

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

THE INFLUENCE OF VIEWS REGARDING SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY ON FEMALE
LEADERSHIP: THE INDEPENDENT BAPTIST AFRICAN AMERICAN DENOMINATION

A Prospectus Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Cynthia D. McZeal

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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Abstract

The purpose of the proposed exploratory research study is to examine how different views on scriptural authority regarding female leadership impact women in leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denominational church. The research is necessitated by the extant complementarian-egalitarian debates on scriptural authority regarding female leadership in the selected religious denomination, the high view of scripture amongst evangelicals, and the increasing growth of women's influence on the evangelical church. There have been little, if any efforts, to understand how various views regarding scriptural authority affect women in leadership in the Independent Baptist African American Denominational Church setting. The main research question for the study was, given the framework of the Independent Baptist African American denomination, how do the different views on scriptural authority regarding female leadership impact women in leadership? The research methodology was qualitative and explorative, encompassing in-person interviews and focus assemblies with female leaders in the Independent Baptist African American denomination. The debates on whether women should lead were deemed part of free expression within the church environment. The collected data were transcribed and analyzed through thematic analysis. The results showed that while egalitarian, complementarian, and high views of scripture existed in this denomination, such ideas did not affect the work of female leaders materially. Female leaders were instead influenced by their own opinions on the authority of scripture about female leadership. Thus, it was recommended that leadership training and mentorship accommodate female leaders who are ideologically inclined to only serve under male headship, as well as those who believe in unfettered access to leadership positions in the church.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my loving grandmother, who taught me to trust God and never give up on my desires.

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Definition of Terms

1. **Female:** A person who corresponds to the biological features of a woman and the attendant social roles
2. **Scriptures:** The holy writings found in the Christian Bible
3. **Biblicism:** “A theory about the Bible that emphasizes together its exclusive authority, infallibility, perspicuity, self-sufficiency, internal consistency, self-evident meaning, and universal applicability” (Smith, 2012, p. 7).
4. **Egalitarianism:** The theological view that all human beings are equal before God and have no gender-based restrictions on the roles they play at home, church, and society in general (Warner & Warner, 2005).
5. **Complementarianism:** The theological view that all human beings are equal in personhood and dignity but created to complement one another through different roles at home, church, and society (Warner & Warner, 2005).
6. **Patriarchal:** Institutions, structures, or organizations that are dominated by men in society (Miller, 2017)
7. **Plenary Inspiration View:** The evangelical doctrine of scripture which affirms that all words in the Bible are inspired by God and were authored by human writers under divine superintendence (Allert, 2007)
8. **A high view of Scripture:** Another description of the plenary inspiration view that is common in the evangelical tradition (Allert, 2007). It considers the Bible as the final authority in faith and spiritual matters.
9. **Ideology:** The beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and norms shared by a group of people and often informed by an external authority.

10. **Evangelicals:** A worldwide church associated with Protestantism, espousing a belief in the Bible as the revelation of God to humanity, faith in the doctrine of salvation by grace, and belief in the redeeming characteristics of Christ (Monsma, 2017). Evangelicals also believe in taking active roles in spreading the Gospel (Bishop, 2019)
11. **Independent Baptist African American denomination:** Is a congregation of African American faithful who hold fundamentalist Baptist beliefs.
12. **Leader:** the person who leads or command a community, group, organization, or country.
13. **Female Leaders:** a person that can lead as a Bishop, Pastor, Elder, Minister, or Deacon in the Independent Baptist African American denomination.

Chapter One: Research Concern

Introduction

Historically, the role of women in leadership in the church has been a source of controversy and intense debate due to varied interpretations of scripture. Some of the arguments promote limited roles for women in the church, while others suggest greater capacity, particularly in leadership. For instance, the Bible appears to discourage women from taking up teaching roles in the church and instead submit to male leadership as evidenced in 1 Timothy 2:12 “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet” (New International Version). On the other hand, in Joel 2:28, God says “And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy.” The latter message is emphasized by Peter in Acts 2:17 when the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost, and it shows that God has empowered both genders to lead in ministry. Thus, arguments for and against female leadership in the church are, on the surface, backed by scriptural authority.

Biblical interpretations that preempt the advancement of women in church leadership are exemplified in evangelical churches. Characteristically, evangelicals believe in the unlimited atonement of sins and salvation for anyone who accepts Christ as their personal Savior, in accordance with the scriptures (Walraven, 2020). However, some of them also hold that the Old and New Testament are the inspired, inerrant word of God. The latter view tends to support the exclusion of women from specific church leadership roles based on the literal interpretation of certain Biblical verses. However, while most evangelicals support the plenary inspiration view, some who adhere to the principle also apply it to argue for extensive leadership roles for women. Nonetheless, women pastors and evangelists still deal with challenges of law exemptions and

policies, leadership obstacles, and gender barriers or stereotypes (Burnett, 2017). In effect, gender roles remain a controversial topic for many evangelicals.

Various theories have been proposed to explain the positions of different gender roles in evangelical churches. The two dominant views are egalitarianism, which holds that men and women are created equal before God and should lead the church equally, and complementarianism, which avers those genders complement each other, so women should subordinate men who are Biblically mandated to lead. Owing to the disharmony between the two dominant theories, Lee-Barnewall (2016) proposed a consensus. Through her kingdom corrective theory on the evangelical gender debate, she espoused two themes for discussing gender unity and reversal. Typically, egalitarianism is focused on individual rights, while complementarianism underscores the position of authority. However, the author notes that the central message of Jesus was about the Kingdom of God (Lee-Barnewall, 2016). Accordingly, the unity theory holds that the church is obligated to unite to preserve the temple of God through love and humility to avoid the fight over individualism and personal rights instigated by egalitarians (Hicks, 2017). At the same time, Lee-Barnewall notes that leadership in the church is about service to people rather than positioning oneself above them; thus, complementarians should focus on serving others rather than on positions of authority. All the same, complementarians and egalitarians still argue about gender positions in the church.

Given the ensuing debates on scriptural interpretations regarding female leadership, the number of women taking leadership roles has historically been limited. Efforts have been limited in understanding how the rising phenomena of women in church leadership interact with the scriptural views on the subject. Evangelical scholarship “universalizes white, male, northern Atlantic perspectives” (Coffman, 2019, p. 241), ignoring the role of women leaders and figures

in religious history and present times. The knowledge of the different scriptural views and their effect on female leaders can be applied to inform capacity building, training, and preparing for present and future female leaders in the church. Moreover, the predominance of white, male, North American perspectives means that the experiences of Black women in Black churches are seldom explored. Accordingly, an analysis is necessary to understand the nature and experience of their female leaders. Thus, the proposed study will investigate how different views on scriptural authority regarding female leadership impact female leaders in the Independent Baptist African American denomination.

The current chapter is divided as follows. After the introduction section will be the background of the study, which establishes the research problem. After that, the statement of the problem, the purpose statement, research questions, assumptions and delimitations, definition of terms, the significance of the research, and a summary of the research design will follow the background section.

Background of the study

Scriptural authority on women in leadership has been a source of sharp divisions for many evangelicals. Lee-Barnwell (2016) suggests that most evangelicals are currently split on the complementarian-egalitarian argument, with strong views held on both sides (as cited in Hicks, 2017). Egalitarians often emphasize the creation narrative in Genesis, which depicts both man and woman being accorded dominion over the rest of creation with no distinction in their leadership capacity. They further argue that after the fall, salvation through Christ restores God's initial design of equality, with men and women being capable of serving at any capacity again. On the other hand, complementarianism doctrine espouses the male and female genders as different and thus, complementary. When applied to Christian leadership, it is perceived that

some evangelicals contribute to the continued sidelining of female leaders in churches and perpetuate the conservative view. The divide between the two modes of interpreting scripture has not been bridged and continues to define the extent of women's involvement in leadership.

Besides the two views, most evangelicals believe in biblical inerrancy. It supports the view that the Bible is the source of evangelical faith and lifestyle and the primary source text for doctrine and governance. Further, it provides that God inspired every word in the Bible, with human authors acting under divine superintendence. The latter view is treated by egalitarians and complementarians differently. Additionally, the pre-modern and modernist comprehension of inerrancy differ considerably (Stewart, 2019). At the heart of an inerrant Bible is the Scripture testimony necessitating that the pre-modern view of inerrancy is superior in honoring the Bible as God's Word as opposed to the modernist view (Stewart, 2019). According to Elwell (2017), the Bible offers its own inspiration, and this assumes inerrancy as seen in 2 Tim 3:16 (Elwell, 2017). Additionally, the Bible teaches its own authority, and this, too, necessitates inerrancy (John 10:34-35; Matthew 5:17-20) (Elwell, 2017). While both sides of the divide hold the bible as the source of truth, they differ on how it should be interpreted.

In practice, women are increasingly assuming leadership roles in evangelical churches compared to the past. Women are taking leadership positions such as lay leaders and ordained clergy due to the societal shift in attitudes towards female church leaders (Smietana, 2021). While the argument suggests that the call to increase the capacity for women in church leadership comes from external forces, there have been equally strong arguments within the church that support female leadership. The debate is framed from an egalitarian standpoint but provides an excellent example of support for women leadership within the evangelical church.

Thus, the increased numbers of female leaders in the evangelical church may be driven by cultural change and rising egalitarianism within the church.

According to Spencer and Spencer (2020), the Bible emphasizes leadership roles for women in churches. This view is based, in part, on the fact that Jesus included women in his ministry as followers of Him. As churches gradually change their thinking about women's leadership in religious institutions, the secular, egalitarian view celebrates leadership equality for all (Spencer & Spencer, 2020). This belief opposes the complementarian focus on authority, where position takes precedence over relationships (Hicks, 2017). According to Ward (2018), "the gendered evangelical subject is constituted by a discursive formation with a premodern genealogy refracted through a modern epistemology" (p. 114). Although evangelicalism is focused on reordering the biblical gender discourse, evangelical responses to modern feminism are focused mainly on narrow conceptions of female church leaders.

There is an active debate on the possible link between different opinions concerning the authority of scripture on female leadership aspirations, attitudes, and styles. Bishop (2019) argued that the interpretations by some evangelicals resulted in patriarchal-hierarchical governance, leading to only 10% of female leaders rising in the evangelical church. Further, most female leadership is limited to children and women's ministry (Bishop, 2019). Wood (2019) has detailed how harmful patriarchal, cultural, traditional, and gender practices in the church are by utilizing a stereotypical prism to view gender role equality. Such views have been mirrored by Barr (2021), who notes that the subjugation of women in the church is a product of social forces rather than directives from the scripture. Most of these debates follow the fashion of the feminist groups that challenge the traditional roles of women, while others focus on the core teachings of the scripture.

Gender equity remains a theoretical concept, and gender biases are involved in the way churches are run. According to Genesis 1:6-31, God created males and females in His image and blessed them to rule and multiply (Wood, 2019). According to Rugwiji and Masoga (2017), the Old Testament generally depicts a patriarchal Israeli society that views the role of women as inferior. However, Noswell (2017) illustrated that women played influential roles in the Old Testament culture, such as religious and political leadership, vulnerable heroes, and wisdom women. Many are of the opinion that the evangelical church in modern times often encourages a patriarchal view of leadership rather than one that favors female empowerment (Chisale, 2020). When Peter, in Acts 2:17, states, “In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy,” he predicts that the Spirit will be poured on men and women. The pronouncement necessitates an understanding of how comparability and strength should be embraced by female church leaders (Wood, 2019).

While research has focused on the complementarian-egalitarian divide, the scriptural doctrines of evangelical churches, and the increasing space of women in leadership in the church, it is still a limited perspective of how views on scriptural authority affect female leadership. As previously noted, some studies have examined the effect of complementarian attitudes on career aspirations. Some scholars argue that biblically based views of leadership within some evangelical churches discourage female leadership in the church. Additional research is needed to explore how egalitarian and complementarian perspectives affect female leadership. The effect of the authority of scripture in the evangelical church on female leadership is also largely unexamined and warrants attention. More importantly, the highlighted issues have not been studied in the Independent Baptist African American denomination.

The Independent Baptist African American denomination consist of Bishop's, Pastors, Elders, Ministers, and lay people that can serve as leaders in any area of the church. Although this denomination holds similar fundamentalist Baptist beliefs, they are an independent church that is governed by the word of God. They do not submit to creeds, church councils or confessions to determine their beliefs. Their beliefs are based on individuals accepting Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior and participating in baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The degree to which the complementarian-egalitarian divide exists in the Independent African American denomination is determined by how the Bishop or Pastor interprets the word of God. Every church in this denomination is considered independent and can lead the church in whatever way they believe God is inspiring them to lead and the way they interpret the scripture.

Problem Statement

Complementarian-egalitarian debates regarding female leadership persist in some evangelical churches. The egalitarian view runs counter to the complementarian perspective as evidenced by women's participation in leadership roles increasing in the evangelical church (Hornstra-Fuchs & Hornstra, 2010). Additionally, evangelicals mostly hold a high view of scripture, which implies reliance on the Bible as the leading authority on every aspect of life and faith, including questions about the role's women take in church and society. While these elements are reflected in literature, it is unknown how they affect female leadership, particularly in the Independent Baptist African American denomination. It is critical to understand how complementarianism and egalitarianism affect female leadership in the church. There is a need to study these relationships in the Independent Baptist African American denomination. Such inquiry will illuminate the experience of female leadership and how it has been shaped by the

doctrines and views of evangelicalism. Ultimately, it will set the stage for the much-needed development, training, encouragement, and nurturing of female leaders.

Purpose Statement

The resolve of this exploratory research study is to examine how different views regarding scriptural authority on female leadership affect female leaders in the Independent Baptist African American denomination.

Research Questions

Main Research Question

RQ1: In what ways do different views concerning the authority of scripture on female leadership influence women in leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination.

Sub Questions

RQ1: To what degree do evangelicals in the Independent Baptist African American denomination hold a high view of scripture?

RQ2: Are there particular ways, if any, in which a high view of scripture influences female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination?

RQ3: In what ways, if any, do complementarian and egalitarian views on scriptural authority affect female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination?

Assumptions and Delimitations

Assumptions

Several assumptions will be made in the study. First, it is assumed that the study participants will not have any material differences amongst them to affect the sample. Regardless of their years of experience and positions held in the church, they are assumed to have equal

fitness for the study's purposes. It is also assumed that the egalitarian and complementarian theological debates exist in the church. While not all evangelicals embrace the said views, it is assumed that the majority are represented by the dichotomy. Besides, most denominations have a formal stance on women in leadership, despite debates on gender roles in the church. Thus, the assumption is that egalitarian-complementarian debates subsist and can have effects despite the positions taken at the formal level. The study further assumes that all study participants, including those in the focus groups, will give honest and truthful answers. The answers are presumed truthful despite any individual sensibilities towards the topic. The study also assumes that "female leadership" and "women in leadership" are interchangeable terms. Thus, a female leader is assumed to have the biological features of a woman, with the implicit assumption that these are the only types of female leaders in the Independent Baptist African American denomination.

Delimitations

First, the study focuses on the Independent Baptist African American denomination rather than the entire evangelical church. Thus, the experience of women in leadership in other evangelical churches is not considered. It is necessary to research the females' experience in leadership within the evangelical church to have an appropriate scope within the available time and resources. The focus on a single denomination is also dependable with the case study tactic taken. The study is also delimited in that the researcher is female and, thus, may take biased positions on issues affecting women's leadership. The author's bias should be mitigated by independent reviews of the research study by supervisors and peers. Besides, the researcher will be careful and reflective throughout the study to ensure that all findings and discussions are based on observations rather than prior experiences or preexisting knowledge. The sample and

participants in the survey are delimited to those willing to participate voluntarily. Any participants who will be unresponsive or constrained from participation by any other factors will not be considered. There is a further delimitation in that the study will rely on self-reported views on leadership and scriptural authority. There will be no objective assessments of female leadership, whether it is on style, attitudes, or any other dimension amongst the study participants. However, the self-reported views constitute valid data within the qualitative research design.

