theology, pursuing her honors. She is married and has no children of her own. She was 30 years old when she was ordained. She has worked in many parishes within ELCSA – SED both rural and urban parishes even English-speaking parishes. She grew up with a very religious grandmother, who was Anglican but got baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran Church because it was her grandmother's wish for her whole family to be Christians. When she passed away she was staying with the family of a priest, a relative, which made her journey to entering ministry fairly easy. She says her calling grew because when she applied for other jobs she was never accepted but when she applied to do Theology she was accepted instantly. Her immediate family did not want her to study theology.

***Personal Reflection:***

*There was a bit of discomfort at the start of the interview from both the participant and myself as the interview, which I believe was the uncertainty of how to cross the friendship bridge over to professional study. But as soon as I formalized the introductory remarks, it flowed. However, I felt that because the participant knew*

*that I had journeyed with her in her recent struggles, she did not provide me with rich narratives on those and I can unfortunately not add them myself and I could not ask leading questions. According to my observation, this priest has been hurt so much, that she has learned to mask her true hurt so she may be seen as tough. However, one can pick up the hurt in her voice as she gives her responses. All that she has endured has awakened her agency, she is fighting which now has been viewed in certain cases in bad light as though it is her fault or nature to want to fight. It is not seen as the fault of her perpetrators. I felt sad for her.*

### **5.5.3 Virtual Participants Interviews**

**5.5.3.1. Culture - VI 1** is a 37-year-old female with a Diploma in Theology. She is married and has a child. She was 32 years old when she was ordained. She first worked in the Central Diocese (ELCSA-CD) which is in Gauteng province although she is originally from ELCSA-SED Diocese. When she first felt the calling and shared it with her then-male minister, he fully supported her and other congregants and council but there were discouraging remarks about how was she going to get married if she became a minister.

#### ***Personal Reflection:***

*Although this was a virtual interview conducted via WhatsApp voice notes as well as texts, it was free and flowed with ease, whereas load shedding affected the session we paused and regrouped at a later stage. Her willingness to participate was evident and her responses showed. I felt good about the interview.*

**5.5.3.2. Dresscode - VI 2** is a 30-year-old female with a Diploma in Theology. She is married with children. She was not married when she was ordained into ministry. When she first mentioned her calling she did not get support, there were remarks that she was forward, she was not going to make it and whilst studying there were constant remarks about when was she going to finish her studies. There was a young age issue raised as well.

#### ***Personal Reflection:***

*Engaging with the participant in preparation for the interview showed me the difficulties of being married with children whilst in ministry as a woman. Our initial face-to-face interview did not materialize because of the demands of ministry work and the second attempt was because she had no nanny and was taking care of two toddlers whilst also doing her ministry work. However, she was committed to*

*participating and we opted for virtual WhatsApp where she was able to respond when she had free time and I would ask follow-up questions and wait. It took a few days but it was a good interview.*

**5.5.3.3. Flourish – VI3** is a 50+-year-old female, she is not married and has no children of her own. She first studied, qualified, and worked in a different field before leaving and then studied and graduated with her Bachelor of Theology and was ordained the same year. She served in two Parishes before she became the first woman to hold the office of Dean in the Northern Diocese(ELCSA-ND) in 2021 consecrated as the first woman bishop of the ELCSA-ND and in 2022 the first woman Deputy to the Presiding Bishop of ELCSA.

***Personal Reflection:***

*This interview also changed its format many times, from virtual to face-to-face and back to virtual because of the position of the participant in ELCSA which has added responsibilities that included inter-provincial as well as international travels. The interview was on WhatsApp and the participant was very free and forthcoming with her responses. I was pleasantly surprised by this as I expected a bit of defensiveness for someone holding a high position in ELCSA. even if they are a woman minister. It left me feeling optimistic about my study.*

## **5.6 Interview Responses**

### **5.6.1 What constitutes the ministerial landscape of ELCSA and what is the institutional context of women in ELCSA?**

Here the study sought to find out from participants what they understood ministry to be at ELCSA and if their experiences on the ground align with their understanding and expectations from the time they heeded the calling up to the present experiences. 3 out of 7 shared similar sentiments about the start of their journey that the initial reaction was being questioned, doubted, and not fully supported. They were questioned about marriage, and age and even talked about behind their back that they were being forward, they were not going to make it, they were going to fall pregnant or they would drop out and it would have been a waste to invest in them. The reactions were based on socio-cultural constructions of gender roles which are patriarchal and heteronormative. These have found home in religious spaces due to the colonial influence of missionaries who brought religion to our shores with

narratives that did not give women leadership roles in the church. These are some of the responses from the participants themselves:

*“My application was held back by the congregational council without any explanation until the bishop who knew about my intentions to study intervened and asked for it” (Ngane, 26 May 2023)*

*“ There has never been another woman minister to come out of my congregation after me because I never got support’(Ngane, 26 May 2023)*

*“ I think they undermined the family that I came from because we did not have money and said I will drop out and waste money” (Doek, 23 June 2023)*

*“They asked how I was going to find a husband” (Culture, 26 July 2023)*

Those who got accepted easily because they had influential men behind them for example

*“I was staying with a family of a priest, a relative of my mother.” (Makoti, 24 August 2023)*

*“ When I told my father that I had started studying theology overseas where I was working, he stopped me from going back and called the bishop to let him know that I have a calling and he wanted me to study locally. Arrangements were quickly made for me to start my theology studies at LTI/UKZN.” (Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

Besides not being received with enthusiasm at the beginning of their journey, these women continued to face patriarchal forces even after they started their ministry. They feel looked down upon and not held in the same esteem as their men minister counterparts. They also feel that their ill-treatment and lack of support have a negative influence on attracting young girls into ministry.

*The way we are treated, even when there are positions, we are last to be considered, we are not seen as fit candidates, not just us as women ministers even congregants who are women are not voted into positions even where they would have excelled. – (Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

*When I first arrived back at ELCSA-SED at the parish where I was appointed, I was chased away on arrival by a congregant, demanding that first there must be a council meeting to review the letter of my placement. (Ngane, 26 May 2023)*

*No one takes you seriously even at church they speak to you anyhow, look down upon you, no dignity/no respect which equals that of a married woman. I am seen as a child, equal to someone's wife. (Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

### **5.6.2 What is the experience of women in ministry in ELCSA that informs/inhibits flourishing?**

This question sought to establish if the environment is conducive and supportive for women ministers to do their ministry, bring in new ideas, grow, and flourish. The responses illustrated yet again that their struggle continues, they need to be seen as forceful and they need to grow a thick skin to survive. Even when they have done that they felt it was still not enough to get them recognition instead their men minister counterparts are still favored.

*“I was not supported and I have seen the type of support given to men who joined the ministry after I joined. “(Ngane, 26 May 2023)*

*“It can cause low self-esteem, no motivation to perform your duties, and feeling inadequate and useless,” (Dresscode, 28 August 2023)*

*“If you are not strong in your convictions you can even question your calling, in others, it causes low self-confidence even the girls in that area would never think of becoming priests even if they are called because they witness such treatment of women priests” (Doek, 23 June 2023)*

### **5.6.3 What are the themes/structures/issues identified by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in ELCSA?**

This question sought to establish if some policies or programs support women ministers to work well and succeed and also to find solutions to any gaps that participants may have identified. And their responses showed a lack of policies and an inconsistency in programs. Furthermore, it highlighted a lack of comradeship and support amongst women ministers in helping each other grow. They pointed out that they needed support from senior women ministers as they look up to them as big sisters but they do not get it.