Significance of the Study

The practical significance of the study is well established. First, the findings will help to delineate the experiences of female leaders on the prevailing views and doctrines within the Independent Baptist African American denomination. The analysis is essential for self-reflection and debate-shaping regarding scriptural authority on female leadership. Notably, research confirms that there is resistance in resolving gender inequity prevailing among church leaders (Chisale, 2020). Chisale (2020) suggests that there is systematic and institutional discrimination of women in church leadership. He believes that patriarchal forces retain their stronghold over gender-biased conceptions of leadership nurtured by a biblical interpretation that is androcentric (Chisale, 2020). Consequently, women leaders are increasingly relegated to the peripheries of church leadership based on cultural socialization that rejects the fundamental biblical representation of men and women as created equal (Chisale, 2020). Thus, this study is essential to explore the extent of gender relations in the bible.

Again, this study will review the literature that addresses the role of women in leadership to determine its validity. According to Sande (2017), the concept of equality is elusive for faith-based organizations due to resistance against women in leadership positions. While the

traditional view has been that men hold the exclusive right to leadership, Sande argues that such perspectives have been informed by one-sided interpretations of biblical verses. Accordingly, this study intends to contextualize the readings that define gender relations to verify whether they are misconstrued or rightly understood.

The study's findings will inform leadership training, mentoring, encouragement, and discipleship of current and future female leaders in the evangelical church, particularly in the Independent Baptist African American denomination. While the study may not settle complementarian versus egalitarian debates, it will help reflect the effects of such views; hence, act as a basis for leadership training and development. Female leaders will be more adaptable in their leadership styles by being aware of the different ways they are affected by the doctrines and views of the church. Most importantly, the study will assist churches with policies that encourage female leadership to be nurtured in religious institutions.

Patriarchy has been perceived as the dominance of males in decision-making posts within church leadership. Some have argued that patriarchy is prevalent in all religions and serves as a global perspective to view female subordination (Sande, 2017). However, Barr (2021) notes that the practise is more common in the North American churches because it was introduced following specific social developments. By understanding how views and doctrines affect female leadership, churches can develop strategies for building a culture that supports female leaders. Overall, the study will provide a basis for shaping governance structures within the Independent Baptist African American denomination.

Summary of the Design

The study will take a qualitative, exploratory approach in addressing the research questions. A qualitative design is one of the most popular approaches in conducting social

science research. It often entails conducting interviews with participants face to face, over the telephone, or through focus groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The interviews in qualitative design can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. The proposed research will employ semi-structured interviews, where the interviewer will have an interview guide on the topics and questions to be followed but can stray from it whenever necessary to track specific issues. The flexibility is needed in an explorative approach because it ensures that valuable data is obtained on the subject matter. Both individual and focus group interviews will be carried out, with female leaders in the Independent Baptist African American denomination forming the sample. The participants will give their experiences on leadership and how they have been impacted by how complementarian and egalitarian views scripture amongst their congregants.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria for the sample will be as follows. For both individual and the focus group interviews, only female church leaders will be included because they are best placed to report on the experiences of female leadership and how the views on scriptural authority have impacted them. There will be no geographical limits to the data collection if participants are within the Independent Baptist African American denomination. Purposive sampling will be used for both the focus groups and individual interviews, with the researcher employing their judgment to select the most suited individuals for the study's purposes.

The data collected will be transcribed and checked for completeness and errors. The researcher will be careful to ensure that the recorder is on and well-functioning throughout the interviews to have a smooth and error-free transcription stage. The transcribed data will then be codified and analyzed through thematic analysis. The latter is a suitable method for analyzing qualitative data, particularly when an exploratory approach is taken. However, there are several precautions to be taken in the process. First, there is a risk of researcher bias due to reliance on

the individual's interpretation in the analysis. To mitigate this problem, the researcher will enlist an independent review of the themes identified to ensure that they are based on the observations by requesting view members from the faculty to help in reviewing the themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The researcher will also be mindful and reflective of their bias throughout to reduce its possibility.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review has three major sections. The first part is the theological view which asserts biblical and theological truths on female leadership that inform the study. The section will include material which indicates that both men and women are created in the image of God and worthy leaders. The next section will unpack Christian egalitarianism which posits that women are capable leaders as a matter of biblical and practical reality. The theoretical review will also show that women are capable leaders along with the views, values, and attitudes of society which affects their leadership practices and experiences. To balance the egalitarian perspective, the study will analyze complementarianism, which upholds that women complement male leadership structures. The paper will analyze arguments that posit the equality of the sexes stereologically rather than socially, and the alleged roles ascribed to the genders biblically (Lowe, 1991). The final part of the literature review will explore related literature, focusing on complementarian/egalitarian debates, the perspective of a high view of scripture amongst evangelicals, and the status of women in leadership in Independent Baptist African American denomination.

Theological Framework for the Study

There is scriptural evidence to support various leadership roles held by women. Genesis 1:26 reveals that both man and woman were given dominion over creation, the implication being that both were mandated to lead. Secondly, the creation story in Genesis asserts the equal dignity of both men and women through the imago Dei (Horowitz, 1979). According to Eyo (2020), the first part of Genesis describes the creation of humankind in the likeness and image of God in an act that emphasizes gender equality. Thirdly, there is oneness in the body of Christ, which

supports the view that we are all called to lead and engage one another with various gifts and talents. Anyone blessed with the gift of leadership can contribute to the body of Christ by putting it into action. This section will expound on the three themes of dominion, dignity, and oneness in the body of Christ that form the theological framework of the study.

Dominion

The capacity of both men and women to lead is inferred from the creation narrative in Genesis. The Bible explains that when God created humankind, he gave them dominion over the rest of creation. Genesis 1:26 identifies dominion as one of the outcomes of creating humans. It is stated that God created man "...so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground" (*New International Version*, Genesis 1:26). The language used is rule, and, in this regard, the implication is comparable dominion. There is an understanding that God made humans custodians of the planet. Studies of the Hebrew word *radah*, shows that it was translated to "rule" (Stead, 2010). *Radah* is a command word that implies soft care for creation rather than harsh rule over them (Stead, 2010). The issue of dominion is reiterated in Genesis 1:28, where it is stated that God blessed Adam and Eve and asked them to "fill the earth and subdue it." The verse is more direct in its direction of both the man and woman to oversee the rest of creation in that it directs them to "rule" over it. Man and woman are thus both leaders with equal dominion over the rest of creation without qualification.

Some have questioned the idea that both man and woman were given dominion over the rest of the creation. However, other scholars reiterate that "God's intention for gender equality is obvious" (Kategile, 2020, p. 41). Carbajal (2018) notes that scriptural references do not subordinate Eve, although she was created after Adam and termed a helper. The author argues

that the latter must be interpreted in its Hebraic, which shows that being a “helper” does not imply being inferior. Carbajal (2018) instead shows that the meaning of Eve being a helper had everything to do with Adam’s loneliness rather than superiority. Genesis 2:18 affirms, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him” (*New International Version*). The implication is that Eve was created to solve Adam’s loneliness rather than for subservience.

The verse also suggests that the issue of suitability was the rationale of creation rather than hierarchy. Similarly, being created after man does not suggest a hierarchy in which the woman is subordinated. Men and women share the imago Dei wherein the image reflects a Divine reality that underscores God’s intention that men and women serve together, including in leadership (Kategile, 2020). This view is further underscored by the reference to the relationships inherent in creating people in God’s image. In Genesis 1, the text is replete with plural pronouns such as can be found in verse 26, “let us make man in our image so they may rule...” (*New International Version*). Image-bearing seems to imply the reciprocal nature and diversity found in relationships.

In several other places, the Bible suggests that a “helper” is not an inferior entity and can be superior. This means that the dominion of both man and woman and their attendant leadership responsibilities are not impugned in the biblical sections, which describe Eve as a “helper” (Carbajal, 2018). An example is in the book of Psalms, chapter 54:3-4 (*New International Version*), where David laments strangers who were after his life. He consequently looks up to God, whom he describes as his “helper” and sustainer.

Arrogant foes are attacking me;
ruthless people are trying to kill me—

people without regard for God.

Surely God is my help;

the Lord is the one who sustains me.

Let evil recoil on those who slander me;

in your faithfulness destroy them (Psalm 54: 3-5)

God was superior to David, and yet the latter refers to him as his helper. The fact that God was meant to come to his rescue is a mark of superiority. It thus does not follow that a helper is an inferior entity. It can be observed that the creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2 bestow both man and woman with dominion over the rest of creation, which by implication makes both leaders. The fact that Eve was created last or has been referred to as a “helper” does not subvert her equal stake in leadership.

Dignity

The creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2 also confer both man and woman with equal dignity before God. Furthermore, the image of God in which both man and woman were created represents the spiritual and mental faculties that man reflects the Divine Creator, in that “the image of God resides in man’s reason, personality, free will, self-consciousness or intelligence” (Kategile, 2020, p. 42). Genesis 1: 27 is clear that “in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Accordingly, man and woman are equal before the eyes of God (Kategile, 2020). This view implies that dignity comports to various areas of life, including leadership and management, since both women and men are the image of God.

Even though there may be different interpretations of the doctrine of the image of God, it is undeniable that the image is vested in both men and women. Consequently, it leads to corporate dignity in humankind. One could surmise that equal value and dignity suggest a

platform for leadership for both men and women to share in different aspects of church life, including leadership and management (Kategile, 2020). As per God's initial plan of creation, Marumo (2016) suggests that the doctrine of the image of God should recognize and empower women in ministry. The author argues that both man and woman have the duties of stewardship of God's creation flowing from his image. In addition, while the intended image of God was marred by sin, our relationship with one another and with God seeks to restore some of what was undone. Notwithstanding the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, the *imago Dei* and the implications of stewardship remain intact. Both man and woman continue to reflect the image of God and should seek to demonstrate those benefits and responsibilities flowing from that image.

Human dignity holds that we are afforded certain qualities courtesy of being in the image of God. Galgalo (2016) argues that being created in the image of God suggests the capacity to mirror God in moral, intellectual, and spiritual nature for both man and woman. The implication that Galgalo makes is that by virtue of this image, both men and women are equal in status and standing before God. The author notes that by being in God's image, both men and women can exercise gifts bestowed to them, leadership or otherwise. Thus, excluding women from church leadership equates to the denial of the existence of leadership gifts in women and is, therefore, a distorted view of the *imago Dei*.

Additionally, identified within the Bible, many women played important roles as leaders in different times and various occasions, including the Old and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, Deborah, the Judge is a case in point. Judges chapter 4 and 5 narrate Deborah's story as the judge of Israel, the only female judge, and a person of repute. (Holy Bible, New Living Translation, 1996/2015, Judges 4 & 5), the key elements covered in the book of Judges are the relapse into faithlessness, the resulting retribution, and eventual recovery. We know that Deborah

led Israel, settled disputes, and held court. Besides, she was instrumental in using this leadership position to communicate God's directives to those she led. We see in the text that she

“She sent for Barak and said to him, The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: “Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun, and lead them up to Mount Tabor. I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands”” (*New International Version*, n.d, Judges 4; 6-7)

Barak's lack of faith, coupled with his lack of obedience and indecisiveness as a military leader, stands in stark contrast to Deborah's unwavering military, political, and spiritual strength. We know that Barak's failure to take leadership command resulted in the victory over the enemy, Sisera, by a woman, Jael.

Another woman that some would point to as a leader in the Old Testament is Queen Esther, whose narrative is contained in a book that bears her name. The book is only one of two in the Old Testament bearing the name of women around whom narratives are focused. In the Bible, Esther appeared as a courageous and patriotic woman, with deep faith and commitment in her role, delivering her people from harm (Nowell, 2017). A Jewish orphan, Esther was selected as the Persian Queen by King Ahasuerus. When she learned the King had permitted Haman to destroy Israel, she decided to act at the encouragement of her uncle Mordecai. Esther shows selflessness and courage as a woman leader, not hesitating to present herself before the king to protect her people even with the possibility of losing her life (*New International Version*, Esther 4: 1-17). The king, however, spared her and her people, and a yearly feast of Purim is held in Esther's honor. Esther's story is reflective of her bold and decisive leadership style.

Jesus Christ also challenged the view of women as inferior, and the New Testament is proof of the will of God manifesting itself in Christ's recognition of each human being as guided by God's grace alone. The Gospel granted women the right to equal participation in church management and leadership alongside men, enabling full participation in the community of God's people (Heidebrecht, 2005). For instance, Jesus visited Martha and Mary at their home and recognized Mary's dedication to listening to Christ's teachings (*New International Version*, n.d, Luke 10:38-42). Through his teachings, Jesus also promoted equality among people and encouraged humility and service to others. Such instructions elevated women who were previously subordinate to men to the latter's level based on their humility in service (*New International Version*, n.d, John 13:16). Most importantly, Jesus frequently interacted with women, such as Mary Magdalene, Martha, Mary, and the Samaritan woman. Christ treated women as equal in status to men through his teachings and practices, thereby elevating them in dignity.

Acts of the Apostles detailed pivotal roles played by women in the history of Christianity. Women were part of the congregations that listened to the teachings of the Apostle Paul (*New International Version*, n.d, Acts 17:4). Furthermore, Acts 18:2-3 (*New International Version*, n.d.), detail that women were part of the community that interacted freely with the Apostles. Additionally, in Acts 21:9 (*New International Version*, n.d.), women are identified as prophesying. Philippians 4:2 (*New International Version*, n.d.), points how women assisted Paul in spreading Christianity within the community. An example of women who were part of Paul's ministry is Phoebe, a deaconess, in an early Cenchrea Church. The other supporter of Paul was Priscilla, pointing to the prominent role played by women in Church in Roman times. Other examples of women who helped Paul as mentioned in the New Testament include Nympha in

Col 4:15 and Mary in Acts 12:12 (*New International Version*). Acts 16: 13-15 (*New International Version*) talks about Lydia, a woman who responded to Paul's message and accepted her household to be baptized by Paul. Verse 40 of Acts 16 (*New International Version*) notes that after Paul and Silas leave prison, they first went to Lydia's house who welcomed them. Women were not largely ostracized or prevented from fulfilling the Great Commission.

God's image must be understood in that of a triune who does not create any hierarchy which would subordinate women. The implication is that men and women are supposed to complement each other in serving God together rather than establishing hierarchies. Therefore, leadership styles in the church must reflect the complementary roles of men and women rather than an exclusionary or hierarchical system (Claasens, 2017). Complementing one another means leading together. In this structure, we complement one another by potentially filling in the gap posed by what is lacking in one another. Genesis 5:1-2 (*New International Version*, n.d.), reaffirms that man was created in the image of God and adds that God blessed them the day they were made. Again, the blessings in the above verse are not exclusive to man but available to both sexes. Further, there is no indication that leadership is excluded from the blessings that man and woman are bestowed upon during creation. This affirms that indeed man and woman are both in God's image and consequently equally worthy of leadership duties.

The social agency of Paul's literary activities afforded women new avenues for participation in church management. Through the Apostle Paul, the message is that the gender differences do not pose limitations in our equal access to God through salvation. The Apostle acknowledges the participation of women in the church directly, even identifying them as comprising the hardest workers for the church (*New International Version*, n.d., Romans 16:6). Besides, Pauline texts impact the course of Christianity by recognizing women's contribution to

church activities, thereby promoting them for church leadership. Prominent women grace his congregation, and he features them in his teachings and letters as well. In essence, Paul elevates the status of women in the ministry of Christ, thereby recognizing their ability to lead.

Oneness in the Body of Christ

The Bible makes it clear that we are all part of the body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:12-28 (*New International Version*, n.d.), offers an extensive explanation of how the body of Christ looks like and works. First, there is unity in diversity within the body of Christ (Richards & Hoeldtke, 1988). Paul states that the fact that we are baptized in the same spirit eliminates class and ethnic differences between us and that there are no differences between slaves and free people or between Jews and Gentiles (*New International Version*, 1 Corinthians 12:13). This would suggest that leadership is not gender-specific and includes opportunities for women to lead alongside men.

Some have argued that Paul purposefully left out gender in the list to maintain such differences within the body. However, such an interpretation would suggest that Paul was conclusive in his list of differences that are eliminated in the body of Christ. It would lead to assumptions that Paul would tolerate geographical, age, or language differences to exist within the body. A better interpretation of the verse should be that equality in the body of Christ is borderless. No wonder Paul insists that each part is essential and serves an important role (*New International Version*, 1 Corinthians 12: 17-18). Many parts are distinguished by function, such as prophecy, teaching, and interpretation, but they all form the same body. 1 Corinthians 12:30-31 (*New International Version*) does not specify that any of the parts in the body must be male or female. What they demonstrate is that every part of the body serves an essential purpose.