*“I think women ministers need special consideration, where we are placed to work because in other places you might arrive and not be accepted.” (Makoti, 24 August 2023)*

*“More than 10 years after my ordination I am still the only woman priest to have come out of her congregation/parish/area.” (Ngane, 26 May 2023).*

*“We are wounded as women ministers, I am very much affected by this, such that even when I get chosen to new/other positions I am no longer eager or interested because I am wounded I also was not able to continue with my studies because of these wounds “(Makoti, 24 August 2023)*

*“There was a fellowship for women ministers which gave a chance for women empowerment.” (Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

*“I think it is still lacking, academically we are well covered through our feminist theology training but spiritually we are not covered. We do not need to study in a book for this, we need to sit down and talk to each other and heal each other.” (Culture, 26 July 2023)*

*“We need to be provided with a space to talk and be healed because we are wounded healers and this causes cracks in the church.” (Culture, 26 July 2023)*

*“ELCSA leadership should have an intentional program for the empowerment of women ministers as well as women at large in the church.”(Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

*“Have more women ministers in key leadership positions in the Diocese, respect the authority of the minister even if they are female (Dresscode, 28 August 2023)*

### **5.7 Challenges in Data Collection**

Some scheduled meetings or appointments were canceled because some study participants had busy schedules due to their pastoral duties as well as events such as church conferences. To mitigate this challenge, the researcher sent structured questionnaires and conducted follow-ups through WhatsApp and Voicenotes. The attenuation strategy used has the advantage of being precise, recording data, and performing monitoring. Also, it was not always easy to get the participants to respond to every sub-question, and in such cases, I opted to leave responses unclear to avoid over-explaining and influencing their responses. This will be evident in the next chapters’ data presentation and analysis. Interview notes recordings and WhatsApp responses will be stored in a Google Drive where the study supervisor and I will have password-protected access until it is disposed of in 5 years.

### **5.8 Conclusion**

From the participant’s responses, it can be deduced that ELCSA as a religious space within which these women ministry practice their ministerial duties is highly heteronormative and patriarchal, second it has no policies in place to protect the human rights and dignity of its employees who are ministers against abuse by its clients who are congregants, it also has no program to ensure women empowerment and gender equity. Third, the systematic silencing of women ministers has disempowered them to mentor, lead, and support each other, and thus women in

ELCSA need to relearn their place in the church and be empowered to voice out and participate in decision-making. The next chapter will then draw on these themes Heteronormativity and Cultural Expectations, Solidarity and support, Perspective of flourishing, and Policies and Programmes, to analyze and make study conclusions and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 6: –DATA ANALYSIS

### 6.1 Introduction

The research aimed to seek answers to these three research questions: What constitutes the ministerial landscape of ELCSA and what is the institutional context of Women in ELCSA, what is the experience of women in ministry in ELCSA that informs/inhibits flourishing? And what are the themes/structures, and issues identified by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in ELCSA? This was done to respond to the question: What insights could be drawn from the embodied lived experiences of women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that could inform enable and enhance the flourishing of women in ministry? With the help of the interview schedule, participants readily led insightful conversations and the themes that emerged from their responses as mentioned in the preceding chapter were *Heteronormativity and Cultural Expectations, Solidarity and support, Perspective of flourishing, and Policies and Programmes.*

The theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter three will be used in this chapter to interpret the findings and put them with the body of prior research discussed in chapter two. It will evaluate the information gathered from the interviews to see if the research questions have been answered adequately, emphasizing unexpected and important findings. The study used African Women's Theology and Ecclesiology as its theoretical frameworks to explore the experiences of African women in their faith community which is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA). The study highlighted the historical role of women in post-colonial and post-missionary Africa, their economic disadvantages, and the influence of religion on poverty, racism, and exploitation. The study aimed to understand the evolution of spirituality, religion, and culture within these communities. (Oduyoye, 2001.) Second, Feminist ecclesiology analyses Christian church practices using feminist theory and theological hermeneutics. It aims to address common church issues and promote inclusion, recognizing the gifts God has bestowed upon all, including women, men, and children. This approach goes beyond studying and discussing the church from an African perspective by focusing on the true meaning of being a church. (Husbands and Treier 1998) (Rakoczy, 2004) (Mulambya-Kabonde, 2014).

## 6.2 Heteronormativity and Cultural Expectations

Heteronormativity is the belief that institutionalized heterosexuality is the norm for acceptable social, cultural, and sexual arrangements, that is both an omnipresent and inherent category in social existence. Heterosexuality has mostly been opaque, unchallenged, and unproblematized despite its reliance on homosexuality as a category (Ingraham, 1996; Katz, 1995; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1993a, 1994a; Richardson, 1996, 2000). Because heterosexuality is "now you see it" and "now you don't," it eludes serious examination. Even though humans experience the world through their bodies, which enact cultural and religious norms and values. This gendered script supports the systemic ideology of heteropatriarchy. (Van der Walt, C. and Davids, H.R., 2022) Studying this ideology helps us understand the systemic realities and methods of heteropatriarchy. Reformed ethicist Nico Koopman proposed a three-step analysis method for an ethical response to racism. Koopman's ideosystemic analytic approach is used to examine heteropatriarchy as an ideology in structures and religions. Similar to racism, heteropatriarchy creates specific images or notions of how to react to, comprehend, and organize reality, which is deeply ingrained in systems of power centered on politics and economy. Koopman argues that theological arguments, particularly in religious texts, are used to carry out ideology. (Koopman. N.N., 2013) Heteropatriarchy is the fundamental idea that forms the basis of normalcy measuring tools. It combines patriarchy and the demand for heterosexuality or heteronormativity. Feminist theorists refer to the system of male supremacy as patriarchy. Feminism challenges the patriarchal gender paradigm, which classifies male and female bodies based on biological characteristics. It aims to liberate women from all forms of oppression, challenging the dominant and "normal" sexual orientations through conventions and belief systems. Feminism does not support women's privilege over males or any particular group, race, or class of women. (Van der Walt, C., and Davids, H.R., 2022 The text advocates for structural change in various areas, challenging our social, cultural, political, and religious traditions through a new consciousness and altered perspective. (Ackermann, D.M., 1993) Heteropatriarchy is based on heterosexuality, which codes the body into a binary system of male or female roles. In patriarchal societies, women are positioned at the bottom of the hierarchy and hold authority with men's permission. Cisgender bodies, acting based on their birth reality, are primary beneficiaries of this system, as they conform to the body's assumed gender. The socialization of bodies through

gender norms and roles is influenced by ideological heteropatriarchy, both consciously and unconsciously. Violence against marginalized bodies is not limited to specific experiences or society. In South Africa, religious communities uphold heteropatriarchy, often using faith to commit violence against weak and marginalized bodies. The Bible often hinders innovative investigations into gender and sexual diversity. Van der Walt argues that hetero-patriarchy is often manifested in Bible interpretations, leading to exclusion, discrimination, and violence. He argues that God ordained heterosexuality and gender complementarity through Genesis 1–3, Genesis 19, Judgment 19, Lev 18:22–20:13, Rom 1: 26–27, 1 Cor 6: 9–10, and 1 Tim 1:10.37, and this interpretation influences preaching, religious groups' rituals, missions, and pastoral care. (Van der Walt, C. and Davids, H.R., 2022) Discourses about gender identities significantly influence individual, cultural, and societal ideals of masculine and feminine identity, which are developed from a young age and shaped by social constructs. (Mayer. 2017). South Africa is a predominantly male-led country. (Morrell. 2012). Gendered history in South Africa is largely rooted in colonialism and apartheid, perpetuating patriarchal systems that excluded diverse genders and women. (Morrell & Swart, 2005). Traditionally, religious circles associate God with men/males, assuming this maleness is inherent to patriarchy and power systems that men have often benefited from. (van Klinken, 2017).