Therefore, oneness in the body of Christ denotes the absence of gender differences and the presence of gifts for the benefit of the whole.

An egalitarian interpretation of Galatians 3:28 (*New International Version*, n.d.), emphasizes that females and males represent categories that cannot be viewed rigidly but must be understood that Christ encompasses one and all. The verse includes the categories of Jews and slaves that are addressed in 1 Corinthians 12 (*New International Version*, n.d.). Accordingly, the verses seem to suggest unity and should be read together to understand the elements of the body of Christ. More importantly, the verse should clarify the objections by some who suggested that Paul intentionally wanted to retain gender differences in the body of Christ as indicated in 1 Corinthians. This makes sense given that there is little dispute that Paul authored both Galatians and Corinthians. Thus, Paul clarifies his position regarding gender differences in the body of Christ in Galatians to those left in doubt in the first letter to the Corinth Church. Again, First Corinthians 12:31 (*New International Version*, n.d.), concludes with a call to all of us to desire the “greater gifts.” These are the gifts of apostles, prophets, and teachers according to the hierarchy that Paul presents in the verse. There is no gender distinction on who ought to desire such gifts, which leads to the conclusion that they are open to both men and women.

The Galatians 3:28 text is considered the most genuine representation of Paul’s views on women in the church by those who embrace feminist and egalitarian ideals. It reflects the possibility that “there is no male and female” in the service of Christ, supporting gender representation of both women and men in the church and the state (Oyetade & Femi-Olubi, 2019, p. 144). Possibly, God intended to have both men and women in leadership positions, considering the dominion he gave them over the rest of creation and the fact that they bear his image and likeness. In addition, oneness in the body of Christ eliminates gender supremacy and

allows everyone the gifts of the Holy Spirit, including the free exercise of leadership in the Church. However, some scholars have opposed this contention on the grounds that Paul's other views that seem to subordinate women in the church are irreconcilable with an egalitarian or feminist interpretation of Galatians 3:28 (*New International Version*, n.d.). Scholars such as Lowe (1991) recognized that Paul's egalitarian message could be understood to promote soteriological equality rather than social equality, particularly in church leadership. Still, it is unlikely that Paul's teachings in Galatians 3:28 (*New International Version*, n.d.) were limited to the spiritual realm, because he also promoted an equality in social relationships between Jews and Gentiles (Lowe, 1991). Accordingly, the Galatians 3:28 (*New International Version*, n.d.) text may serve to elevate the status of women in the church.

Besides, some scholars have sought to distinguish the contradictory views of Apostle Paul as representing his past as a Jew and trained Rabbi. Additionally, certain egalitarian scholars have also impugned problematic passages as not constitutive of Paul's writing. Scroggs and Walker are cited as examples of critics who contend that Ephesians, Colossians, and the pastorals are non-Pauline instead representing the works of Paul's students who wished to conform his teaching to the official practices of the church (Jodamus, 2019). While there may be debates on some of the interpretations of scripture, such as Galatians 3:28, scholars such as Miller (2002) suggest the need to promote an egalitarian view of gender equality. Of note is that complementarians question the egalitarian interpretation of Galatians 3:28, insisting that equality in the spiritual realm, which Paul may have implied, does not denote equality in the social sphere (Lowe, 1991); thus, the verse does not promote female leadership. Complementarians also maintain that Galatians 3:28 does not suggest an interpretation of egalitarianism in role and functions; instead, it refers to the egalitarianism of privilege and covenant and is irrelevant in so

far as the question of gender roles is concerned (Heidebrecht, 2005). What manifests is that scholars agree on spiritual oneness but differ on social equality based on varied understanding of scripture.

Theoretical Framework

The dissertation is based on two main views, namely, egalitarianism and complementarianism. Egalitarianism is the view that both genders are equal for various reasons, the key being that they were both created in the image of God. The theory explains the growing support for female leadership in society in general and in the church. It aligns with other contemporary sociological theories, such as feminism, which is currently advanced to resolve the historical subjugation of women. For some, traditional feminism differs from biblical feminism in that the latter holds that women are afforded rights by virtue of the imago Dei rather than simply their gender. On the other hand, complementarianism is the notion that men and women were created differently to play disparate but complementary roles in society. The view has sometimes been associated with patriarchy because it tends to promote male leadership while encouraging the subordination of women. Still, some would argue that complementarianism is supported by scripture and has sound arguments that sustain it. Connected with these two theories is the notion that social forces affect the capacity and effectiveness of women in positions of power to lead. By investigating these theories, the study aims to understand the factors that affect the ability of women to lead.

Biblical Egalitarianism

Biblical egalitarianism emerged within evangelicalism in the 1970s to establish equality for the roles of men and women in the church. Although this campaign may be equated to feminism campaign which emerged at the same time, there are notable differences between them.

First, biblical egalitarianism embraces the inerrancy of scripture and inspiration rather than reject them (Köstenberger, 2006). This adherence to core evangelical ideals distinguishes the theory from radical feminism, which sought to reject the Bible and Christianity due to their perceived patriarchal bias. Secondly, while feminism rallied around the idea of liberating women from oppression, egalitarianism is centered on equality (Köstenberger, 2006). Thus, egalitarians are more concerned with ensuring equality without necessarily describing the traditional scriptural interpretations and their attendant doctrines as oppressive. Overall, the main elements of egalitarianism emphasize equality while adhering to the evangelical ideals of inerrancy and inspiration of scripture.

The first wave of egalitarian scholarship pointed out the inconsistency between subordination and equality. The traditional view, as it were, was that men and women were equal in dignity and personhood, but only males were to be in positions of authority. Scanzoni & Hardesty (1982) challenged this view, arguing that equality and subordination were contradictory. They noted that the Bible teaches mutual submission of the husband and wife to one another, eliminating any hierarchy. In their view, the authors did not find evidence of a chain of command of the kind that traditional interpretations of scripture had promoted. Jewett (1975) also determined that in the presence of a hierarchy between men and women, the side that exercised authority was superior to the one that submitted. In other words, there was no way to reconcile a hierarchy between men and women with the principle of equality where only men were in authority.

Jewett (1975) further elevated Galatians 3:28 to one that would help make his point. He compared it to other writings of Paul, terming it a “fundamental statement of Christian liberty” (p. 134). Other scriptures on male-female relationships had to be tested against the verse. Jewett

(1975) argued that other scriptures attributed to Paul suggesting the subordination of women could be attributed to his mixed legacy of Judaism and Christian theology. Paul may have held subordination views earlier but corrected them later as identified in Galatians 3:28 (*New International Version*) (Jewett, 1975). However, the elevation of Galatians 3:28 (*New International Version*, n.d.) over other scriptures, as Jewett (1975) would argue has been widely criticized as departing from inerrancy. Allen & Allen (2009) argue that Jewett merely pits one scripture against the other, forgetting that every scripture is inspired, and the Bible is inerrant. Despite the criticisms, the core of egalitarian thought remained the need to achieve equality which is at variance with women's subordination.

Recently, theorists utilizing the egalitarian perspective have also proposed that humans are the representatives of the Creator (Shilliday, 2019). A functional assessment of imago Dei rests on the assumption that man and woman are created "as our image," and the Bible is the first genealogy connecting God and humans (*New International Version*, Genesis 5:1). According to Shilliday (2019), every generation following Adam and Eve is the imago Dei or in the creator's likeness and has dominion over God's creations. Egalitarian thinkers have emphasized how, by proposing humans are God's image-bearing creations, the argument for equal human dignity may be articulated with the power to define and enforce heresy based on human agency (Hill, 2017). Still, the fact that Christian worldviews were responsible for equal human dignity does not mean the conduct of believers was always consistent with egalitarian belief structures (Hill, 2017). In effect, egalitarian thinkers hope to advance equality by showing that all humans are created fearfully and wonderfully.

Egalitarians have also contested the meaning of the terms "head" and "helper," whose traditional interpretations led to conclusions that women were to take subordinate positions at

home and in the church. Earlier, Virginia (1977) disagreed with the conventional understanding of *kephale* in Paul's letters to mean headship. The author argued that the term referred to "source" or "origin." Thus, in her view, it was a mistake to consider that Paul meant to have men as the head by reference to the use of the Greek term. According to more recent writers, the terms can be construed in various ways depending on the interests of the person doing the translation. Some people have held them to mean that women are subordinate to men, while others believe that they meant women should grow their hair long (Osei-Bonsu & Gokah, 2012). At the same time, some men have exploited those terms to subdue women (Osei-Bonsu & Gokah, 2012). On her part, Barr (2021) advanced the view that the subjugation of women was not biblical but cultural, owing greatly to a practice of inerrancy that prevented biblical verses for broader meanings. Accordingly, egalitarianism insisted on the reading of phrases like *kephale* in the scriptures to give rise to interpretations that favored equality rather than subordination.

The clamor for equality by egalitarians was also based on the active roles taken by women in the Scriptures. The authors advancing egalitarianism made notable observations of women whose active participation in the church contradicted views on subordination. Pape (1977), for instance, observed that Jesus was highly courteous to women, expressed confidence in them, and demonstrated compassion towards them. The author qualifies the fact that Jesus did not call women among his 12 disciples by observing that calling single women to serve would have attracted unsavory suspicions. On the other hand, calling married women would have been inappropriate as they were busy with their families. Still, Pape (1977) reads respect and equality in the approach in which Jesus treated women. The author also makes critical observations on the role of women in the book of Acts. Pape (1977) is emphatic that women were active participants in the church, from taking part in meetings to helping establish churches. They also participated

in prophecies (Acts 2:17-21), served as deacons, and worked in other ways for the Lord and the church (*New International Version*, Romans 16: 1-15). Overall, egalitarians took a cue from scriptural examples to claim that women could take active roles in the church without limitation.

A summary of the egalitarian position in the evangelical tradition is articulated by Ware (2002). The author explains that egalitarians first point is that all genders are created equally, in both the ontological and functional sense. The argument goes that God created man and woman equally without any distinction (ontological) and gave them both dominion over his creation (functional), as stated in Genesis 1:26-27 (Ware, 2002). After the fall of man, sin introduced an illegitimate hierarchy in Genesis 3:16 (*New International Version*). The verse stated that women would subsequently desire male rule over them. However, there was a restoration of equality in Christ's redemption (Ware, 2002). Through Jesus' salvation, all became equal through faith, and are no longer bound by laws that upheld inequality between people. Galatians 3:25 (*New International Version*) states, "... now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian," meaning the insubordination of women under men has been replaced by individual salvation through faith in Christ. The apparent hierarchy created after the fall is thus outdone by renewal in Christ.

Further, egalitarians argue that the woman termed a "helper" in Genesis 2:18 is meant to convey someone who comes to complement man (Ware, 2002). She is thus meant to complete the man rather than be subordinate to him. The argument is based on the interpretation of the original Greek term *ezer*, which, though translates as "helper," is often attributed to God (Ware, 2002). This informs egalitarians to conclude that nothing in the creation narratives and the rest of the scriptures indicates divine intendment to create a hierarchy between man and woman, let alone have the woman inferior to the man (Miller, 2002). Matthews (2017) makes the same

distinction with the term *ezer*. The author notes that the term appears almost two dozen times in Hebrew in the Old Testament. The context in which the word is used primarily refers to a helper, savior, rescuer, or protector, not to a subordinate as the contemporary use of the word “helper” may suggest. From this, the indication is that, for example, Eve was not created to be a subordinate servant for Adam but to serve with him in the fulfillment of God’s wishes.

Matthews (2017) further points to a second Hebrew term used in Genesis 2:18, *kenegdo*, which means “suitable to him.” This term is confusing since, on the surface, it implies that Eve was meant to suit Adam, thus placing her as his subordinate. However, as Adam names all the animals of the Earth, God realizes that none of them is *ezer kenegdo*, or, none of them is a suitable helper to Adam, and thus, He created Eve (Matthews, 2017). From an egalitarian standpoint, the implication is that there are some things that Adam is incapable of, that Adam is not a complete and self-sufficient man. From the egalitarian perspective, without Eve, Adam is incomplete, and he needed *ezer kenegdo*, one who would help him fulfill God’s destiny as an equal and uniquely suited to this task.

Complementarianism

Ware (2002) also explains the complementarian view. The author posits that complementarianism views man and woman as equal in dignity but meant to complement one another with different roles in church and society. The man is meant to be a loving authority over the woman, while the latter offers glad-hearted and willing submission to the man (Ware, 2002). Complementarians state that the creation story in Genesis 1:26-27 speaks to equal personhood and dignity, but there is a hierarchy introduced in Genesis 2 echoed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2 (*New International Version*). In addition, sin introduces enmity between man and woman in Genesis 3:15-16, where the woman will desire to usurp the authority of the man

and the latter rule over the woman oppressively. Thus, the effect of sin is not to create the hierarchy but rather to make it harsh (Ware, 2002). Renewal in Christ restores role differentiation as attested to in Eph. 5:22-33 and 1 Tim. 2:8-15, (*New International Version*) where the wife is to submit to the husband in the manner of the church's submission to Christ. Thus, the central argument of complementarians is that though both man and woman share the same dignity by virtue of being in God's image, the divine intention was to have them complement each other with different roles in the church and at home.

A major controversy has emerged in the complementarian position due to what is perceived as a double standard applied in western countries. Schreiner (2001) observes that in some cases, women can teach, preach, and evangelize in foreign countries but are denied the same opportunities back home. Schreiner (2001) also pointed this out as subtle racism given that globally, women can take leadership positions in non-western countries. There is a need to justify why women cannot preach in the west but can lead evangelistic missions in non-western countries. Another double standard has emerged in church governance (Schreiner, 2001). For instance, the congregation is theoretically the final authority in the Baptist tradition. In this structure, both men and women form part of the congregation and are deemed to be an authority over the pastor, who could be a man. In that case, it would become difficult to sustain the complementarian position unless the church engages in the task of denying women voting rights or ensuring that majority of the congregants are male. Achieving the latter would be difficult given that majority of the congregants are women in most cases (Bryant, 2009). Thus, the complementarian position has been dogged by controversies emerging from perceived double standards applied in practice.

Regardless of the criticisms, the complementarian standpoint has been dominant in protestant denominations to various degrees. Barr (2021) notes that American evangelicals are far more likely than the average population to support women in leadership roles in the church or even outside of it. In England (the birthplace of Protestantism), Percy (2017) notes that even though talk of placing women in positions of leadership in the Church of England began as early as 1914, it was not until 100 years later, in 2014, that women were allowed to hold all positions, but the steps to get there were hard-won. In the 1992 General Synod – Church of England’s parliament, for instance, even though women could be considered as candidates to the priesthood, they were not allowed to become bishops. Moreover, according to Resolution A of the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure of 1993 passed by parliament, even though women could be priests, they could not celebrate communion or pronounce the Absolution within the parish. Resolution B of the same Measure stated that female priests could not be the incumbent or the priest-in-charge of the benefice (Percy, 2017). The point here is that complementarian interpretations of scripture have been used to preclude women from positions of leadership, and in cases where through the internal and external pressure, the evangelical church has been required to accept women in leadership and management positions, it has sought to remove any element of power from these positions.

Dzubinski (2016) captures this dynamic best. The author focuses on evangelical mission organizations. The author asserts that despite evidence to the contrary, stereotypes about women and leadership are deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of society. The author notes that the world of evangelical missions is male-dominated, and women in leadership positions are scarce. By employing a qualitative research approach, Dzubinski (2016) found that both gender role stereotypes and evangelical gender roles were significant in limiting and defining the power of

female leaders in these organizations. Moreover, women experienced success in their positions so long as they remained within the bounds of these roles. Any deviations would result in organizational sanctions, further limitations of their powers, demotions from their positions of power, and even exclusion from future participation in such missions. Thus, it appears that the complementarian perspective not only enforces gender and evangelical roles and stereotypes to maintain the male-authority perspective but also actively limits the powers of those exemplary women who, despite the odds, have managed to attain leadership positions within the organizations.