**Study participants have confirmed the existence of these ideologies in ELCSA through their lived experiences of the bible and the low status of women.**

*“Bible verses that speak of a woman in a bad light are used as one of the contributing factors to the challenges faced by women ministers in that people have a specific understanding of a woman and the role of the woman in cultural and social spaces and thus women are always on the back foot when it comes to ministry since it is difficult for some males to be led by a woman” (Dresscode, 28 August 2023)*

**Also, heterosexuality as an aspect of heteronormativity has disadvantaged women ministers and challenged and sanctioned their sexual reproductive rights over those of men.**

*When I fell pregnant I was suspended for 2 years without any consultation or counsel, you do not receive any financial support whilst on suspension. No policy was ever openly shared or taught about pregnancy in ministry. Yet women are*

*suspended but men who impregnate whilst studying or during ministry are not suspended. – (Doek, 23 June 2023)*

*Those in self-support are happily married and have children whereas in full-time ministry the majority are not married and have no children even if women want to have children unmarried, they get suspended but males who are impregnated never get suspended they continue normally. (Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

*“I feel I wasted my time joining the ministry early, I should have first lived my life, dated, or even had a child. I regret not having children before joining ministry because it is difficult to date, I have raised children of my late siblings but they too tell me that they will leave me when they start working” (Ngane, 26 May 2023).*

**And for these participants their initial application process was smooth because of the status of men in their lives who influenced the process, confirming that hetero-patriarchy is present in ELCSA.**

*“I was staying with a family of a priest, a relative of my mother.” (Makoti, 24 August 2023)*

*“ When I told my father that I had started studying theology overseas where I was working, he stopped me from going back and called the bishop to let him know that I have a calling and he wanted me to study locally. Arrangements were quickly made for me to start my theology studies at LTI/UKZN.” (Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

Traditional African family structures perpetuate discrimination against women in the workplace and church, viewing them solely as wives for child-rearing and child-bearing. In traditional African culture, educated women face male domination, leading to a significant gap in family roles and societal expectations, with women primarily caring for children. ELCSA's church structure involves male pastors handling pastoral duties and women organizations handling soft issues like prayers and solace, with lay women volunteering to legitimize their work. (Phaliso, 2012). The cultural tradition of women joining ministry was difficult to accept, despite the church's openness to their participation. Patriarchy is a male-dominated system of governance where the head of the family holds all power and authority. (Phiri, 2000) The text argues that patriarchy is a system of male authority that oppresses women

through its social, political, and economic institutions. (Humm,1995). The argument that women are gatekeepers of patriarchy has once been proven by the study's participants statement that:

*“After my degree, I did my internship at Emangweni Parish, women priests are not respected in that area. There were talks that they couldn't have a woman priest stand in front of men and instructing men. What I found strange was that these were women, not men. They would judge everything even my dress code and appearance including hairstyles and length of my dresses. (Dresscode, 28 August 2023)*

Men's greater access and influence over authority systems, both inside and outside the house, gives patriarchy its power, a concept attributed to various theologians. According to Webber (1978), Men held the power of governance in society due to their position as head of household. (Phaliso, 2012). Six (6) out of seven (7) participants in one way of expressed or associated how they were treated or their reaction towards their calling with being women. They also shared the same perception that generally it is not yet easily accepted to see women as ministers in many areas they have worked at in ELCSA-SED. They have to constantly prove themselves to both men and women each time they arrive in a new post.

Responses illustrated explicitly that cultural expectations are systematically still active in ELCSA. One of the reasons that may be deducted from the study to explain why ELCSA continues to be patriarchal in its culture might be that the ill-treatment of women ministers has made them remain the minority in full-time ministry as the rest do not follow in their footsteps because of fear, as stated by one participant. Considering someone to be a minority is one of the main ways that someone can be called a subordinate. A minority is defined as "a group of people who, in the society in which they live, are singled out from others for differential and unequal treatment because of their physical or cultural characteristics and who, as a result, regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination" (Wirth 1945:347). Although participants all believe that ministry is a calling, there is a systematic patriarchal culture of doubt instilled on these women from the time of their calling, throughout their studies up to now as they try to work where they are placed.

As a recently ordained minister with a child out of wedlock, I had not considered the issue of sexual reproductive rights versus church and cultural tradition and expectations on women ministers who were ordained before they had children and

are still not married. Both participants who brought this up were very emotional and affected and challenged by this topic. This was mainly because as a member of the church I have had experience of male ministers having children having illegitimate children but continuing with their ministry.

*“It is an office where we are called to serve full-time. But as women ministers we are forced to sacrifice, no choice is given. “we want to get married and have children”. It is painful, we are getting old and have no children, and we can’t even choose to have children out of wedlock for fear of how the church will treat us. Yet as a woman I feel incomplete, I wish to have children like every woman wishes for someone to say “Mah” but I am deprived by imithetho yebandla (rules of the church).” - (Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

*It is a spiritual journey between a person and God. It is difficult for another person to understand. – (Culture 26 July 2023)*

*It is a service to the church. It entails preaching, teaching, worship, pastoral care, and administration – (Dresscode28 August 2023)*

In Africa, women, marriage, and motherhood constitute an unbroken continuum, sexuality and the relationship of men and women in marriage being treated with double standards where self-discipline is expected from only women. The study also revealed this double standard in two ways: first, one participant believed she was treated unfairly when she became pregnant and was suspended without cause; second, she believed that her ordination was delayed because she was single, while men who impregnated women did not receive the same treatment. Second, two single people stated their dissatisfaction with not being able to have children despite not being married. Although sexuality is an essential aspect of being human and not a luxury, it is a topic that is flagrantly disregarded, which has an impact on women ministers who are childless and unmarried. Women pastors are unable to celebrate their sexuality because of the double standards around how sexuality is handled. Some have even voiced fear of dating because they fear being criticized and wonder how they would find suitable partners and husbands. Although it affects women ministers more than men, sexuality and its expression are perceived as evil. Although it should be recognized as a component of everyone's humanity and spirituality, the church has regrettably decided that it is not a problem. This raises the issue of sexual reproductive rights for women priests versus issues of morality, a safe space must be

provided to address these issues, they are so central to flourishing that participants have even contemplated leaving ministry to have the freedom to bear children without judgment. (Kanyoro & Oduyoye, 2006).

### 6.3 Solidarity and Support

Connell, R.W. (2002) and Thatcher, A. (2011) Gender is a social construct defining individuals based on biological differences, assigned roles through mass media, sports, family, and social restrictions enforced by power figures. Despite significant progress in deconstructing primitive gender concepts, an attempt has been made. Avishai, O. 2016, A symposium paper discusses the marginalization of women feminist sociologists in studying gender and religion, highlighting the neglect and ambivalence of studying religion. Despite this, they persevered, studying women's experiences using gender and feminist theories of difference and empowerment. Feminist scholars expanded their focus from studying women to understanding gender as a social institution shaped by power, privilege, inequality, and social structures. Avishai's paper highlights the often secondary and undermined issues faced by women, potentially contributing to the delayed transformation of the church in terms of women's leadership.

*“There are expectations on how you should behave and talk, failing which you will be judged.” (Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

*“When I was first ordained I was not appointed within the ELCSA-SED diocese until I had to move and work in the Eastern diocese, although the bishop of ELCSA-SED was aware that due to ill health, I needed to be nearer to home within ELCSA-SED and health facilities. I was helped to fight to return to the diocese and be next to health facilities by another bishop.” (Ngane, 26 May 2023).*

*There are no policies – gender equity reference should be given to women, especially in the upcoming elections. Women can't do it on their own, leadership needs to enforce it. (Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

*We are wounded but it looks like it is business as usual, as if it is not known that we are wounded yet it is known. Besides retreats, there should be a way to make women ministers feel safe. There is a culture in which women ministers are abused, if nothing is done a person can die. I have even considered leaving the ministry. – (Makoti, 24 August 2023)*

Christianity has through the colonialist mindset which sought to erase African religion and spirituality instead of aligning and integrating it contributed to the inhibiting lived experiences of these women ministers. This has created a barrier and further marginalised them, this hindered the advancement of these women ministers. In the majority of the study participants' workplaces, it appears that dualism was practiced, and as religion largely avoids public scrutiny, it has also avoided being held accountable for human rights crimes against these women ministers. African traditional norms are still hierarchical, there is no equality. The Christian religion has persuaded individuals to relinquish their responsibility for their own lives and place them in "God's hands," hence it has become difficult for women priests to speak up for themselves due to the dualism of Christianity and Zulu culture, (Kanyoro & Oduyoye, 2006).