Defenders of the complementarian view have, however, portrayed their position as the natural conclusion of a faithful exegesis of scripture and further refuted any equivalence to patriarchy and other negative concepts attributed to the view. Complementarians like Grudem (2006) view arguments for equality by egalitarians as departing from biblical truth. The author argues that scrutiny of egalitarian scholarship and practice is predicated on rejecting rather than embracing scripture. In their view, a complementarian view is the only viewpoint that can be arrived at upon an exegesis of scripture. In addressing comparisons with patriarchy, complementarians have argued that the Bible talks of loving authority rather than the oppressive kind suggested by feminists (Köstenberger, 2006). Besides, it is explained that the biblical societies did not practice the kind of patriarchy that feminism critiques. Daniel Block, as cited by Campbell (2003), explains that life in Israel revolved around the male figure, in his capacity as a provider and protector of the family rather than an oppressor. The system is described as patricentrism, which denotes love and care of the male figure in the household and society at large rather than a patriarchal tyranny. Köstenberger (2006) further observes that patriarchy in the Old Testament was not condoned by the Bible; in any event, it is a cultural practice rather

than scriptural prescription. In sum, complementarians distinguish their position from patriarchy and other negative connotations, demonstrating it to reflect faithful scriptural exegesis.

Practical and Biblical Reality of Women in leadership

Northouse (2017) explains that scholars began to gain interest in gender and leadership in the 1970s and sought to understand whether women could lead. The proliferation of women leaders in the corporate and political scene has since rendered the question pointless, at least at the practical level. This was after the emergence of highly effective women leaders around the world. Examples of such leaders highlighted by Northouse (2017) include Benazir Bhutto, Chancellor Angela Merkel, and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. There are also several female CEOs across the world that have set a precedent for good leadership. Due to their evident capability, scholars are no longer interested in investigating whether women are effective leaders (Northouse, 2017). The concern has since shifted on why women are still underrepresented in top leadership positions.

Globally, women are a minority among CEOs and other top leadership positions. Northouse (2017) dismisses the idea that the underrepresentation of women is due to less human capital investment. The author notes that women earn bachelor's and advanced degrees at the same or, in some cases, higher rates than men. They have thus made significant investments in education that should allow them to reach top leadership positions in the same numbers as men. Initially, the metaphor of a "glass ceiling" was used to describe the failure of organizations to promote women to top leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2012; Northouse, 2017). However, Eagly & Carli (2012) argue that the complexity and mystery of women's underrepresentation in leadership makes a "labyrinth" a more deserving metaphor. This is because the obstacles to women's progression in leadership are many and puzzling. Generally, it is a settled issue that

women can lead, but the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions globally awaits explanation.

Within the Christian religion, women leaders are evident throughout the history of the church (Dzubinski & Stasson, 2021). However, their contributions have been downplayed for centuries due to the dominance of the complementarian perspective and its insistence on the fact that women should not hold leadership positions in the church and sometimes at home. Denison (2018) gives several examples of women who have taken leadership positions. Such women include Hilda of Whitby, who led the double monastery at Heretu in the seventh century, Saint Clare of Assisi, who founded the first Franciscan order for women, Edith Stein, Catherine McAuley, and Saint Elizabeth Ann Stenton among many others. Thus, throughout the years, there have been women in leadership positions in Christian churches who have been effective.

Women are also capable leaders as a matter of biblical reality. According to Chennattu (2012), God chose several women to act as vehicles for justice, peace, and liberation in his redemptive work in the Bible. The author observes that the story of the Israelites' liberation from slavery began with the heroic work of several women who are not often accorded enough attention. These include Moses' mother and sister and the midwives Shiphrah and Puah. The midwives were instructed by the pharaoh to kill all the newborns of Hebrew women but disobeyed the order. It was an act of courage to disobey the pharaoh, which Shiphrah and Puah did out of the fear of God (*New International Version*, Exodus 1:17). Deborah is also introduced as a leader, acting as a judge and prophetess among the children of Israel in the Book of Judges Chapter 4 and 5 (*New International Version*). She was God's messenger to the people and helped to deliver them from Canaanite oppression. Other significant women in the Old Testament that God uses for His divine purposes include Miriam, a poetess, prophetess, and singer, and Huldah,

the prophetess that God sent to King Josiah in 2 Kings 22 (Marumo, 2016). In the New Testament, women are equally presented as capable leaders. At the resurrection, an angel appeared to three women and instructed them to inform the disciples of the risen Christ. Later, Jesus himself appeared before the three women and asked them to inform the disciples to head towards Galilee (*New International Version*, Matthew 28; Mark 16). The witnessing of women to the resurrection, which is the pinnacle of the Christian faith, demonstrates yet again God's calling on our lives.

Effects of Societal Values, Attitudes, and Views on Women in Leadership

Female leaders are affected by the values, views, and stereotypes that their followers and society in general hold about them. Northouse (2017) explains that women are often aware of and respond to gender stereotypes about their leadership. The author explains that women may respond by assimilating to the stereotype or engaging in behaviors that counter the stereotype. This may hurt their decision-making. Gaddini (2019) explores these two options (assimilation or rebellion). In her study, she notes that women in evangelical Christian communities and churches are held to a particularly repressive standard that aligns with evangelical gender roles – specifically those associated with complementarianism. Moreover, the author states that a third choice exists among these women; that is, the option to stay within the church community regardless of the marginalization experienced by those who do not fit or conform to their prescribed roles. Gaddini (2019) finds that such women express a range of investment in the church depending on their levels of resilience and hope for change, thus revealing that leaving and staying are not categorical choices but rather two ends of a wide spectrum. Tabassum and Nayak (2021) have examined societal views on women and have found that stereotypes are harmful to women in positions of leadership and management. The authors note that individual,

cognitive, familial, socio-cultural, and organizational factors contribute to the stereotyping of female leaders within contemporary organizational settings. Such stereotyping attitudes and views result in tokenism, prejudice, disparate treatment, and devaluation of female leaders and their contributions to the organization (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021). These antecedents and consequences are inextricably linked into a complex network, and their overall effect is to not only discourage women from seeking leadership positions but also to make it harder for those women already in leadership. Northouse (2017) also shows that women are negatively impacted by the homosocial tendencies of decision-makers when filling in leadership positions.

Individuals often prefer to reproduce their own images and hence fill in positions with those that are like them. With the majority of decision-makers male, they are likely to select fellow males into leadership positions. This has also been reported in the evangelical church, particularly by Hornstra-Fuchs & Hornstra (2010), who noted that the absence of female leaders in the church was due to a lack of mentors. There are thus both direct and indirect effects of stereotypes, views, and attitudes towards female leadership on female leaders.

Notably, complementarian, and egalitarian gender role attitudes may impact female leadership. This was observed by Warner & Warner (2005), who examined the relationship between the gender role attitudes and leadership aspirations among students in an evangelical Christian university. Their findings indicated that egalitarianism has a positive relationship with the extent to which a female student aspires to achieve. Thus, the views held by female evangelicals may determine the level of leadership they ultimately offer to the church. Carbajal (2018), on the other hand, noted that the values, attitudes, and views of some men in the evangelical church could make them unable to empathize with women and advocate for them to gain leadership positions. The author argues that there is a sense of indifference in many men

towards the challenges of women in attempting to rise to leadership positions. Hiel (2016) also observed that gender stereotypes had an impact on the leadership practices of African American women. The author explains that female leaders had to come up with strategies for dealing with gender and other types of biases. Therefore, while women are able leaders, the prevailing views, values, attitudes, and stereotypes about them often affect their leadership practice and experiences.

Complementarian and Egalitarian Views

According to Blomberg (2005), the debate over the scope and nature of women's leadership in the evangelical church has persisted over the last 50 years. The author observes that questions have persisted on whether women can preach, baptize, serve as lead pastors, or teach adult Bible classes, among other leading roles. While the debate is still heated, Blomberg (2005) argues that there have been some developments with each side slightly adjusting their original views. Notably, the initial positions in the debate were extreme- with individuals wholly against or supportive of female leadership (Miller, 2011). On one side were the traditionalists, who were against women taking significant leadership positions, and on the other side, egalitarians, who supported women to take leading positions in the church. The debate was initially focused on one or two contentious verses in the Bible particularly 1 Timothy 2:11-15 (*New International Version*) rather than a holistic view of the role of women in the Bible (Blomberg, 2005). The narrowness of the debate led to strong views on the topic, with traditionalists commonly viewing women as flawed and a secondary creation (Blomberg, 2005). However, there have been massive changes in views, with most individuals abandoning extreme positions on women's leadership.

Traditionalists now identify as complementarians; however, their position is still at variance with that of egalitarians. According to Guillory (2017), African American female

pastors and church leaders have been at the center of spiritual efforts to uplift and transform the church. However, the growing tide of gender inequality and discrimination has paved the way for the lack of empowerment for the disenfranchised woman (Guillory, 2017). Therefore, the clash between traditional conceptions and egalitarian views for women in the Baptist tradition has led to female church leaders being drawn to other denominations that offer them the opportunity to serve in a parish (Guillory, 2017). This disparity is noted despite feminism and the rise of awareness about gender inequity and discrimination.

Gundry (2010) views the evolution of complementarian/traditionalist and egalitarian views over time as due to feminist activism and economic pressures. The author argues that the two forces have increased female participation in the labor force, and consequently, these women have proven themselves to be levelheaded, competent, and wise. The emphasis on male success has been substituted with a universal encouragement of both genders to work hard and be “all that they can be” (Gundry, 2010, p. 22). Evangelicals have not been left behind, with many of them revising their views on women in leadership. They mostly agree that women are talented and gifted, just like men. This has led to the emergence of a rare consensus between complementarians and egalitarians – that both men and women are equally equipped with spiritual gifts (Gundry, 2010). Women are often encouraged to pursue their spiritual gifts but often within certain parameters.

Johnson (2010) demonstrates that the focus on spiritual gifts was crucial in changing evangelical stances on women in leadership. According to the author, dwelling on a few verses that seemed to prohibit female leadership in the church led to many evangelicals being passionately opposed to female leadership. However, when the issue was reconsidered considering their spiritual gifts and whether it was right for them to use them in the body of

Christ, there begun to emerge a shift in attitudes. Practical experiences with women in ministry have also changed the framing of the problem (Sumner, 2009). Women who teach, preach, and lead well in the church and the community have influenced many to reconsider their views.

While there has been an evolution of views on female leadership in the evangelical church, there is still plenty of diverse views for or against female leadership. The only change that has been experienced has been the consensus that women have spiritual gifts that should be utilized in the body of Christ (Gundry, 2010). Contention remains regarding female leadership, particularly whether women can lead men (Blomberg (2005). Some of the dividing questions are whether the relationship between men and women should be hierarchical, whether men and women should hold the same positions in the church and if the Bible limits women from taking certain leadership positions (Blomberg (2005). It is the answers to these questions that form the gulf between complementarians and egalitarians. According to Gundry (2010), complementarians who argue for role differentiation often view their position as “Christ-honoring and Bible-believing” while criticizing the egalitarian views as a “liberal, culturally accepted view” (p. 21). Generally, the egalitarian view is often criticized as culturally inspired and stemming from the liberal ideal of gender equity. Equally, the complementarian view is criticized as being born of a patriarchal-hierarchical system that oppresses women in society. Complementarianism and egalitarianism presently represent the diversity of evangelical views of women in leadership.

It is imperative to note that both egalitarians and complementarians retain the idea of gender complementarity. The difference is in the interpretation of the concept with respect to the presence of a hierarchy (Dizon, 2014). Egalitarians hold that complementing one another has to do with companionship, mutuality, and partnership. In that respect, they argue that the woman

was presented to the man to cure his loneliness and provide correspondence rather than subservience (Colijn, 2002). They conceptualize “complementarity without hierarchy” (Dizon, 2014, p.2). Generally, hierarchy is viewed as alien to God’s created order and is only introduced by sin after the fall of man. On the contrary, complementarians posit gender complementarity that encompasses a hierarchy. Thus, both views understand that men and women are meant to complement each other but disagree on the existence of a hierarchy.

Hübner (2015) explains that both egalitarians and complementarians evaluate and critique one another’s position based on theological stability. Crucially, complementarians often argue that while their defenses have remained consistent and unchanged over time, egalitarian arguments have been changing over the ages (Hübner, 2015). The purpose of the argument is to suggest that the complementarian position represents a commitment to unchanging truth, while the egalitarian arguments have been changing with culture. In that respect, egalitarianism is often equated with evangelical feminism and criticized for shifting positions. However, Hübner (2015) shows that both positions have been changing over time, and none can claim consistency. For instance, the author observes that a noted complementarian, Susan Foh, once maintained that 1 Timothy 2:11–12 (*New International Version*) explicitly excludes women from the position of a church elder. Later, she softened her stance and argued that it was debatable whether Paul had expressly excluded women from eldership in the same verse. Others would argue that the terms themselves are distant and different in that the role of elder is not synonymous with pastor and should thus be viewed differently. Another example given by Hübner (2015) points to acclaimed complementarian, Douglas Moo, who argued in 1980 that 1 Timothy 2:11–15 meant that women were easier to deceive than men. The same author shifted his position in subsequent editions of his writings to suggest that Eve did not represent all women. Hübner (2015) shows that both

complementarian and egalitarian positions have been changing over time, and thus none of them can make a special claim of consistency.

Belleville (2005) demonstrates that there are larger issues that influence the complementarian-egalitarian debate. The author particularly points out the role of personal experience in shaping the positions of individuals on both sides of the discussion. For instance, most egalitarians, especially women in leadership positions in the church, have been personally attacked by complementarians at some point in their work to the extent that they are unable to consider the view that complementarians may have a point (Belleville, 2005). In the same vein, complementarians, especially men in leadership positions, have also experienced personal attacks from egalitarians to the point that they are inclined to dismiss any valid points that may be made from an egalitarian perspective. In addition, there is a tendency of individuals to impute improper motives on any attempts to canvass gender roles in the church (Belleville, 2005). For instance, if a church were to express a slight bias towards complementarianism, questions would be raised on whether the intention is to sideline women from leadership. In the same way, if the church were to begin a conversation on egalitarianism, questions would arise over whether secular feminism was taking over. Thus, the presence of such complicating factors has hindered an honest and progressive debate that would have led to a middle ground between the two camps.

The egalitarian position has been commonly criticized as departing from inerrancy and inspiration of scripture as core doctrines of evangelical faith. Haddad (2015) explains that those who advocate for shared leadership and authority between men and women in the church are often criticized for prosecuting their position by circumventing the scriptures. Consequently, they are accused of theological liberalism, which departs from inerrancy. Besides, Haddad (2015)

observes that egalitarians are accused of capitulating to secular feminist views. However, in response, egalitarians firmly establish their arguments as grounded in scripture and committed to inerrancy. Haddad (2015) demonstrates that biblical egalitarianism has Christian roots and began in the early 1800s rather than in the 1970s at the peak of feminism. The position is supported by examples of evangelicals like Katherine Bushnell, A.J. Gordon, and Catherine Booth, among others (Haddad, 2015). Thus, the effort was not orchestrated by cultural forces but a theological revolution within evangelicalism. Gies (2011) articulates the egalitarian view of inerrancy, inspiration, and authority of the scriptures to debunk the claims that egalitarianism does not take scripture seriously. Thus, egalitarians reject the accusation that they abrogate scripture and instead demonstrate that their views are compatible with inerrancy and inspiration as professed by evangelicals.

Notably, literature on the complementarian-egalitarian debate has focused on the nuances, complexities, weaknesses, and controversies of the two views. Scholars on both sides of the debate have also sought to address misconceptions about their views, chiefly in relation to biblical authority for egalitarians and associations with patriarchy for complementarians. There has been little focus on how these debates affect female leadership in the evangelical church. Only a few authors like Warner & Warner (2005) have focused on how the complementarian/egalitarian views affect female leadership. Even then, Warner & Warner (2005) only examined the impact on leadership aspirations. Much remains unknown on how such views affect the experience of existing female leaders.

High View of Scripture

According to Carson (2017), a high view of Scripture has prevailed across Christian churches spanning centuries and is a view that embraces inerrancy. However, while this view of

the Scriptures has prevailed across many cultures, theological systems, and epistemological structures, it has prompted some thinkers to choose the opposite road. Carson (2017) does reiterate that the high view of Scripture is paradigm independent, and for those defending this traditional view of Scripture, there are differences in understanding what the respective comprehension of epistemology represents. For example, orthodox Christianity acknowledges that the depiction of the Trinity in the third and fourth centuries go beyond what is written in scripture but are presented responsibly in a way that aligns with it (Carson, 2017). Therefore, a high view of Scripture considers different types of claims and works towards an understanding that is central to Christianity. The Scripture is an authoritative and inspired document; so, a high view of the Scriptures may promote an understanding of female leadership in a conservative yet egalitarian manner if it deems such interpretation faithful to the inerrancy of scripture.