Phaliso, argues that the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Southern Africa (ELCSA) considers the subject of gender inequality to be peculiar. The presence of several ministries involving both men and women in the church has prevented free discussion of the hegemonic systems of patriarchy and kyriarchy at this time. This institution's enduring patriarchal and kyriarchal institutions, practices, and culture continue to be a challenge and a fact that many women and men experience. The direction and dedication towards providing women with space and assistance still boil down to simple propriety. Phaliso, further asserts that being voiceless might be something you choose because you lack confidence, or it can be something that others who are more self-assured and powerful than you do to other people. The unsaid language of those without voices in their life, who rely on others to convey their messages, is known as the voices of the voiceless. Either the messages are misinterpreted and misrepresented when they get to their destination, or they never arrive at all. Responses of the study participants confirmed the above Phaliso when they commented that although there are opportunities for women, the resistance needs someone confident and will forge ahead and prove themselves. Why is there a need to forge ahead in a fight? Why are there no policies and teaching that will ensure that regarding one's personality and fighting spirit ELCSA is just a safe space for women ministers to flourish?

One of the participants said that she was told to stop her quest to confront her abuser by her co-workers, and her voice was silenced. The world preaches liberation, freedom, and a better life for all, but many countries and organizations still oppress

the voiceless, such as women, children, and some unimportant men. Not having a voice breeds resentment and secrecy among oppressed people. Fear of being identified as unruly leads to a lack of credibility, making this dangerous for all roleplayers. (Phaliso,)

*“I wanted to ask him what I did to him for him to hate me so much and they said I must leave him, it will not help anything” – (Ngane, 26 May 2023).*

Fanusie posits that a fully human person is interconnected socially, spiritually, vocationally, and physically. They interact, share virtues, and work in obedience to God's will. Physically, they reproduce and identify according to sex. All dimensions influence our lived experiences and flourishing. (Kanyoro & Oduyoye, 2006).

Participants expressed concerns about their positions as well as their placement because no consideration is made for their vulnerability as women, especially as unmarried women ministers. Most participants do not feel valued or even their skills recognised but they just forge ahead and prove themselves.

#### **6.4 Perspective on Personal Flourishing.**

As discussed in earlier chapters, the human flourishing method, created by political theorist Martha Nussbaum, aligns with United Nations ideals and philosophical concepts. It seeks to determine if individuals have access to valuable opportunities to engage in activities. To assess flourishing, individuals are asked four questions: satisfaction with their current state, happiness, and worry, and their belief in the worthiness of their life activities. Anand's analysis of resources, despite assuming financial sufficiency, also highlights the importance of social resources for flourishing. (Anand, 2016.) This is the basis on which the study will provide the participant's perspective on their flourishing, it will also draw on what in their environments and lived experiences informs their perspectives as elaborated below by scholarly contribution on the subject.

Weston, A. (1992) suggests that during the "original stages" of cultural values alterations, proponents should support and accommodate new moral concepts and practices. Discussing useful concepts for resolving social/ecological challenges is crucial for understanding the linkages between feminist, postcolonial, and environmentalist ethics and politics. While terms like flourishing represent achievable objectives, they don't define an ultimate standard. Morality should not be solely based on rights, caring, or virtue, but can be approached in various ways,

including ecological feminism. People are social beings, and the health of nature is linked to human flourishing. This perspective acknowledges that instrumental and non-instrumental values are interconnected and that diverse values and motivations create moral life. Moral worth is relational and exclusively involves living things and systems. It raises questions about moral agency and flourishing from the standpoint of unfreedom among beings. This perspective is based on liberal individualist assumptions and ignores the extent to which autonomy is rendered impossible by unfreedom. Therefore, an ethical framework promoting moral agency should value integrity and autonomy. Feminism advocates for the revision of values, practices, and institutions that deny women's full agency and moral consideration of nonhuman life, promoting domination and oppression. It asserts that women and others are full moral agents, should eliminate oppression, and minimally consider all living things and systems. (Cuomo, C.J., 1999)

These scholars' arguments support the importance of one's viewpoint and interpretation of flourishing, one's morals, and what one values about those people in their context or environment who may or not enhance or inhibit their flourishing. The study found that participants' perspectives, within the ELCSA landscape have inhibited women ministers' sexual reproductive rights as well as freedom of association by punishing their behavior more than they punish men and this has caused unhappiness and regret in choosing ministry. Also, their perception of ELCSA congregants is that of the rejection of women's ministry and the authority of the priesthood on women. These psycho-social factors have been highlighted by scholars such as Naussbaum as important to flourish. Some of the comments made by participants were:

*"Women ministers are forced to sacrifice, no choice is given. "we want to get married and have children". It is painful, we are getting old and having no children, we can't even choose to have children out of wedlock for fear of how the church will treat us. Yet as a woman I feel incomplete, I wish to have children like every woman wishes for someone to say "Mah" but I am deprived by imithetho yebandla." (Thrive, 14 June 2023)*

*"We as women ministers are never given important tasks when there is an event at the diocesan level, have you ever seen a women minister do a bible study or lead Eucharist on their own at that level" (Dresscode -28 August 2023)*

*“It was exciting to become the first female dean. The ordinary congregants were welcoming, the leadership of the Prayer Woman’s League was non-receptive, non-cooperative and non-supportive” (Flourish – 6 September 2023)*

*“More than 10 years after my ordination I am still the only woman priest to have come out of her congregation/parish/area. The hardships that I experience in ministry discourage women from my area from wanting to join the ministry.” (Ngane, 26 May 2023).*

*“Males think they are better called than women, they think they are more trusted than us but these days having a female pastor is safer” (Culture, 26 July 2023)*

These are systematic realities of how the patriarchal culture of the context where the study participants live their ministry perceives them as women and these are the perceptions women ministers have about the landscape of ELCSA where they live their ministry. Next, I am going to look at what could be done through the theme that emerged, which is the lack or non-implementation of policies and empowerment programs.

### **6.5 Policies and Programmes.**

Christian salvation is a priority for God, and Christians are obligated to serve others. Christian freedom is derived from freedom from patriarchal societal structures, as God alone is responsible for our lives. Addressing sexism and patriarchy is essential for Christian service. Christians are free from patriarchal societal demands due to God's control over life, but their neighborly service must critically examine sexism and patriarchy to ensure gender justice and equality. (Streufert, M.J.) Streufert argues that according to Rosemary Radford Ruether, a feminist theologian, sin is a social-historical, interpersonal, and cultural issue, based on Luther's contradictory perspective on faith and relationships, including patriarchy and sexism. From a Lutheran perspective, combating sexism requires more than just showing respect; it involves a theological reorientation and symbolic rearranging of understanding of sex, gender, and sexuality. This action benefits people of all gender identities, including men, women, girls, queer, and nonbinary people. "Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Call to Action" emphasizes the importance of Christians addressing systems, including institutional, social, symbolic, and religious. It suggests an intersectional analysis, focusing on the intricate interactions of oppression systems, is

the only effective way to achieve this theology. Womanists, Latinx, mujerista, queer, Black, and liberation theologians are long-standing scholars who analyze and organize techniques focusing on race, class, nationality, ability, gender, and sexuality. (Crenshaw, K.,1989) Christian denominational organizations and educational establishments are systems that must address systemic inequities in areas such as employment practices, remuneration, harassment and violence rules, classroom pedagogy, and academic citation. Administrators are obligated to evaluate responses to sexual assault and harassment from a Christ-centered perspective. Hence the development and resolution for the adoption and implementation of the 2013 Gender Justice Policy of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) of which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (ELCSA) is a member church. The policy mandates each church member to undertake their own contextualized work, with the recent social statement serving as an example of this. However, it was unfortunate that during the interviews when participants were questioned about themes/structures/issues that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in ELCSA, not even one participant mentioned or viewed this policy as a tool that could advance their liberation as women ministers and enhance their flourishing.