Enns (2016) concurs with this argument about factual inerrancy. In his book *The Sin of Certainty*, the author explores how the evangelical movement's high view of scripture results in an excessive focus on the factual inerrancy of the Bible. In essence, debates about the interpretation of the scripture, to evangelicals, are attacks on the Bible's authority. This standpoint is a result of one of the core tenets of contemporary evangelism; that the Bible's authors were inspired by God, and therefore, the contents of the Bible are free of errors. This tenet underpins the complementarian argument on the surface, and many who follow this doctrine base their arguments on the fact that something is true because it is in the Bible, ergo, it is God's word (Enns, 2016). As such, matters such as female leadership in the church are addressed through this lens. In the end, whether one's position is egalitarian, or complementarian depends on the degree of literalness one applies to the Bible. The higher the degree, the higher the view of the scripture, and the more likely one is to follow complementarian principles. Such

is the reason why Enns (2016) contends that knowing and understanding what to believe and how to believe is a primary preoccupation across the evangelical spectrum.

Women Leadership in the Evangelical Churches

The status of women in the church, in general, has improved globally. Changing attitudes of society towards women have inspired the church and other religious institutions to review their stances on women in leadership (Cadeddu, 2020). According to the authors, women are now accorded various professional roles in churches and synagogues, and in some cases, they have been ordained as clergy. Women are also filling lay leadership positions which were previously closed to them. Hargrove, Schmidt & Davaney (1985) also note that in some cases, one's theology has been changing because of the new developments. To begin with, there has been a recovery of a huge portion of women's history in the church, which had been otherwise downplayed. For example, Pidgeon (2018) writes extensively about Pauli Murray, an influential activist, and priest, who played a significant role in the early 1970s in the Episcopal Church. Murray chaired a commission that examined the issue of women being ordained in the church. In 1977, Murray became one of the first women to be ordained as an Episcopal priest (Pidgeon, 2018). Representations of God and the church have as well progressed. For example, images of the church and God are also changing into a more inclusive paradigm. In addition, a resurgence of the egalitarian approach has been witnessed (Mannon, 2018). The complementarian worldview of evangelicals is no longer being challenged only by secular and feminist progressive forces which choose to ignore scripture in favor of more secular arguments against complementarianism. Rather, avowed, female evangelicals are challenging the status quo by sharing their narratives as testimony to drive further conversations about female roles in the evangelical space (Mannon, 2018). However, these changes do not come without exception.

Hargrove, Schmidt & Davaney (1985) contend that some religious groups have formed opposing camps, taking a stand against increased participation of women in public life. Thus, the progress in as far as the position of women in the church is concerned has been a mixed bag of both progress and setbacks.

Durham (2016) contends that there is still a long way to go as far as women in leadership are concerned in some evangelical churches. The author highlights the case of the Southern Baptist Convention, which passed resolutions meant to discourage more than 1,600 women ordained as ministers in the church from continuing to serve as pastors. It is noteworthy that the Southern Baptists are the most outspoken evangelicals on the issue of women in certain leadership roles (McKinney, 1971). Thus, their statements have a great influence on evangelicals. The fact that the Southern Baptist churches are not led by a centralized hierarchy suggested that the resolutions against female leadership represented the views of their congregants. The denomination, however, produced a statement of faith acknowledging that both men and women were gifted spiritually in a bid to acknowledge the efforts of women in the church (Brekus, 2014).

Scott (2014) summed up the position of women in certain positions of leadership as one that is fraught with challenges. According to her research, there is no question that women are capable leaders. However, there are numerous obstacles, beginning with perception, that challenge them in their bid to lead (Scott, 2014). She notes that, for instance, our perceptions of an ideal leader often do not include the image of a woman. This poses a problem in that most women do not believe that they are leaders in the first place. She seeks to encourage them by telling them that they can do great things, that they are also called by God and gifted, and, more importantly, are needed (Scott, 2014). Tunheim and DuChene (2016) concur, adding that society,

in general, does not completely realize the value of having women in positions of authority and leadership. They further assert that such blindness to the value of female leaders is cultural as it exists across business, government, religious, and education sectors. Scott (2014) also points out that the role of women throughout the history of the church has often been neglected, with appeals to historians to be more balanced largely falling on deaf ears. Tunheim and DuChene (2016) who examined the roles, responsibilities, and professional journeys of female bishops in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America agree that the journey of women into leadership positions has been long and full of neglect. The authors found that a lack of mentors was a significant challenge. Of the seven women interviewed in Tunheim and DuChene's (2016) study, only two had female mentors, and one of these had to seek mentorship outside the church. Moreover, the participants – who are all ordained bishops in the Lutheran Church – reported experiencing sexism at various points during their careers (Tunheim & DuChene, 2016). The bishops stated that the cultural norm and expectation that congregations must see a man on the pulpit stunt the growth of women in leadership positions in the church. Evidence of the complementarian mindset is plentiful from this study, indicating that female leadership in the church is affected by the complementarian/egalitarian debate. Added to this is the fact that while some wrestle with the prohibitions on women in leadership, others are confident in the authority of scripture to the extent that practice stems from their bibliology.

There is a need to do research and illuminate the contributions of women in the church. Scott (2014) also delves into the complementarian/egalitarian debate and notes that both sides have well-formed arguments based on scripture. However, she notes that both sides fail to listen to one another due to the broader settings in which the arguments emerge. Complementarianism is associated with patriarchy, while egalitarianism is associated with radical feminism, which

disputes the authority of scripture (Scott, 2014). The author argues that there is a need for both sides to acknowledge the fears associated with their stances to pave the way for honest dialogue. It is thus evident that the current state of women's leadership in the church in general and the evangelical mission is far from satisfying. The evidence shows that women leaders still face many challenges from perception to institutional barriers and apathy.

Rationale for the study

The study is justified on two major grounds. First, evangelicals hold strong views on scriptural authority regarding female leadership, at least at the popular level, yet the impact of said views are largely unexplored (Allert, 2007). Complementarian/egalitarian debates are both grounded in scripture and have polarized evangelicals for decades despite progress made in acknowledging and empowering female leaders (Hübner, 2015). It is important to investigate whether the views of evangelicals on scriptural authority on female leadership affect active female leaders in different avenues of ministry. Secondly, female leaders among evangelicals continue to face various challenges from institutional barriers, apathy, and lack of self-belief (Durham, 2016; Scott, 2014). There is a need to understand the full extent of the challenges they face and their underlying drivers. This will help mentor a new crop of female leaders who may engage their spiritual gifts and mentor future female leaders.

Gaps in the Literature

Several gaps emerged in the literature review. First, it was apparent that there has been a good deal of scholarly focus on the evolution, controversies, strengths, and weaknesses of the complementarian and egalitarian gender role views. However, there was still limited research on whether said views affect female leadership in the evangelical church in a significant way. Another gap emerged in that evangelicals are still associated with a high view of scripture but

have a variety of stances on the doctrine to the extent of defying categorization. Thus, there is a need to empirically assess evangelical views on scripture rather than assume that they all hold a high view. In addition, women in leadership still face many challenges in evangelical circles and the issue needs further exploration.

Conclusion

The literature review has unpacked the theological stance, theoretical framework, and related literature on the subject. The theological view guiding the paper has three components, dignity, dominion, and oneness in the body of Christ, which collectively demonstrate that women are equally called to be leaders by God. On the other hand, the theoretical review draws from various theories arguing that women can lead as a matter of practical and biblical reality.

Related literature demonstrated that complementarian/egalitarian debates are still ongoing in the evangelical church and are likely to go on for a long time. While such debates are normal and healthy, it is important to consider whether they have any material effects on female leadership, which is the subject matter of concern. It is also unclear whether a high view of scripture still represents the bulk of evangelicals and if such a view significantly affects female leaders. Overall, the literature exposes important questions worthy of investigation to empower and mentor female leaders in the evangelical church.

Chapter Three: Exploratory Research

Introduction

This section will extensively describe the explorative approach that will be taken in addressing the research questions. The section will begin with a synopsis of the research design, which includes the overview of the research (description of the problem, purpose statement, and the research questions) and a brief statement on the methods. This will be followed by a specific focus on explorative and qualitative approaches. Next, the setting of the study, participants, and the sampling process will be described. This will be followed by a description of the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, data collection methods, data analysis, and the chapter summary.

Research Design Synopsis

This section begins with a recap of the problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. This is important in providing the methods that will be adopted in the study. The problem to be addressed in the paper has at least two perspectives. First, gender role views, namely egalitarianism and complementarianism, are important issues for some evangelicals. This is in addition to the high view of scripture that most evangelicals espouse. However, the influence of these approaches with respect to scriptural authority has not been significantly examined in relation to female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination. This is despite an increasing number of female leaders in this denomination and indicative evidence that leadership can be shaped by values, attitudes, and beliefs of the followership. The purpose of the proposed exploratory study is to determine the influence of various views on scriptural authority regarding female leadership on active female

leaders in the Independent Baptist African American denomination. The research questions for the study are:

Main Research Question

RQ1: In what ways do different views on the authority of scripture influence female leadership in Independent Baptist African American denomination

Sub Questions

RQ1: To what degree do evangelicals in the Independent Baptist African American denomination hold a high view of scripture?

RQ2: Are there particular ways, if any, in which a high view of scripture influences female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination?

RQ3: In what ways, if any, do complementarian and egalitarian views on scriptural authority affect female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination?

The research questions will be investigated through an explorative, qualitative research design involving individual interviews and focus groups. The sampling method will be purposive, consisting of female congregants and leaders in the Independent Baptist African American denomination. Apart from interview data, secondary sources will be reviewed to complement the primary data. Analysis of primary data will be undertaken through thematic analysis, which entails finding common ideas, patterns, and concepts.

Overview of Explorative Research

Understanding the meaning of explorative research begins with the basic conceptualization of “to explore.” Thus, as the common understanding of the act of exploring suggests, explorative research is meant to find out more information on a subject rather than present conclusive findings (Stebbins, 2001). An explorative approach is thus understood in

contrast to confirmatory research, which entails testing a priori theory or hypothesis. Exploratory research is the starting point in most research undertakings, customarily aimed at understanding the whys of potential relationships between variables (Butler, 2014).

After explorative research has been completed, confirmatory research can be conducted to test various theories or a single theory that emerged from the explorative research. Simply put, an explorative approach is necessary when dealing with novel concepts that need to be defined better and clarified. Confirmatory research, which entails testing the hypothesis, proceeds when the researcher has a good idea of what is going on and thus wants to subject their theory to empirical testing. The key concepts in explorative research are the novelty of the questions addressed by the researcher and the tentative nature of the findings. For this reason, Swedberg (2018) recommends the definition of exploratory research as “the concept of defining something novel and interesting by working through the research topic” (p. 2). Thus, the choice of an explorative approach is often advised in those instances where research inquiry entails breaking new ground.

An explorative approach suits the proposed study because the various scriptural views on female leadership (complementarianism and egalitarianism) are being examined in a novel angle, namely the influence of those views. The extant literature is merely descriptive of those views and the debate they generate in the evangelical church (Warner and Warner, 2005; Lee-Barnwell, 2016). An explorative approach is necessary for developing theories on how the different views on scriptural authority impact female leadership or entirely new questions worthy of further exploration or confirmatory studies. In addition, the proposed research will be conducted in the Independent Baptist African American denomination which is fresh ground for such kind of inquiry. The study is novel, which means that even the existing knowledge on evangelical

doctrines and scriptural views on women's leadership may only apply with strict qualification. An explorative study is thereby justified to provide posteriori hypotheses that may be subject of confirmatory studies soon. In addition, there is a great diversity within the approach of high views of scripture amongst evangelicals, which makes it difficult to articulate a universal doctrine that applies to all evangelicals (Sparks, 2008; Bovell, 2011). This calls for empirical clarification of the concept in the Independent Baptist African American denomination. Thus, an explorative approach is justified in the proposed study.

The dominance of confirmatory research has led to unjustified criticism of explorative research. Contrary to the criticism, Butler (2014) explains that confirmatory and exploratory research designs are complementary and equally important. The author explains that both confirmatory and exploratory research are necessary because finding the question is more essential than getting the answer. Exploratory studies are used to refine and validate questions, while confirmatory studies are concerned with answers to those questions (Butler, 2014). Through explorative studies, researchers connect ideas to unearth cause and effect relationships, discover potential relationships, come up with novel research questions and address type II errors (Reiter, 2013). On the other hand, confirmatory research addresses type I errors, confirms a priori relationships and gives definitive answers as to whether relationships between variables are statistically significant (Butler, 2014). Confirmatory studies that focus on testing of hypotheses using quantitative and qualitative methods also have their weaknesses. Reiter (2013) for instance points out that confirmatory studies often ignore the role of the researcher and the fact that their backgrounds, training, and culture may influence the questions they ask, how they ask them and the answers that they find acceptable. Therefore, both explorative and confirmatory research serve important purposes and none of the two should be considered inferior.

In sum, exploratory research is both justified and suitable in the proposed study. The nature of the research questions and the setting of the study in the Independent Baptist African American denomination confer novelty to the study's focus, necessitating an explorative approach to lay the ground for future confirmatory studies. In addition, there is a need for exploration to clarify the nature and extent of a high view of scripture in the study, given the difficulty in elucidating a universal doctrine that applies to all evangelicals.

Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative research is an important paradigm in the social sciences. It is used to understand phenomena in-depth (Astalin, 2013). Qualitative research uses methods such as interviews, observation, and focus groups to explore phenomena within their natural setting. In principle, qualitative research does not entail manipulation of variables and works well with small samples that are capable of being studied in rich detail. Like exploratory research, a qualitative design entails questions of "why" and "how" in relation to a specific topic or idea rather than the testing of hypotheses (Astalin, 2013). It is important to think about qualitative research in juxtaposition to quantitative research. This is because the variance between the two research designs closely resembles the differences between exploratory and confirmatory studies. Most qualitative studies are explorative in approach, while most quantitative studies are confirmatory in nature. Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey (2016) further explain that there is mutual criticism of the two research designs, just like there is between exploratory and confirmatory studies. The authors explain that qualitative studies are treated with suspicion in quantitative circles due to their small samples, influences of researcher bias, and their general subjectivity. On the other hand, qualitative circles criticize quantitative methods for failing to acknowledge researcher bias, simplifying the human experience for the sake of generalization,

and using guesswork to deduce the meaning of aggregate data (Hammarberg et al., 2016).

However, both research designs are appropriate for use. Thus, a qualitative research design is a valid way of undertaking a study if it is employed in the right way.

Qualitative research generates non-numerical data. The approach is appropriate in understanding the experiences, beliefs, attitudes, and interactions of individuals (Pathak, Jena, & Kalra, 2013). It is a suitable paradigm of research if employed to understand issues from the perspective of the participant. Such experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of individuals investigated using qualitative methods cannot be reduced into numbers, hence the non-numerical nature of qualitative data. In practice, qualitative research is a broad term that refers to several methods and approaches that may vary in terms of assumptions, the role of the researcher, and focus (Astalin, 2013). However, there are certain important features that bring together various forms of qualitative research. These include the use of methods that are flexible and sensitive to the research, the use of analytic frameworks that respect detail, complexity, and context, and taking an interest in the way certain phenomena are understood, interpreted, or produced (Astalin, 2013). Examples of qualitative research methods include phenomenological, observational, and ethnographic studies.

A qualitative research design is ideal for the proposed study for several reasons. First, the study is concerned with how different views on scriptural authority on female leadership influence active female leaders, which is a proper question for qualitative study. The latter is an appropriate design for studying views and experiences from the perspective of the participant (Pathak, Jena, & Kalra, 2013). In this case, the scriptural views of individuals from the Independent Baptist African American church and how they affect female leaders in the same denomination are the focus of study. Qualitative methods are also used to study phenomena in-

depth, and in this case, the study will explore the influence of various views on scriptural authority and their influence in great depth. The choice of a single denomination as the study allows for an in-depth, rich exploration of the topic. It is also noteworthy that the experience of female leaders interviewed in this study cannot be reduced into numbers and is thus suitable for qualitative treatment. Other factors favoring the application of a qualitative design include the novel nature of the questions guiding the study and the underlying explorative approach of the study. In sum, the proposed study will be best carried out using a qualitative approach.

Setting

The proposed setting of the research is the Independent Baptist African American denomination. The independence of the denomination suggests that the churches within it represent several different categories, thus limiting broad generalization in evangelical traditions (McKinney, 1971). The churches have unique practices, beliefs, and doctrines owing to their rich history. Black churches were founded by former slaves and serve a large community of people of color within the Baptist tradition (McKinney, 1971). The churches have remained important to people of color centuries later, establishing themselves as important institutions representing a source of hope, tradition, and culture among colored Christians. Their messages are characterized by deep emotionalism and social justice. The Independent Baptist African American church thus offers a unique perspective for exploring the experience of female leaders. With the church being formed on the platform of hope, justice, and emancipation, attitudes towards female leaders and interpretation of the relevant scriptures can provide rich, novel data. In addition, the centrality of the denomination to Christians of African American descent suggests that the study findings will have a wide arena for practical application.

Participants

Participants are often drawn from the population and selected for potential participation in the study subject to their consent. The first process of identifying the participants needed for a study is to select a population that can best provide answers to the stated research questions (Sargeant, 2012). In the proposed study, the ideal participants are female leaders within the Independent African American Baptist church who can report on their experiences in leadership and how they have been influenced by various views on scriptural authority. Since the study is concerned with the experience of female leadership, only leaders of the corresponding gender will form part of the study population.

Sampling

The most appropriate sampling method of the proposed study is purposive sampling. The latter is a non-probability sampling technique in which the researcher relies on their judgment to choose the most suitable participants (Hammarberg et al., 2016). In this case, the researcher will select female participants who are active leaders in the denomination. In deciding inclusion and exclusion of participants to fit the sample size, elements like years of experience, availability to take part in the research, and a keen understanding of the nature of research questions in the study may be used to make judgments.

Sample Size

The sample size in qualitative research is often not decided in advance. Ultimately, the number of individuals involved in a qualitative study is dependent on the number that is necessary to fulfill all the contours of the phenomenon under study. In the proposed research, this means that the sample size will be determined by the collection of adequate data in respect of all the stated research questions. The adequacy of data depends on reaching the point of saturation,

which is defined as the point where individual or focus group interviews do not lead to the generation of new themes and concepts (Sargeant, 2012). However, the researcher will begin with a sampling frame of 50 female leaders who will form part of the individual and focus assembly interviews. If saturation is attained before all the 50 individuals are involved, the rest will not take part in the study. The relatively large number of 50 participants is also important to ensure that anyone who is unable to take part in the study for any reason is readily replaced.

Instruments

There are three key instruments that will be utilized in the study. First is the interview schedule, which will encompass a list of guiding questions to be administered to the study participants. The questions will be semi-structured to fit the needs of an explorative research approach. Secondly, the researcher will use a voice recorder to capture the responses of the study participants. In the event physical interviews are impossible (in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic), the interviews will be carried out online using tools like Zoom or Blue Jeans. Finally, the researcher will also need transcription software like Rev Call Recorder to help transcribe the oral interviews into text.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis will be conducted concurrently. Carrying out the two processes together is important for the purposes of determining the point of saturation at which the study would be complete (Sargeant, 2012). Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. An interview is a process of gathering information through a conversation (Easwaramoorthy & Zarinpoush, 2006). The process involves an interviewer who coordinates the conversation by asking questions to the participant. Interviews are suitable for social science research because they provide in-depth information on a subject. Though the researcher uses pre-

determined questions in semi-structured interviews, there is room for flexibility and thus pursuing new, interesting lines of questioning that may emerge or require clarification. The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The latter is a suitable method for qualitative research that entails examining data to identify consistent ideas, concepts, themes, and patterns (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The thematic analysis begins with highlighting text and assigning labels, called codes. The codes are then examined for patterns that are connected to give rise to themes. The latter are then subjected to further review for accuracy and completeness before defining and naming the final themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). An inductive approach will be taken in the thematic analysis. The approach entails letting the data determine the themes rather than coming with pre-conceived themes that are expected from the analysis based on some theoretical predictions. Secondary data will also be collected from credible, published sources and used to complement the primary interview data.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research design offers an active role to the researcher. The role of the researcher begins with conceptualizing the study, designing the research questions, and obtaining necessary material resources. In addition, the purposive sampling method means that the researcher's judgment will be critical in deciding the nature of participants that will be involved in the study (Pathak, Jena, & Kalra, 2013). During the data collection process, the researcher will also be required to present themselves to the participants, communicate about the role of the research, the scope of the study, objectives, and the importance of the participants in the study. More critically, the researcher will carry out the data analysis, which entails identifying themes and patterns in the data. Inevitably, the heavy involvement of the researcher in the study, particularly in data collection and analysis, may import their values and biases in the research.

This bias will be addressed by allowing peer review of the themes during the analysis. In addition, the researcher will be keen to reflect and consider their role in the research, with the aim of identifying biases and addressing them in advance.

Precedent Literature

The study will be conducted on a two-prong approach. The first approach has been discussed in detail, which is primarily qualitative research using a descriptive research design. The second approach is the use of secondary sources of information. The sources chosen for the study will allow the researcher to gain additional and complementary or argumentative data regarding the data retrieved from primary sources of data. The proposed secondary sources of information are provided (see References) Ethical Considerations

The first factor to consider is the relationship between the researcher and the participants. Establishing a good rapport with the participants is crucial to how well they will respond to the questions. The researcher for the current study will introduce themselves to the participants to create a relationship before undertaking the interviews (Sanjari et al., 2014). This association will allow the participants and the researcher to get clarifications regarding the scope of the research, honest opinions about the rights of the participants, and establish any ethical concerns regarding participation (Sanjari et al., 2014). The researcher will also be careful to inform the participants of all their rights, including confidentiality and privacy. Informed consent will be secured, with individuals taking part in the study on a purely voluntary basis. Participants will have to sign consent forms to document their willingness to take part in the study in clear, express terms.

Further, ethical aspects regarding the minimization of intrusion and autonomy of the participants will be considered. The researcher will ensure that the study is conducted in the least intrusive form and individuals are offered the liberty to withdraw their participation in the study

at any point. More importantly, given that the study will involve human participants, the commencement of any data collection or preparatory processes will be strictly subject to approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Therefore, the IRB and due process of diligence was followed to ensure approval for the study, as it entailed interaction with research participants, and the university board provided its approval for the same.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed the methodology that will be followed in addressing the research questions in sufficient detail. Drawing on the research problem, purpose, and nature of research questions, it was demonstrated that an explorative, qualitative approach is best suited in conducting the proposed study. The suitability of an explorative approach was laid out in terms of the novelty of the research focus, while the propriety of a qualitative approach was grounded on the nature of the research questions and the focus of the study in general. The setting of the study will be in the Independent Baptist African American denomination, with its rich history and uniqueness in the evangelical tradition providing a suitable basis for exploring the experiences of female leaders.

The study participants will be purposively sampled and feature female leaders in the selected denomination. Data will be collected using qualitative interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis. Data collection and analysis will be carried out concurrently to be able to identify the point of saturation. Since the researcher will take an active role in the study, there is a need to introduce measures like peer review in the data analysis to address bias. In addition, the study will observe ethical considerations, including developing a relationship with the study participants, informing them of their rights, and obtaining informed consent from everyone constituting the study sample.

Chapter Four: Findings

Overview

This chapter focuses on the findings of the qualitative study. It has five main sections, namely, the overview, participants, the themes, research question responses, and the summary. The findings will be narrated for the overall purpose of the study, which was to investigate the influence of various views regarding scriptural authority on female leadership on female leaders in the Independent Baptist African American church. The said views, as framed in the research questions, and grounded in the literature, include egalitarianism, complementarianism, and a high view of scripture, all of which are popularly held in the evangelical tradition. Since the data were analyzed using thematic analysis, the various themes evident in the data will be presented under the three research questions that guided the inquiry.

Research Questions

Research Question One

To what degree do evangelicals in the Independent Baptist African American denomination hold a high view of scripture?

Research Question Two

Are there particular ways, if any, in which a high view of scripture influences female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination?

Research Question Three

In what ways, if any, do complementarian and egalitarian views on scriptural authority affect female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination?

Participants

Though the qualitative study targeted 50 participants for the interviews, the researcher only managed to work with 30 of them, giving a 60% response rate. Still, the response rate was adequate given the qualitative nature of the research, with emphasis placed on the richness of data rather than the number of participants. All the participants were female leaders, taking active roles in the Independent Baptist African American church. They were aware of the leadership situation, experience, and challenges encountered on a day-to-day basis. Due to ethical considerations, the identity of the participants was not disclosed anywhere in the interview. Apart from the fact that some participants did not answer some of the questions, the data generated from participant responses were adequate and insightful for the purposes of the study.

Results

This section presents the themes that emerged from the qualitative data. The themes have been organized according to the research questions that informed the inquiry. The themes under each of the research questions will be discussed separately.

RQ1: The Extent to Which Evangelicals hold a High view of Scripture.

The first research question focused on the extent to which evangelicals in the Independent Baptist African American Denomination held a high view of scripture. The following themes emerged upon analysis of the qualitative data:

Scripture Matters

Most of the participants held the view that scripture was the most important source of faith and was beyond impeachment. They expressed the view that only scripture mattered ahead of all other considerations. Thus, even when asked whether social and cultural beliefs affected how women were viewed in church leadership, one of the participants answered:

“No, it is scripture that matters...”

The participant suggested that her leadership style was unaffected by social and cultural norms and only depended on the Bible. Even when culture and social norms dictated against the assumption of leadership roles, she remained firm if the Bible supported her. The Bible was the ultimate authority that trumped all other considerations. She continued:

“To me, culture and society are inferior to what the scriptures tell me. If God has spoken to me through scripture and encouraged me to teach, I will teach. Human beings will always have their own ways, but to me, scripture is the only standard.”

The large extent to which scripture mattered to the participants was also evident in the way they addressed seemingly controversial issues that become apparent for egalitarians and complementarians. If it was scripture, it was God’s word and the only thing that was of importance. This was evidenced in the answer supplied by one of the participants when faced with the question on egalitarianism:

Question: Egalitarianism suggests that women and men are perceived to be equal and should have similar roles in the church, including leadership. Galatians 3:28 states, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus,” (*New International Version*). What are your views about this stance, and how has it shaped you?

Answer: “...If God said it, I believe it. God’s word is supreme and should be taken as it is. All I need to know is if it is God who has said it.”

Thus, the participants did not seem to care about the variance presented by the Bible verses that address the role of women in the church. Overall, the word of God was shown to matter above any controversial interpretations of scripture or social and cultural norms. Another

participant emphasized full belief in the word of God. When asked whether they had a high view of scripture, they responded, “Yes, I believe everything in the word of God. All of it is true and should guide us in every endeavor.” It also emerged that the entire question of women's leadership in the church narrowed down to what scripture said. It was not about gender-based evaluations but whether the leadership conformed to God’s word. This emerged clearly amongst participants who were asked to give their opinions on female leadership in the church. One participant answered as follows:

Question: What is your opinion about female leadership in the church?

Answer: “...If they are following the pastor and the word, I see no problem. It is not about who is in charge but if they obey the word...”

Thus, to the participant, female leadership would be justified if it were aligned to the word of God. The real question was whether whoever was in leadership was following Biblical and pastoral truths rather than gender. While the participant implicitly suggested that female leaders had to be under the authority of the pastor, the centrality of scripture in justifying their leadership was equally evident. Therefore, scripture was again the only thing that mattered in determining opinions on female leadership.

Finally, there was equally an element of scripture being ahead of personal understanding and feelings. The participants appeared to suggest that their interpretation of scripture or what they thought about it was secondary to the text itself. This was evident from the answer provided by one of the participants below:

Question: Would you say that you hold a high view of scripture? What would that mean?

Answer: “...I take what the scripture says very seriously and hold it above my own thoughts and understanding...”

Another participant explained that they had to pray to understand scripture to avoid imputing their own thinking into what it meant. When faced with the question of complementarianism, they responded:

Question: 1st Timothy 2:12 states that “do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.” The scripture clearly has a definite presumption about the role of women in church leadership. What is your opinion regarding the references about the Bible on female leadership?

Answer: “...many people have rushed to express their own feelings about that verse and used it to their own reasoning. For me, I would pray and ask God to speak to me through it. Scripture is God’s word, and we must ask him what his intention is every time we interpret it. Only prayer can help us understand scripture separately from our own understanding.”

In summary, the research participants demonstrated that scriptures mattered ahead of social and cultural norms, controversial interpretations of scriptural content, the gender identity of those in leadership, and their own thoughts and understanding.

Scriptures Speaking in Context

Another powerful theme that emerged from the data was that scripture appeared to be speaking to the participants that guided their beliefs. It had a voice of its own that the study’s participants sought to find whenever they read the Bible. Thus, the text of scripture was not enough, but rather paying attention to how it spoke to the prevailing circumstances. This was evident from the narration of one of the participants:

Question: Would you say that you hold a high view of scripture? What would that mean?

Answer: “yes I have a high view of scripture. This means that I try to understand what scripture is speaking to me in today’s world.”

The answer revealed that the participant did not just pay attention to the text of the Bible but also the circumstances in which we live in today. Though the text of the Bible may be viewed differently, the key part was to pay attention to what it was specifically speaking. One had to consider what the scripture meant in the world today or their individual life. This was emphasized by another participant, “I read the scriptures asking God to tell me what they mean to my life. I believe the word of God.” Thus, the scriptures were not to be taken as just words according to the participants. It was imperative to always pray and ask God what they meant at the individual level. Beyond that, some participants emphasized the need to put scripture in its proper context. When presented with questions regarding complementarianism, one participant noted as follows:

Question: 1st Timothy 2:12 states that “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.” The scripture clearly has a definite presumption about the role of women in church leadership. What is your opinion regarding the references about the Bible on female leadership?

Answer: “According to what we were taught, this was because women were asking questions when business was being conduct (sic) and that held up progress but had nothing to do with ministry.”

The above answer demonstrates the importance of conceptualizing the authority of scripture amongst the study’s participants. Scripture does not just speak but rather speaks in context. Another participant observed in equal terms regarding the import of 1st Timothy 2:12:

“This scripture when taught out of context may lead me to believe that, but when added into scripture may not mean the same.”

The quote above further reinforces the essence of context in making a proper understanding of scripture. The participant was mindful of scripture being taken out of context and being ascribed meanings that are far from the intended ones. In summary, the participants indicated that scripture speaks to an individual or the society.

Overall, the first research question focusing on the extent to which evangelicals hold a high view of scripture led to two main themes, namely, scripture matters, and scripture speaks in context. The first theme, scripture matters, suggested that scripture was superior to cultural and social norms, interpretations of scripture – controversial or not – as well as personal feelings and understanding. It was the highest authority upon which the faith of the participants was predicated. The second theme, on the other hand, emphasized the fact that scripture is not plain text but rather speaks to people and does so in context. Individuals should thus always ask themselves what scripture is trying to tell them regarding their circumstances, whether individual or at the societal level. The issue with such an approach is that society changes constantly; thus, a changing interpretation of scripture may change its meaning as the society advances. However, such events are less likely where a holistic interpretation of scripture is adopted and adhered to, because the overall message of God's word is constant.

RQ2: Whether a High View of Scripture Influences Female leadership

The second research question concerned whether the presence of a high view of scripture in the Independent Baptist African American denomination had any influence on female leadership. Three major themes emerged, namely, necessity, no effect, and obedience.

Necessity

The participants suggested that female leadership was so necessary that it could not be affected by views that are for or against it. Without female leadership, churches in the

Independent Baptist African American church would barely function (Green, 2003). This was evident in the answer by one of the participants:

Question: What is your opinion about female leadership in the church?

Answer: “We need female leadership in the church; without female leadership, many things won’t (sic) function.”