If the LWF Gender Justice Policy is silent in ELCSA, what policies or programs are there for women ministers. ELCSA constitution perhaps? Mashiane (2025) analyzed the constitution of ELCSA against the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights. First, he highlighted that the constitution of ELCSA was developed and adopted during the Apartheid regime when the Bill of Rights and the South African Constitution were not yet effected. He further argued that even the revised church constitution still did not consider the supremacy of the constitution of South Africa, the Bill of Rights, and other employee/employer-relevant legislation that was introduced in the new dispensation. Furthermore, he argued that the ELCSA constitution does not provide clear power and accountability to the bishops. I assert that these ambiguities provide a scapegoat for ELCSA to account for some of the abuse reported by women ministers which was committed against them by male congregants and colleagues. ELCSA should be cognizant that as a registered entity it be sued as a legal person. Mashiane (2025) also argued that how disputes are handled violate the Labour Relations Act of 1995 as well as the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. During the course of the study, one was not able to find evidence of the existence of employment equity which the government requires from all entities operating in the country to show how they plan to empower and promote women to senior positions. This would have been an important tool to guide ELCSA and ensure

that women ministers' flourishing is intentional, ensured, and accounted for. What the study participants also revealed and Mashiane also collaborates is that the church system has got no regard or impetus to hear the voices of its employees. One participant expressed her frustration on how her colleagues stopped her from confronting her abuser, yet nothing was done to create a space for them to talk.

*“No intervention was made when I was antagonized by congregants, there were just talks regarding the incident amongst congregants and other ministers, the dean who is my superior promised that it was going to be dealt with but nothing ever happened. When other pastors enquired they were shut down by the response that it was being handled. It never received any formal support/attention from higher levels of the church even though it was known. I would have loved to see the perpetrator being formally disciplined but instead, it was business as usual, not even an apology was demanded. This is the financially powerful family in the church perhaps that was the reason not to discipline them.” (Ngane, 26 May 2023).*

Another participant also expressed how difficult it was for her when she was suspended for two years without pay for falling pregnant out of wedlock before she was ordained. This delayed her ordination and has since affected her seniority versus that of her men and women counterparts with whom she completed her studies.

*When I fell pregnant I was suspended for 2 years without any consultation or counsel, you do not receive any financial support whilst on suspension. No policy was ever openly shared or taught about pregnancy in ministry. Yet women are suspended but men who impregnate whilst studying or during ministry are not suspended. – (Doek, 23 June 2023)*

This Mashiane(2005) argues is a direct contradiction of paragraph 18.2 of the ELCSA constitution which gives provision for people accused or charged of misconduct to be given a chance to present their defense or mitigation. Mashiane urges the church to develop a disciplinary code that clearly states offences and their respective penalties as this is prescribed by item 4 of schedule 8 of the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 as the current constitution makes no provision for such. The study also revealed that for some of the participants expressing their interest in joining the ministry, there were unexplained delays by their councils as well as unsavory remarks about them being young, unmarried, and women. This happens in ELCSA because Paragraph 4.2.3 of the ELCSA constitution stipulates that, whilst in training and probation, one must convince the church of one's suitability for the

office without explicitly explaining or putting terms of suitability, this opens up an opportunity for ministers to be abused and discriminated against by congregants who possess no qualification to make such decisions. This was a very sensitive topic for me to cover as I had experienced similar abuse in my journey towards ordination. I still leave with remnants of the pain especially because now as their ordained minister, I have to serve these congregants as if they never abused me. This is traumatic for me as a women minister, psychology has affected my self-esteem, causing me anxiety by always thinking that I am being watched and judged.

The study deducted from participants' responses the lack, inadequacy, and even absence of vital policies, procedures, and empowerment that might have otherwise aided their lived experience and protected them from cultural, traditional, patriarchal, and gender abuse. This is from the treatment they experience in the hands of male congregants, senior male colleagues, or male counterparts. This theme illustrates what God says about these atrocities and also provides a glimpse of the gaps in the ELCSA constitution which if addressed might enhance the flourishing of women priests. Participants also expressed how women empowerment programs are an event instead of being a permanent tool to empower them as well as encourage support amongst them.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored four key themes: Heteronormativity and Cultural Expectations, Solidarity and Support, Perspectives on Flourishing, and Policies and Programs. These themes were identified through interviews with study participants, and scholarly opinions were provided to enhance understanding. The final chapter will offer conclusions drawn from the study's findings and provide recommendations aimed at assisting the ELCSA church in making meaningful changes to address gender and social injustices. The goal is to create a safe and supportive environment where women ministers can thrive in their roles.

## CHAPTER 7: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Introduction

In January 2024, social media was ablaze with women's agencies pushing back against statements made by two celebrities who used culture and religion to insult women who have children out of wedlock, as well as men who marry these women. The statements made by these two gentlemen, trending as "Isintu sithi..." (meaning culture dictates that...), illustrate how culture and religion are used to abuse, disrespect, and subjugate women. Neither the statements by these gentlemen nor any formal endorsement of them as part of Zulu culture or their religion can be found. Additionally, neither representatives/custodians of Zulu culture nor elders of their church came forward to defend these statements. Without women mobilizing and fighting back, demanding an apology, these statements could have systematically slipped through and become yet another tool of systematic patriarchy that women are subjected to.

It is evident that religion and culture, as forms of systematic patriarchal behaviors, establish the contextual tone of the type of male congregants and colleagues with whom the study participants, the women ministers, navigate their ministry within ELCSA-SED, predominantly influenced by Zulu culture. I bring this to light to underscore the significance of Feminism and the African Woman Theoretical Framework utilized in the study to amplify the voices of women ministers. This narrative reveals the unity of women in challenging these patriarchal norms, leading to apologies and even the loss of certain endorsements and financial benefits. Without women sharing their stories, men may fabricate narratives under the guise of cultural norms. May this research study inspire the agency to deconstruct and transform ELCSA-SED into a space that promotes the flourishing of women priests. The purpose of the study was to investigate what insights could be drawn from the embodied lived experiences of women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that could inform enable and enhance the flourishing of women in ministry.

These are the research questions that were answered:

1. What constitutes the ministerial landscape of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese and what is the institutional context of

women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese?

2. What is the experience of women in ministry in Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that informs/inhibits flourishing?
3. What are the themes/structures/issues identified by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese?

## **7.2 Summary of Chapters**

In chapter one I introduced the purpose of the study whilst introducing my positionality in the context of the study. I developed a poem that gives an overview of my lived experience from childhood up to the present where I am now an ordained minister. This chapter provided the rationale behind the hermeneutic of suspicion which drove the study. The then absence of women ministers in my context, the gendered abuse that I have witnessed from afar of those I eventually saw in my adulthood as ministers, and my journey in entering ministry all contributed to seeking answers and the desire to bring change if needed. I also introduced African Womans Theology and Ecclesiology as theoretical frameworks for the study as I sought to illuminate women ministers' voices as well as influence the church to change its narrative and where their place women. Furthermore, I introduced phenomenology as the research methodology which allowed in-depth interviews as the participants' number was low.

The literature reviewed in chapter two started by setting the scene for defining flourishing in religion, how it can be achieved and measured, and how this definition will provide background to the study. It further allowed for the review of the landscape of women's ministry in church at large, in Southern Africa, in South Africa, in other denominations as well as in the the Lutheran Church. It also introduced the AWT theoretical framework as the extension of feminism and how this is influenced by gender and thus patriarchy.

In chapter three theoretical frameworks were explained in detail and different scholars who have contributed in their development like Oduyoye, Nadar, Phiri, and others were explored to examine how their contribution can aid in understanding the lived experiences of these women. Last the doctrines of the church were explored and the participation and acceptance of women.

Chapter four looked at how the methodology of data collection was going to assist in finding answers to the research goals and objectives as well as in answering the research questions. It also gave justification for the type of fieldwork research methodology, the qualitative technique, and why the purposive sampling of 7 women ministers is appropriate.

Chapter five mainly presented the data which was collected through individual interviews which were face-to-face with some participants and virtual with others. The data collected and presented was a result of a process that took several months due to the nature of the ministry and the timing of scheduling the interviews. I gained a lot of insight, connected with empathy with many of the issues that came out of the interview but most importantly some of my suspicions were confirmed and this process awakened a stronger agency for gender justice within me.