The participant thus made it clear that female leadership was a necessity in the church; thus, they would be guided by verses in scripture that support the advancement of female leadership. For instance, they relied on verses such as Joel 2:28 and Acts 2:17 (*New International Version*) that recognized that women were equally called to serve. The reason for this was that female leadership was the driver of many programs and served the important purpose of showing young people that they could be anything. The latter role is critical because female leaders are role models to young girls who aspire to become leaders in the future. This was emphasized by one of the participants:

“We need female leadership in the church to show young people that they can be anything. If only male leaders are allowed in the church, our girls will grow up thinking they are inadequate and cannot take certain roles in the society. Women are capable and we should show that to the young ones.”

Thus, besides the practical necessity of women leaders in the church, they were also needed as role models, which left no opportunity for them to be distracted by what people were saying about their roles or the views of their congregants. One participant made this point:

“If God calls a person, their work is needed in the church because they have been commanded by the spirit. It will not matter whether the person is male or female. We

cannot defy the spirit, so our work is to do what we have been commanded no matter the challenges. The calling is enough.”

The aspect of a calling was also profound among the participants in making the point on necessity. When asked about 1st Timothy 2:12, one of the participants noted that if the verse was meant to block women from taking leadership positions in the church, then God would not call women. The fact that women were frequently called to serve meant that God needed them in leadership. The participant continued:

“God has always called women to serve in various positions in the church. Their work is always needed to help the church grow and realize its mission. I do not think that the verse (1st Timothy) was meant to block women from arising to leadership positions (...) We cannot reconcile God’s calling to women and open suggestions that he needs them in the church with a direction requiring them to be quiet. The verse needs to be thought about in its context.”

Others suggested that women have different leadership styles compared to men, but both were vitally important in leading the church. The participant argued that women are more emotional in their leadership, which is an important complementary approach to leadership in the church:

“Women are more emotional when they lead which is good for the church. Some things need you to feel what others are going through and respond emotionally rather than with reason. I am not saying that men cannot be emotional but our leadership style as women is more emotional and empathetic. We fill a big gap in the church which I focus on rather than what people say about me or women leaders in general.”

Thus, the overriding idea was that women were responsible for filling an important gap in the church and were needed for very many reasons. That necessity of women leadership was what the female leaders were focused on rather than any opposition or discrediting ideas that they faced in their mission. Asked whether the various views of scriptural authority on female leadership impacted her leadership, one participant noted.

“I have an important role that has been bestowed to me by God. I must focus on that, whether people agree with me or not. In every position we hold, there is going to be naysayers and many who will oppose our mission. That, however, should not affect how to respond to our calling and exercise our powers. It is God who has called us and not man.”

In summary, the participants felt that their role was important in the church as an issue of necessity because they play roles that hold the church together, they act as role models to the young generations, have a different leadership style when compared to men, and further are called to serve. The fact that female leadership was a necessity in the church made it unimportant to consider other things, such as the views of the congregants about female leadership. The ordainment of such leadership by God was sufficient, and any opposition towards female leadership had to be marginalized to honor God’s call.

No Effect

There were several participants who acknowledged that there are views against female leadership in the church, but none of those views were material to their leadership style or aspirations. In some instances, they answered the question with a simple “no” without any qualification. A good example is in the exchange below:

Question: Do you think that the views of your congregants regarding scriptural authority on female leadership have any impact on the way you conduct your leadership duties?

Answer: No

In some cases, the participants observed that the different views of congregants regarding female leadership in the church were a democratic phenomenon. People had different views on all manner of issues, and it was perfectly expected to be so in any communal setting. One participant made it quite clear.

“In a church setting we have many kinds of people. They may take different views on issues in a way that contradicts my view or the pastor’s. This is no problem because we expect our communities to have different ideas on any topic. We are not a church because we agree on everything but because we have all been called by God to serve him in his purpose.”

Another participant made similar observations but added that a leader should not pay attention to views, especially if they are negative in nature. The only reason they would pay attention to such views would be if they constitute genuine criticism that can help them improve in their leadership:

“As leaders, we are out there in the field to be studied and criticized. There will always be opinions about us, which we should not pay attention to or take them into our hearts. Of course, we should have an open mind and consider constructive criticism when it comes along. Some people give your ideas that will help to improve ministry and serve God better. These ones are not to be ignored. But those who just want to say they that you are a woman and should not lead we just ignore and pray for them.”

Another reason why the participants suggested that a high view of scripture complemented their leadership style, or its basic nature was that leadership was a matter of exercising the gifts that God had given them. They argued that their focus would be on exercising their gifts and not fighting off views. This was evident from the narrative by one of the participants:

“God has poured his spirit upon all people and gave us gifts to serve him with. We must focus on those gifts and put them to fruition no matter what view we hold of scripture. I think the Bible has warned about the failure to use the gifts that God has given us, and we cannot use the views of our congregants as an excuse. Whether positive or negative, the views of our congregants will always be there, but we are expected to serve. Every morning, my worry is whether I am serving God as he expects and not what the people are saying about it...”

There was a further element of God equipping the people that He has called to serve and thereby giving them the ability to rise above all the challenges they face. Therefore, when the application of a high view of scripture contradicted participation, the participants were properly equipped to address it using the guidance provided by God. One participant observed:

“When God call us, he equips us properly for the tasks ahead. This means that I have what it takes to face what is before me. Sometimes we go through really discouraging situations, but God is with us and gives us the patience and wisdom to navigate. Therefore, I am not concerned or affected by what people in the church say. I know God has a purpose and a reason for putting me in this position, and he will always give me the strength I need to soldier forward.”

The observations on God's gifting helping to deal with naysayers were equally echoed by another participant:

“When we get filled by the Holy Spirit, we are gifted in different ways to serve. Some of these gifts like patience, humility and kindness help us to interact with people of different kinds, some of whom may not even approve of our ministry. However, the gifts are sufficient to ensure that we weather the difficult moments and give glory to God in the end.”

Overall, the participants did not find negative views, including those backed by a high view of scripture, influencing their leadership. They acknowledged the existence of such views but found them to be of no effect because they accepted that individuals would have different views in a democratic environment. In addition, God had gifted and equipped them to handle such views when they emerged. In the end, it was clear that though a high view of scripture is important, it was complemented by ways in which women felt called to lead.

Obedience

Another major theme that was evident among the participants was obedience. Most of them claimed that their work as church leaders was in obedience to God's call and scriptures. The effect of a high view of scripture is to lead them into total submission to God's word and directions. This was set out by one of the participants in elaborate detail.

“I think the scriptures are clear that God calls whoever he wants to serve him. When I see many examples in scripture where God called women and gave them a mission, I relate to my own experience. I must proceed to obey what scripture and God's call is commanding me into. I believe it is the case with every female leader.”

It was further explained that scriptures express a clear intention to bring women into the leadership of God's people. Serving in the church in a leadership position was essentially responding to God's will. It was an act of obedience that women leaders displayed and that every other church member needed to reflect. This was the argument made by one of the participants:

“I think when we read scripture carefully and without being biased, we can see that God is commanding women to be in leadership just like men. We must obey God and serve, and those who are in church must also be obedient to let us serve God in his purpose. Scripture leans towards allowing women to serve rather than prohibiting the same at any level.”

There was a common thread amongst the participants requiring that scriptures be examined on the question of women's leadership. The participants were of the view that those who viewed scripture as prohibiting women's leadership were not giving it a holistic look. One participant was particularly forthright about this:

“When you look at this verse (referring to 1st Timothy 2:12) without fitting it in the whole book, you do not get God's message. You must read the verse and fit it in the rest of the Bible to understand what God is speaking to us through it. To me, God is clearly commanding us throughout the Bible to serve him in leadership and I must read the whole book to understand God's message and obey it.”

Thus, the participants were for the obedience to the whole Bible and not just parts of it. Once they read the Bible in a holistic manner, they found a duty to obey God through service at all levels, including leadership. One participant made the case:

“I take my position in leadership to be an act of obedience to the Bible. God called many women in the scriptures to serve, and they immediately left all they were doing and

followed God's call. We must emulate these women when God calls us because that is what God expects. He demands total obedience to his word which is what we must offer. Obedience is better than sacrifice."

It was the high view of scripture that largely led to the idea of obedience. Many participants were strong about the importance of staying true to scripture and paying attention when it commands women to serve. In their view, failure to respect women in leadership was because of not taking scripture seriously. One of the participants explained:

"To me, the scriptures are everything. I take them profoundly serious especially when they speak on important matters such as leadership. I genuinely think that everyone should because the Bible is our primary authority where we take instructions from. And when we read it, we see various places where it requires women to serve and be active even in leadership. Those who are against women taking up leadership do not take verses that explain that seriously. We must all submit to the scriptures and obey what God is saying in the different verses of the Bible."

In summary, the participants painted the picture of serving in leadership as being an act of obedience to scripture and God. They argued for a holistic reading of the Bible which reveals several places where women are mandated to be active in leadership positions. Thus, the effect of a high view of scripture was to inspire them into honoring God's call to serve. It was also to take the call to serve seriously as an edict from God and consequently consider those opposed to their service as in opposition to God's purpose.

RQ3: The ways in which Complementarian and Egalitarian Scriptural Views Affected Female Leadership

The third research question was concerned with the ways in which complementarian and egalitarian views on scripture affected female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination.

Strictly Complementarian or Egalitarian

The interviewees demonstrated strict adherence to the complementarian or egalitarian scriptural views. They were either for the complementarian view, which led them to conclude that the roles of women in church leadership were restricted or the egalitarian view, which led them to believe that women could take any leadership role in the church. The key distinction was that female leadership was impacted by the leader's own scriptural views rather than those of their congregants. Complementarians argued that women could not serve when teaching and the exercise of authority were combined. They could only serve under cover of male authority, as demonstrated by one of the participants:

“Women are restricted from serving in the church when teaching and exercise of authority are combined (senior pastor, elder, Bishop etc.). However, they can teach under the proper covering of male authority.”

The views of the participants resonated with classic complementarianism. There were several other participants who equally demonstrated a faithful adherence to the complementarian view, albeit in different words.

One participant invited to comment on the scriptures in 1st Timothy 2:12 was of the view, “I submit wholly to the word. I submit to the male head (Pastor, husband) and as they permit changes, so will I.” The perspective introduced the idea that male headship was the key factor in

determining women's leadership, and only under its authority could a woman teach. The view is strictly complementarian because it even ascribes the power to decide whether women can serve in leadership on the male figures at home and in the church. If the male leadership was against females assuming leadership roles, then that would be the case.

Notably, the participants with complementarian views observed that females only serve in their churches under male supervision:

“We have clear guidelines in our church that allow women to serve at different capacities under the pastor's leadership. We ordain women to serve under different capacities as the pastor permits. We have women serving under different ministries under the pastor's guidance.”

Thus, complementarians held the view that women can only serve under the leadership of the pastor and any position they take must be sanctioned by the male headship. This influenced their leadership aspirations and practices, with many only serving under male leaders. One of the participants made it clear:

“The Bible calls men to be Bishops and Pastors, not women. Women can be ministers in the church but not of high authority. We must learn the difference and respect it to honor God in our service in the church.”

Thus, under the complementarian view, women could only become ministers of low authority in the church setting. They could not hold positions of authority, as is the case of pastors and Bishops. The consequence of a complementarian view was to limit the level to which women could serve in the church. One participant reflected aptly on the said limitation:

“I am more than happy to serve as a minister in the church, but I know where my limits are. God has anointed and called male leaders to exercise authority at the highest level,

and I must operate under their headship. So, I can become a minister or take any position under my pastor or any other male figure. At home I submit to my husband while in the church I also submit to the male leadership that God has placed there.”

In reacting to the verses on egalitarianism, complementarians were clear that they did not view such verses as Galatians 3:28 as a license for them to serve at the highest levels of authority in the church. Some explained that even if it was possible for them to exercise such authority in the church, it might not be the best course of action. This emerged quite clear in the narrative of one of the participants:

“I thank God who allows me to hear his voice in obedience and make myself available to serve in humility. If he says that I can serve in leadership, I will. However, it is important to note that everything is permissible but not everything is expedient.”

In other words, the participant was concerned that trying to serve in the church was not an end to a means. One needed to take a broader perspective as to whether it was a beneficial undertaking even when it was permitted by the male headship and the scriptures. Other participants warned that Galatians 3:28 was not about leadership per se:

“The verse (Galatians 3:28) means we are one in Christ and equal as human beings before his eyes. However, it is not really about leadership and what roles we should take in the church setting. I agree with the scripture that we are equal in God’s eyes regardless of our race, color, gender or any other characteristic, but I don’t consider it to be about leadership.”

In summary, complementarians took a faithful approach to scriptures that appeared to restrict women from rising to certain leadership positions in the church and saw such ascendancy

as only subject to male headship. They also interpreted verses aligning to the egalitarian view as unrelated to the topic of leadership.

Conversely, egalitarians held the view that women could hold any position of leadership in the church. They were not limited in any way from assuming leadership positions and could rise to positions that involve the exercise of authority. One participant made it clear:

“If a woman has been gifted with anointing, she should be able to teach. God anoints people to lead whether they are men or women, and so I think a woman can have any leadership position in the church.”

Thus, anointing was a doorway into any leadership position in the church. Besides, those who held an egalitarian view have insisted that God could use anyone to achieve His purpose. It was beyond the male-female dichotomy. This was the view represented by one of the participants:

“Women have just as much to bring as men. God can use any living creature to achieve his goals. Dog, cat, trees, men, women, etc. Scripture talks of God even using stones to worship him if we do not rise to the occasion. So, it is not about man and woman, God can use anyone.”

The fact that God can use anyone as He pleases and the practical reality of women being capable just as men to serve in the church was also seen as a reason for women being allowed to serve as leaders. Further, egalitarians argued that God poured His spirit onto all people, male, and female, to serve him. The implication was that both males and females could serve in different capacities in the church and community. One participant made the point:

“God has poured his spirit on all flesh, including women. Since women have received the spirit of God, they can serve in the church at leadership capacities. They are not to be

restricted from assuming leadership roles on any basis because if God did want them to serve, he would not have poured his spirit upon them or bothered to call them to serve.”

Thus, egalitarians in this study viewed God’s anointing and the pouring of his spirit on all flesh as a license for them to hold leadership positions. Some participants observed that the failure to accord women leadership positions in the church had led to some leaving the church. She noted:

“Women should be granted opportunities to lead just like men. The scriptures give no excuse for doing otherwise. However, many churches today do not give women equal opportunities in leadership positions. This has led to many women leaving those churches for places where they are appreciated and given equal opportunities.”

Egalitarians further stated that they expected to be treated in the same way as male leaders, accorded the same respect, and offered more leadership positions in the future. One participant made it clear:

“I expect to be treated just like male leaders. Be recognized and offered equal opportunities. It does not happen now a lot (sic) but going into the future this is what we expect.”

In summary, egalitarians, unlike their complementarian counterparts, expect to participate at all levels of leadership in the church setting. There was a sharp ideological divide within the church leadership, which impacted how the leaders viewed their own leadership aspirations, practices, and limits. The ideological effect of leadership was thus evident from the views held by the female leaders themselves rather than the congregants in their church.

Research Question Responses

The answers to the research questions crystalizing from the themes were as follows:

Research Question One

To what degree do evangelicals in the Independent Baptist African American denomination hold a high view of scripture?

The answer to the above research question was that evangelicals held a high view of scripture to a large extent, as evident from the theme “scripture matters.” A high view of scripture implied that scripture was the main standard for decision making and leadership, ignoring social and cultural concerns. Put differently, evangelicals take scripture very seriously as it is the source of their faith and reasoning. However, that high view of scripture was qualified in that there was an insistence on interpreting scripture in cultural contexts in which they presently minister or serve. For these individuals, the issue of context was revealed by the theme “scripture speaks in context.” Participants insisted on considering what scripture meant in the present circumstances, whether at the individual, societal, or church level. Current context was important in arguing whether certain verses had the implication of blocking female leaders from exercising authority or holding certain positions in the church. The research thus revealed that evangelicals demand a strict approach to scriptural adherence but taking in mind the current context.

Research Question Two

Are there particular ways, if any, in which a high view of scripture influences female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination?

It emerged, in respect of the second research question that a high view of scripture amongst evangelicals did not negatively impact female leadership because they believed their

participation in leadership to be in response to their high view of scripture. Three themes supported this view, notably “necessity,” “no effect,” and “obedience.” Female leadership was a necessity in the church, playing a role that was so important that it could not be affected by views held by the congregation. The theme “necessity” revealed that female leadership was indispensable in the church and left no opportunity to be clawed back by the views of congregants. The female leadership was aware of the critical nature of their calling and the gap they filled in the church and sought to focus on those overriding elements rather than the views in opposition to their roles.