The purpose of chapter six was to find linkages, patterns, and correlations between the data by considering the responses to see if they confirm the research hypotheses, putting study results in the context of earlier research and theory, describing unexpected outcomes, and assessing their importance taking into account potential competing theories and advancing the study's thesis

Last, chapter seven is the summary, recommendations, and conclusion of the study against the research problem and questions as well as key findings.

### **7.3 Key Findings**

The research question and sub-questions of the study have been answered through the participant's responses during the data collection process.

**7.3.1 What insights could be drawn from the embodied lived experiences of women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that could inform enable and enhance the flourishing of women in ministry?** From engaging with women ministers in ELCSA it was evident that their current lived experiences do not enable or enhance the flourishing of women in ministry. However, engaging with them can be used as a reflection tool for ELCSA to deconstruct systematic patriarchy and transform itself to be an environment that enables and enhances women to flourish in ministry.

Ministers are called wounded healers, it was evident and verbalized by the study participants that they are wounded healers who need ELCSA to heal them and that is an important step towards empowering a person to flourish. But as it is ELCSA on issues of women suffering can be said in the words of one participant “*business as usual*” (Ngane -29 May 2023)

**7.3.2 What constitutes the ministerial landscape of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese and what is the institutional context of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese?** ELCSA landscape according to the responses of participants is an environment that does not accept women ministers even though it has taken a resolution to ordain them and a few can be seen to be moving up the ladder in seniority in leadership. Study participants expressed being antagonized by men both congregants and fellow ministers and nothing being done about their abuse. ELCSA continues to align itself with mainstream liturgy as well as its interpretation and its lectionary still does not focus on scriptures that present women as equally important contributors to the kingdom of God. When women empowerment and gender inequality are addressed it is an event not an ongoing lasting programme of change.

**7.3.3 What is the experience of women in ministry in Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that informs/inhibits flourishing?**

Women ministers in the study have experienced rejection, abuse, and pushback in their ministry. They have mentioned that they continuously have to prove themselves and have strong convictions in wanting to introduce programs and new ideas in their workplaces and it is only after they have proven themselves that they are accepted. They have also mentioned that they are not offered opportunities to showcase their skills and talents, it is always male ministers who lead liturgy or eucharist. I have however noticed that there has been a shift in the events of the bishop to ensure gender equity, although in my experience at the circuit, where I work and where two of my study participants are from, gender equity is never ensured, it is a boys club, so much that some congregants have questioned us on why we do not actively participate in the leading liturgy. Even sermons and bible studies when allocated by the leadership office are given to ministers, women get a chance if they are specifically asked by the league to have an event.

**7.3.4 What are the themes/structures/issues identified by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese?** Participants identified that they are wounded and they need to heal and one of the tools they suggested was for women to support each through workshops tailor-made for them as well as leadership trainings and gender empowerment sessions. They expressed the need for such programs to be frequent and not a once-off as they had previously experienced. They also want women ministers to be given priority if there are funded programs by the Lutheran World Federation and Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa. Last, women were concerned that women in senior positions distance themselves from younger women when they should be mentoring and empowering them in a Bigsister/Littlesister kind of way.

#### **7.4 Recommendations**

The research sought to find insights that could be drawn from the embodied lived experiences of women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that could inform enable and enhance the flourishing of women in ministry. By examining the ministerial landscape and the institutional context of women ministers of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa-South Eastern Diocese (ELCSA – SED). As the African Women’s Theological framework dictates, stories of the experience of women in ministry were heard and themes/structures/issues were found. All of this interaction brought the conclusion that the landscape of ELCSA-SED inhibits the flourishing of women ministers by not providing support through intentional teaching, by not having clear gender policies as well as women empowerment programs to support women ministers as well as protect them from being abused by congregants.

Recommendations to address these research questions read thus **“What constitutes the ministerial landscape of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese and what is the institutional context of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese?”** and **” What is the experience of women in ministry in Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that informs/inhibits flourishing?”**

According to the study, African patriarchal culture has a significant impact on how women priests are treated. This is because women are not always allowed to fully

exercise their leadership roles in parishes, where traditional gender roles still dictate that men should hold positions of authority and leadership within religious institutions. Women now face obstacles to their progress in the priesthood as a result, as their gender may be viewed as secondary or less significant for leadership positions.

Second, the study found that patriarchal norms thwart attempts to question conventional gender roles and norms inside religious organizations, meaning that the environment at ELCSA-SED remains resistant to change. The patriarchal mindset continues to oppose any efforts to promote women's equality in the clergy or their promotion into leadership positions.

Third, conventional gender roles that designate males as leaders and decision-makers are frequently reinforced by heteronormative societal norms. Consequently, the research participants face opposition and skepticism from men and women who follow these standards, which affects their influence and acceptance in their parishes or congregations.

Fourth, rather than taking the time and making the commitment to solve it, the societal norms around women's duties as homemakers and caretakers are utilized to gaslight experienced women pastors' emotions of abuse and contempt. This has discouraged other young ladies from entering the priesthood.

Therefore, it is crucial and advised that ELCSA take into account the intersecting realities that study participants have brought up regarding their treatment in the organization's ministerial landscape and look for solutions, all the while acknowledging the significance of culture and making sure that the treatment of women ministers within ELCSA is unaffected by their gender. It is also advised that the Gender Justice Policy of the Lutheran World Federation be put into practice as a movement and a tool that may promote gender equality and the participation of women pastors in leadership positions, despite the effect of patriarchal culture. This initiative can leverage religious teachings to confront patriarchal interpretations and advocate for a more inclusive treatment of genders in the priesthood. Despite previous attempts within ELCSA to challenge patriarchal norms and advance gender equality, progress has been gradual due to deeply ingrained cultural beliefs and social norms. Bringing about substantial change necessitates ongoing efforts in advocacy, education, and engagement with clergy, lay leaders, and congregants alike.

Recommendations in response to these two questions **“What insights could be drawn from the embodied lived experiences of women ministers in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese that could inform enable and enhance the flourishing of women in ministry?”** and **“What are the themes/structures/issues identified by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa- South Eastern Diocese?”**. Studying the real-life experiences of women ministers provides valuable insights into the gender dynamics within the ELCSA - South Eastern Diocese. This involves examining how societal norms and expectations related to gender influence women's experiences in ministry. It also reveals the challenges they confront in navigating patriarchal structures and attitudes entrenched within the church. Additionally, such research helps identify the precise barriers and hurdles women ministers face in their roles. These obstacles may include limited access to leadership positions, disparities in training opportunities and career advancement, as well as inadequate support networks within the church community. Despite the obstacles they encounter, women ministers frequently exhibit resilience and devise coping mechanisms to navigate their roles effectively within the ELCSA - South Eastern Diocese. Exploring their lived experiences uncovers the strategies they utilize to surmount challenges, sustain their sense of calling, and flourish in their ministry despite adversity. Consequently, it is recommended that ELCSA - South Eastern Diocese undertake deliberate efforts to foster supportive communities within its framework. This encompasses initiatives aimed at fostering networks of solidarity, implementing mentorship programs, and establishing platforms for dialogue and reflection on gender and ministry. By nurturing such environments, the denomination can empower women ministers and enhance their capacity to thrive in their pastoral roles.

Furthermore, promoting inclusive leadership within the ELCSA - South Eastern Diocese entails advocating for policies and practices that advance gender equality, challenge stereotypes, and facilitate women's full participation and flourishing in ministry roles. This involves creating opportunities for women to assume leadership positions, ensuring equitable access to resources and support, and actively addressing barriers to their advancement within the church.

Additionally, it's crucial to consider theological education and training programs within the ELCSA - South Eastern Diocese that incorporate gender-sensitive perspectives into curriculum development. Providing pastoral training that addresses

gender dynamics in congregational contexts is essential for preparing ministers to navigate issues related to gender equality and promote inclusivity within their communities. Furthermore, promoting theological reflection on issues of gender and ministry encourages critical engagement with theological teachings and traditions to foster a more inclusive and equitable approach to ministry within the denomination. By integrating these practices into theological education and training programs, ELCSA - South Eastern Diocese can cultivate a generation of clergy equipped to address gender-related challenges and advocate for justice and equality within the church.

## 7.5 Conclusion

In summary, women ministers in ELCSA-SED face numerous challenges stemming from heteronormativity and cultural expectations, impacting their acceptance, authority, and opportunities within the church. Overcoming these challenges necessitates continuous efforts to challenge gender stereotypes, advocate for gender equality, and foster inclusive environments within .ELCSA-SED. By actively addressing these issues, ELCSA-SED can create more equitable and supportive spaces for all ministers, regardless of gender, to pursue their callings within the ministry.

The Lutheran World Federation's Gender Justice Policy lays the groundwork for ELCSA-SED to gradually tackle many of the issues identified in the study by examining the lived experiences of women ministers. Although the study acknowledges its limited sample size for making broad generalizations, it asserts the reliability of the data collected from these women ministers, who have worked across the diocese, even though the study was conducted in a specific location. Their perspectives reflect their cumulative experiences throughout their ministry journey in ELCSA-SED. The remaining question to be addressed, possibly through further studies, concerns whether the administration of ELCSA-SED has the human and financial resources to ensure that women ministers flourish in their ministry within the patriarchal and cultural barriers of ELCSA-SED by implementing various policies and programs. These may include but are not limited to:

1. **Gender Equality Policies:** ELCSA -SED can develop and enforce clear policies that promote gender equality within their structures and leadership positions. This includes ensuring equal opportunities for women ministers in terms of

recruitment, training, promotion, and decision-making roles within the church hierarchy.

2. **Training and Education:** Establishing training and educational programs specifically designed to support women ministers can be beneficial. These programs can provide theological education, leadership training, pastoral care skills, and strategies for navigating patriarchal and cultural barriers.

3. **Mentorship and Support Networks:** Creating mentorship programs and support networks for women priests can provide them with guidance, encouragement, and practical advice for navigating their ministry. Pairing experienced women priests with newer members can facilitate knowledge sharing and skill development.

4. **Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns:** ELCSA-SED can engage in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment within the church. This can involve organizing awareness campaigns, seminars, and conferences focused on challenging patriarchal norms and promoting the value of women's leadership in ministry.

6. **Safe and Inclusive Spaces:** Ensuring that church environments are safe, inclusive, and free from discrimination or harassment is essential for supporting women ministers. Churches can develop and enforce codes of conduct that prohibit discriminatory behavior and create mechanisms for reporting and addressing any instances of harassment or gender-based violence.

7. **Gender-sensitive Liturgical Practices:** ELCSA-SED can examine their liturgical practices and rituals to ensure they are inclusive and respectful of women's experiences and perspectives. This may involve incorporating gender-neutral language, diverse imagery, and inclusive symbols in worship services and religious ceremonies.

8. **Financial Support and Resources:** Providing financial support and resources to women ministers can help alleviate economic barriers and enable them to fully engage in their ministry.

By implementing these policies and programs, ELCSA-SED can create supportive environments that enable women priests to flourish in their ministry despite patriarchal and cultural barriers. These efforts are essential for promoting gender equality, fostering inclusive leadership, and advancing the mission and values of the church.

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PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AS PART OF A MASTERS PROJECT

Name: Nondumiso Ngcobo

Student number: 921316892

Cell number: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Working Title: Towards the flourishing of Women Ministers in Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa: An African Women's Theological engagement with the lived experiences and systemic realities faced by Women Ministers in ELCSA

Greetings: To the Bishop of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa – South Eastern Diocese – Ret Rev NM Myaka

I am currently in the process of completing a Masters degree in the School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As part of this course I am engaging on a study to investigate this by talking to women ministers both fulltime and self-supporting ministers who are based within ELCSA-SED. Amongst these women ministers it will be through voluntary consent be it the deans, deputies, parish pastors, deputies and self-support. It will involve the following procedures interviews one on one with all participants and I will keep their participation anonymous. The study is funded through my University Scholarship and no financial obligation will be borne by the participants and ELCSA-SED.

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts:

1. Participants revisiting traumatic experiences in their ministry
2. Participants revealing information which is unknown to the church
3. Participants revealing information which might not paint the church in good light, even if it is the truth.

We hope that the study will create the following benefits:

1. To establish the gender profile of leadership positions in ELCSA
2. To explore if there are any gender programmes or support for women ministers in ELCSA- SED
3. To assist and recommend a strategic empowering plan for women ministers to grow

and be impactful in ELCSA-SED. The study might have no direct benefit to the church or it might but ELCSA-SED has no obligations towards the study.

If anytime during the study participants experience trauma or post-trauma, psychosocial support has been arranged.

This study is currently under ethical review and awaiting approval by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of which the approval number will be provided before any contact is made with the participants. In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at 0610337747 or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact

details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 34001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Participation in this research is voluntary and participants may withdraw participation at any point, if they feel unsafe and this will not have any financial implication for the participants or the church. Participants and ELCSA\_SED will not be paid for this study.

Unless permission is granted in writing by the participants, their identity will not be disclosed to anyone including ELCSA-SED. The interview scripts will be kept safely for five years and shall not be shared without consent from the participants. The study is not intended to make scientific generalisations about ELCSA or ELCSA-SED but is an exploration with an intention to assist ELCSA-SED if the outcome of the study so suggests.

-----  
CONSENT (Edit as required)

I..... have been informed about the study  
entitled.....  
-----  
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conducted by .....

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study. I give consent for the study to be undertaken in ELCSA-SED with voluntary consent of all participants.

Signature

Date

Position

Thanking you in advance.

Yours faithfully

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.

Nondumiso Ngcobo

07/11/2022

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL

For research with human participants

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date:

Dear fellow activist,

My name is Nondumiso Ngcobo. I am currently in the process of completing a Master's degree in the School of Religion, Philosophy & Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As part of this course I am engaging on a study to investigate this by talking to women ministers both fulltime and self-supporting ministers who are based within ELCISA-SED. You can reach me on

Partypiece.nuz@gmail.com or +27 610337747 (voice and Whatsapp).

You are being invited to consider participating in my study titled: *Towards the flourishing of Women Ministers in Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa: An African Women's Theological engagement with the lived experiences and systemic realities faced by Women Ministers in ELCISA-SED*. The study is expected to enrol up to 10 participants.

It will involve the following procedures: A face-to-face interview conducted by me lasting between 1 – 2 hours. The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be 1 – 2 hours. The study is not funded.

Once the interview has been conducted by myself, I will transcribe the interview and then code the data to identify key themes that emerge from the interviews.

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts:

1. You revisiting traumatic experiences in their ministry
2. You revealing information which is unknown to the church
3. You revealing information which might not paint the church in good light, even if it is the truth.

Although you will be asked these questions in your professional capacity as a minister, I am aware that you may live in a context in which you being a woman puts you at risk for marginalisation, discrimination and victimisation. It is therefore possible that you may find some of the questions troubling or traumatic. I will therefore ask you now (and again when we begin the interview) whether you will be able to access psychological support in the event of re-traumatisation? What kind of psychological support? If you experience any distress or discomfort at any point in this process, we will stop the interview or resume at another time.

---

CONSENT

I ....., have been informed about the study entitled  
Towards the flourishing of Women Ministers in Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa: An  
African Women's Theological engagement with the lived experiences and systemic realities faced by  
Women Ministers in ELCISA-SED by Nondumiso Ngcobo.

Please mark your answers by circling Y for Yes or N for No.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study – Y / N

I have been given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to  
my satisfaction. Y / N

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at  
any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

Y / N

My ability to access to psychosocial support in case of re-traumatisation has been discussed  
with me. Y / N

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I  
may contact the researcher at partyplace.nuz@gmail.com / +27 610337747 (voice and Whatsapp).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned  
about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604357 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview Y N

Video-record my interview Y N

---

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number \_\_\_\_\_).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at + [REDACTED]

or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus

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KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604337- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

Participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any point without incurring any penalty or loss or other benefit to which you are normally entitled.

There are no consequences to you for withdrawal from the study. If you wish to withdraw,

please email me at one of the above email addresses to say that you no longer wish to

participate. I will also terminate you from the study if we are unable to set up an appointment

for an interview, after at least 3 attempts in writing. There will be no costs to you at all.

All data will be kept confidential, and the names of the research participants will not be shared with the research. The data will be stored in a Google Drive folder with limited access

permissions. My supervisor will be provided with access to this folder. I will use pseudonyms in my final project and in all records relating to the interviews, so your personal information will not be shared, unless you specifically request that I name you. Since I will be conducting interviews with

respondents, anonymity is not possible, but all data relating to respondents will be kept

confidential and secured. If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me on the details listed above. This study will be written up as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. I will also share a copy of the report and a summary of my findings with you, and host at least one online session to disseminate the findings of the study.

Signature of Participant Date

---

Signature of Witness Date

(Where applicable)

---

Signature of Translator Date

(Where applicable)

1.



### Interview schedule

**Key Research Question:** What insights could be drawn from the embodied lived experiences of women ministers in ELCSA that could inform enable and enhance the flourishing of women in ministry?

### Introduction

1. Name or Preferred pseudonym:
2. Age
3. Marital status
4. Where were you born?
5. Highest level of education attained: (grade 10, matric, diploma, undergrad degree, MA, PhD):

### What constitutes the ministerial landscape of ELCSA and what is the institutional context of women in ELCSA? (Epoche – bracketing)

1. What is your understanding of ministry, what does it entail?
2. In your context what does it take to be a minister?
3. In ELCSA what is ministry like?
4. What is the estimated percentage of women ministers in ELCSA – SED?
5. As a woman minister in ELCSA, please share your journey in becoming a minister?
6. Did you encounter any challenges in becoming a women minister in ELCSA?
7. Do you think that those challenges still exist for women still entering and in ministry in ELCSA- SED?
8. In your (experience)or understanding, what do you think are the contributing factors to the challenges mentioned above?
9. What are the effects of these challenges on women ministers, congregants and ELCSA- SED?

### What is the experience of women in ministry in ELCSA that inform/inhibit flourishing? (Empathy)

1. Does the ministerial environment in ELCSA-SED allow ministers to perform their expected duties as well as bring new insights?
2. In your experience as a woman minister in ELCSA-SED how are your skills utilized and developed towards your optimal potential?
3. As a woman minister how much value do you think congregants in ELCSA-SED assign to you and how meaningful is it to you?
4. As a woman minister in ELCSA-SED do you think your efforts and inputs to enhance your development are supported and valued?
5. As a woman minister in ELCSA-SED how do you think that your efforts and inputs should be supported and valued so as to support and enhance your development in the ministry?

---

**What are the themes/structures/issues identified by women that could enhance or enable the flourishing of woman in ELCSA?**

1. Is ELCSA – SED a safe and courteous space in engaging the idea of flourishing of women ministers?
2. Does ELCSA-SED have an intentional ethos of care and congregational openness to new approaches that contribute to the growth of women ministers?
3. As a woman minister in ELCSA-SED what do you think needs to be done by ELCSA-SED to encourage and support thriving of women ministers?
4. As a woman minister how do you think ELCSA-SED should encourage and support thriving of women ministers?

**SKILLS**

- Code 8 drivers license with over 20 years active driving experience
- Human Resources Administration
- Counselling
- Performance Management
- Time Management
- Communicating at different levels
- Relationship/Stakeholder Management.
- Minute taking and Report Writing
- Project Management
- Recruitment
- Public Speaking and Advocacy
- Computer literate
- Desktop research skills.

- Managed staff of 4 consultants, 1 HR Office and 1 Admin Office through trainee mentoring, performance managing and disciplinary.
- Responsible for client reporting and conflict resolution within the project through client relationship and stakeholder management.

**PRASA Metrorail - Learning and Development Coordinator**

2015 March-2016 March

- Carried out skills audits and organized training in liaison with the line managers at service providers.
- Project managed a learner experiential holiday job program called Techno-Kids aimed at exposing learners to sciences and engineering professions.

**Standard Bank SA - Community Investment Fund Manager**

2010 November-2012 February

- Managed the funding and development of SMMEs working with community based Tribal Councils.
- Evaluated business plans and mentored applicants

**Various Clients- Independent Consultant**

2001 May -2010 November

- Worked on government funded projects where I was tasked with:
  - People's skills development in different fields through the medium of training, mentoring and project management.
  - The development of training materials or development of frameworks and/or charters.
  - Training of SMMEs in business management, export readiness and exhibition skills on behalf of SEDA.
  - Training rural communities in executive skills such as secretariat, treasury and chairmanship.
  - Mentored and managing ABET teachers on a Department of Labor project.
- All these projects were province wide. I was in charge of coordinating the inception through logistical support and procurement and in all of them I managed client and stakeholder relationships and expectations.
- I also compiled monthly and completion reports to clients at various levels of government.

**Infekom ISP - Personnel Officer**

1999 April - 2001 April

- Reporting directly to the HR Manager and Managing Director I was responsible for:
  - General Human Resources functions except payroll, i.e. recruitment, interviewing and hiring with respective manager, induction, performance management and disciplinary. I also managed and contracted recruitment agencies.

**Lumka and Associates - Personnel Officer**

1998 February - 1999 January

- Responsible for recruitment, placement and management of temporary or contract staff placed with our clients.

**Department of Local Government and Housing KZN - Project Administrator**

1996 December - 1998 January

- Responsible for processing developer invoices in line with board resolutions or engineer's milestone reporting.



## PROFILE

I am fluent in English, Zulu, and moderately speak, understand and write Afrikaans, Sotho and Xhosa. I am a confident public speaker with passion for teaching and people development. I am an excellent listener and an empathetic counsellor. I have work and own business experience that spans over 20 years with acquired skills, knowledge and training gained in government funded international projects such as the UK's Investors in People which culminated into the South Africa's Skills Development Act. I was also chosen and trained by the Swedish Trade Council (S.A) in Export Development and IDT in Prince 2 Theory of Project Management. I have been part of government funded delegations to France (INSEAD) and Cuba to be trained and exposed in Exports and Exhibitions in order to develop other SMMEs. I have also done these short courses:

- Investors in People
- Export Orientation
- Train-the-Trainer
- Total Quality Management
- AIDS in the Workplace
- Train-the-Trainer

## CONTACT

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Yellowwood Park 4011  
EMAIL:  
Partyplace.nuz@gmail.com

## NONDUMISO NGCOBO

CONSULTANT-VARIOUS FIELDS

## EDUCATION

### University of Kwa-Zulu Natal – 2022

Masters in Theology: Gender, Health and Religion

### University of Kwa-Zulu Natal – 2021

Honors Degree in Theology: Gender, Health and Religion

To be ordained as a pastor in the Lutheran Church in November 2022.

### TEEC - 2019 – 2020

Passed these modules: Getting to Know the Bible, Church History 1, Systematic Theology 1, Practical Theology 1, New Testament 2, Old Testament 2.

### ASSOCIATION FOR CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Presented by Professor Moyo at University of KwaZulu Natal

Clinical Pastoral Education Certificate -2021 July

### University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (former University of Natal Durban) 1992 - 1995

I obtained a junior degree in Social Sciences majoring in Psychology 3, Sociology 3 and Social Work 2

### University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (former University of Natal Durban) 1996

I obtained a Post-Graduate Diploma in Personnel Management.

## WORK EXPERIENCE

### Aids Foundation South Africa – Capacity Building Officer

2022 June –to date

- My role as a capacity building officer is to use my acquired experience in SMME development and training facilitation to build the capacity of the SRs with skills and knowledge for effective participation in socio-economic development and social justice awareness of their communities. As such I have developed training manuals on the following themes (GBVF, Social Media for CBOs, Time Management, HR/Finance Admin for CBOs, Social Entrepreneurship & Advocacy) and coordinate and run weekly virtual training sessions with the SRs this involves setting up link, monitoring attendance, engagement and resolving technical challenges.

### Community Research Documentary - Project Manager

2019 February–2021 June

- Launched community/public participation structures where the Department of Transport is able to engage and address service delivery issues with ward-based community representatives throughout the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