In another lens, the high view of scripture was seen to be a complement to female leadership for other reasons such as leadership being an exercise of God’s gifts, God equipping the female leaders with the tools of addressing negative views and accepting that diverse opinions are likely to emerge from the democratic environments in churches. The female leaders argued that God would not have gifted them to lead if he did not purpose so. Their work as leaders was merely an exercise of God’s gifts. Others acknowledged the existence of views against female leadership but averred that God properly equipped them to deal with detractors when he called them.

The other rationale why female leadership was unaffected by a high view of scripture was that the church environment was democratic, and people were bound to have different opinions therein. To that end, female leaders could not pay attention to opposing views and instead focused on their well-established duties and mission. The third theme was “obedience,” particularized as the observation that the scriptures themselves had commands for women to serve, and hence female leadership was seen to be an act of obedience to God. A high view of scripture and the various views held by congregants in the study, thus justified female leadership

in the church. Overall, the views held by congregants in the Independent Baptist African American church did not influence female leadership.

Research Question Three

In what ways, if any, do complementarian and egalitarian views on scriptural authority affect female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination?

It was apparent that there were strict complementarian and egalitarian views amongst the female leaders in the denomination. Further, the leaders' own ideological inclination affected their leadership aspirations, practices, and perceived limits. Complementarian female leaders felt that they were not supposed to exercise authority, while egalitarian female leaders felt that they could assume any leadership position, including those of authority, in the church. The female leaders were thus affected by their own ideological learnings regarding scripture and female leadership in the church. This effect of ideology (complementarian or egalitarian) was distinguishable from the views held by the congregants, which were found to be of no effect on female leadership in the church.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the findings of the qualitative study based on 30 participant interviews. The findings of the qualitative study have been detailed in respect of all the three research questions that guided the inquiry. On the first research question, focusing on the extent to which evangelicals held a high view of scripture, the results showed that while a high view of scripture was widely held, there was a qualification in that scripture had to be read in context.

The second research question on whether the high view of scripture in the denomination affected female leadership was answered in the negative. Female leaders acknowledged the existence of different views regarding scriptural authority on female leadership, including a high

view of scripture, but argued that it supported their leadership practices and experiences. The effect flowed from the fact that female leadership was a necessity in the church or for reasons such as leadership being an exercise of gifts bestowed to them by God. In addition, the scriptures themselves were considered to justify female leadership, which made such service an act of obedience to God.

On the third research question, focusing on the effect of egalitarian and complementarian ideas of scriptural authority on female leadership, it was apparent that the two views had strict adherents in the denomination. However, only the leaders' complementarian or egalitarian attitudes affected their leadership aspirations, experiences, and practices rather than those of the congregation. The study proves the existence of various views on scriptural authority regarding female leadership in the denomination, but there is no evidence that such views impact female leadership. The only effect that was evident flows from the leaders' own complementarian and egalitarian leanings, not those of the congregation. Thus, complementarian leaders in the denomination viewed the leadership positions they could rise to as limited, excluding those that encompass the exercise of authority. On the contrary, egalitarian leaders felt that they could rise to any leadership position, irrespective of whether the exercise of authority was involved.

Chapter Five: Conclusions

Overview

The aim of this chapter is to detail the conclusions to be drawn from the qualitative study. The purpose of the completed study was to investigate the influence of views regarding women in leadership for females in the Independent Baptist African American denomination. The views in question relate to the role of women in the church, particularly whether they can assume leadership positions in the church and to what extent they can do so. Two popularly held evangelical views were considered, namely egalitarianism, complementarianism, and then investigated for the influence of a high view of scripture on them. The current chapter begins with a summary of the findings, which will be followed by a detailed discussion of the findings considering relevant literature and theory, the methodical and practical implications of the study, delimitations, and limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

There were three research questions that guided the inquiry. The first question addressed the extent to which evangelicals in the denomination the study held a high view of scripture. The findings of the qualitative inquiry indicated that the women who participated in the study in the Independent Baptist African American denomination held a high view of scripture, to a large extent. They considered scripture to be the most important source of their faith and the highest-ranking consideration in every question, including female leadership. Scripture was important, unimpeachable, and mattered above social and cultural norms, interpretations of scripture, whether controversial or not, and personal thoughts and feelings. However, there was an important qualification to the centrality of scripture to the faith of the individuals in the Independent Baptist African American church, with an emphasis laid on interpreting scripture

contextually. The participants insisted that scripture was not plain prose but rather spoke in context. As individuals with a high view of scripture, they would always ask themselves what scripture was trying to teach them in the circumstances. The emphasis on context was also important in addressing Bible verses that appeared controversial. There was an insistence on the need to read Bible verses that were subject of controversy in their proper context to derive their true intent. Therefore, though it was confirmed that evangelicals in the denomination of the study held a high view of scripture, the said view was qualified by the requirement to read the Bible contextually.

The second research question, on the other hand, focused on whether there were any ways in which a high view of scripture amongst the faithful in the denomination affected female leadership. The answer to the research question was positive for uncommon reasons. First, female leadership was incredibly important in the church as a matter of necessity; thus, the high view of scripture could be used to justify it, and any opposing views would be rejected. Female leaders were a necessity because they performed critical roles that held the church together, were needed to show young girls that they could be anything in the future and that God needed female leaders and thus called them to serve. It would not make sense for God to call female leaders into service if he did not need them. Others added that females had a different leadership style from men (female leaders are more emotional), and thus they were needed to complement male leadership. Thus, overall, female leaders were important as a matter of necessity and could not be affected by the views of the congregation.

Secondly, participants accepted that there were views regarding scriptural authority on female leadership in the church but insisted that such views were to no effect. In some cases, the lack of effect on female leadership was unqualified, while some leaders explained that churches

were democratic environments in which diversity of views was allowed. Thus, those who felt that female leaders could not exercise authority were merely expressing their views and could not materially affect the leadership of women. It was also argued that when God called female leaders, he equipped them with the tools to handle negative ideas, and thus they could handle the various views without their leadership being affected.

Thirdly, obedience was also cited as an explanation of why there was no effect from the various views on scriptural authority regarding female leadership on female leaders. Participants observed that the Bible itself gave several instances in which God called female leaders; thus, their leadership was in obedience to God. As people with a high view of scripture, they had to obey God's word and serve as mandated on a holistic reading of the Bible. In sum, there was positive or limited effect of a high view of scripture and related views on female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination due to the necessity of female leadership, the fact that many of the leaders considered their roles to be an act of obedience to God. Further, while many acknowledged that views against female leaders existed in the church, those views/views were taken to be of no effect on female leaders.

The third research question focused on whether complementarian and egalitarian role attitudes influenced female leaders in the denomination of the study. From the analysis, it was clear that participants were either strictly complementarian or egalitarian. Those that were strictly complementarian argued that women were not supposed to hold certain positions in the church, for instance, as elders or Bishops, when teaching was combined with the exercise of authority. They could provide other forms of leadership under the proper covering of male headship both at home and in the church. Accordingly, complementarian female leaders viewed their role as limited in the church. On the other hand, egalitarians emphasized the fact that they could lead

and exercise authority in the church. They could rise to positions like eldership and Bishops. Thus, though the views of congregants regarding scriptural authority on female leadership had no effect on female leaders, the latter's own views regarding scriptural authority on female leadership influenced leadership aspirations, practices, and experiences. The female leaders were thus affected by their own views on scriptural authority regarding female leadership rather than those of their church members.

Discussion

This section will compare the findings of the study to theoretical and empirical literature that has been published on the subject. The discussion will be guided by the research questions that formed the basis of the qualitative inquiry. The first section will thus consider the findings in relation to the extent to which a high view of scripture is held amongst evangelicals in the study, while the second section will address the question of whether the high view of scripture amongst participants in the study had any impact on female leadership. The final section will be dedicated to the question of whether complementarian and egalitarian views regarding scriptural authority on female leadership had any impact on female leaders in the relevant denomination.

The Extent to which A High View of Scripture was Held

Principally, the findings in respect of the first research question mirrored predictions in the empirical literature that the participants would have a high view of scripture. The findings of the qualitative study were that most evangelicals who took part in the study considered scriptures to rank above social and cultural norms, interpretations of the sacred text, as well as their individual thoughts and feelings. It was the main source of authority in their lives and faith, considered to be unimpeachable. The views expressed on the primacy of scripture by respondents in the qualitative study are consistent with Allert (2007), who explained that

evangelicals had a “dropped out of the sky” view of the scriptures. They considered the Bible as perfect and the answer to every important life question. The qualitative study emphasized this observation of biblical supremacy via the insistence of several respondents that female leadership was not an issue if it followed the word. The findings suggested that scripture was the ultimate judge in the question of whether it was fit for women to lead in the church, an argument that would be reliably predicted by Allert (2007) in his description of evangelicals. In sum, there was consistency between the findings of the study and empirical literature predicting a high view of scripture among evangelicals.

However, it is notable that the findings of this research contradicted some scholars who held that there was a great diversity of traditions and views in the evangelical church that rendered a prediction of a high view of scripture untenable. Such scholars believed that it was no longer reasonable to generalize an ideology like a high view of scripture among evangelicals. For instance, McGowan (2008) argued that evangelicals had changed tune since the 19th century, believing that the recorded events in the Bible applied to a different perspective and were no longer binding to contemporary believers. He also suggested that the deviation from a strong belief in the Bible as was written led to a wide variety of doctrines, beliefs, and practices among evangelicals. All these views were disproved by this study as it showed that evangelicals still upheld the high view of scripture and that the scripture written long ago still holds true today.

While some of the scholars arguing for diversity in evangelical churches may have been right to some extent, the findings of the study showed that evangelicals in this denomination still hold a high view of the scripture. It was not a common argument in the narrative that the Bible did not apply to prevailing circumstances. The authors accepted its force and divine inspiration to a great extent. Consistent with the plenary inspiration view that Allert (2007) attributes to

evangelicals, the findings suggested that every word written in the Bible was generally considered to be from God. Therefore, it was still possible to predict a high view of scripture among evangelicals in this denomination with a high probability of success, unlike the arguments to the contrary by some scholars.

It is critical to note that the study's findings on the importance of reading scripture in its proper context are both novel and in accordance with some widely held theoretical views. The novelty that arises in that context was an important qualification to the high view of scripture that is traditionally associated with evangelicals. Authors like Allert (2007) describe the evangelical view of scripture as though the individuals took a robotic approach to scripture, simply believing everything in it according to the plain and ordinary meanings. However, the study showed that evangelicals from the Independent Baptist African American denomination were conscious of the context in which verses like 1 Timothy 2:12 (*New International Version*) were written and further called for a holistic reading of scripture, rather than reliance on individual, cherry-picked sections. The critical question that individuals asked themselves was what scripture was trying to teach them, rather than merely taking the text as it was. Thus, there was a new insight in that the high view of scripture amongst evangelicals was justified with context.

However, there are scholars who argue that evangelicals need to discard Biblicism and instead take the view that the Bible is ambiguous and complex in nature. Smith (2012) is a good example, showing that the evangelical Biblicism that is evident today lacks consistency, especially when problematic Bible verses appear. In the event evangelicals in this study were confronted with Bible verses that appeared to challenge some of their closely held ideals, they would resort to interpretations that were not remotely plausible. A better approach, according to Smith (2012), would be to accept that the Bible, to some extent, was ambiguous and complex.

This argument on complexity marries perfectly with the emphasis by the study's participants to consider the context in verses like 1 Timothy 2:12 (*New International Version*) which allows for generalized interpretations that account for limited leadership roles.

In summary, there was a high degree of alignment between the findings of the study and theoretical and empirical literature on the question of a high view of scripture among the evangelicals in this study, specifically members of the Independent Baptist African American church. It was clear that most held a high view of scripture in the denomination of the study, as was predicted in literature. The study's unique contribution is to qualify the high view of scripture amongst evangelicals. Unlike literature that emphasizes a "dropped out of the sky" view of the Bible among some evangelicals, the study showed that evangelicals in this particular denomination were keen on allowing the Bible to interpret itself.

High View of Scripture: Impact on Female Leadership

Necessity of Female Leadership Neutralizing Potential Effects

There are three views that emerged from the findings in relation to the effect of a high view of scripture on female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denomination. The first view was that female leaders are a necessity in the church, playing critical roles that holds the church together, acting as role models to young girls, and serving the God who called them into leadership. It was also contended that female leadership was a necessity given its higher emphasis on emotion in leadership style compared to some men. Essentially, the conglomeration of these points on necessity made female leadership so important that it could not be affected by whatever views the congregants in their churches held. In many cases, there is credible support for the idea that women serve an indispensable role in the church, which helps to keep churches together. This can be inferred from other parts of public life where

women play critical roles. For instance, Northouse (2017) argues that the question of whether women can lead is moot. According to the author, women have risen to leadership positions in the modern age and served with distinction, putting to bed the question of their capability. Examples cited by Northouse (2017) include Prime Ministers like Benazir Bhutto and Angela Merkel, who have served their nations excellently. Thus, it is no surprise that the study uncovered similar insights in the church. Women play critical roles that make their work in the church an absolute necessity.

There is support in the empirical literature on the view that female leadership is needed in the church to set an example to young girls. Conscious of this critical mission, women leaders cannot afford to be distracted by the views of congregants in their churches. Interestingly, Bishop (2019) observed that there were patriarchal tendencies in the evangelical church that limited the role of women. While women could serve in various avenues, these were mainly restricted to women and children ministries. If female leaders did not rise to challenge this status quo, young girls would grow up with a mindset that their leadership prospects were limited. Female leaders who, by the grace of God, were serving at the highest levels thus needed to be affirmed in their roles and set a good example. In addition, it has been observed in extant literature that the lack of role models was one of the leading factors why women were not rising to leadership positions in the church. Hornstra-Fuchs & Hornstra (2010) made the point that female leaders could not grow in the church because there was no one to mentor them. All they could see were male leaders ahead of them, who preferred to mentor the next generation of male leaders. In the end, there were no female leaders in the church who could bring up the next generation of female leaders. The task of mentoring young girls to grow into female leaders in the church was thus a tough and important one. The participants in the qualitative study were right to a great extent to argue that

their leadership was highly needed to act as role models to young girls in the church and was thus unaffected by opposing views.

Further, the observations of the qualitative study that female leadership was a necessity in the church because God called women, was equally supported in the available literature.

According to Grenz & Kjesbo (2010), it is apparent that God called women to serve whether in ancient or modern times as a matter of historical and theological analysis. The Holy Spirit empowers women to serve in the church and equips them for that purpose. The participants in the qualitative interviews were right to argue that they were needed in service. That calling to serve is underscored by the gifts God Bestows. In addition, Chennattu (2012) observes various instances in the Bible where God called women to serve important roles in his kingdom and mission. Examples from the Bible are the roles played by the mother to Moses in the liberation of Israelites from the yoke of slavery in Egypt. The midwives Shiphrah and Puah also played distinguished roles in the liberation story, despite being women. In fact, they disobeyed the Pharaoh, who was a male figure, and carried out God's purpose for the Israelites in a fearless fashion. It was also notable that Deborah, in the book of Judges, was a female leader who served as a Prophetess and a judge, exercising in matters of law and military prowess. The women in this study determined to focus on responding to God's call and ignoring views that opposed their rise to leadership positions.

The idea that women had different leadership styles compared to men and thus were an important component of male leadership is, however, unsupported in the available literature. The participants in this study argued that female leaders could be more emotional than male leaders, and their emotive character was needed to complement the leadership style of men, which tends to be more rationalistic. If anything, Northouse (2017) warns of such stereotypes that have so far

acted to hinder the rise of women to leadership positions. There were many stereotypes about women's leadership, which in some instances were used to justify blocking them from ascending to leadership positions. Hiel (2016) equally warned of stereotypes, biases, attitudes, and values that served to impede the ascendancy of women into leadership positions. Therefore, while some of the women in the study felt that their role was needed in the church to supplement male leadership from the perspective of differences, it should be noted that these differences are not significant barriers to women engaging in widespread leadership opportunities. The generalization that women are more emotional than men should be avoided in lieu of supporting evidence that this difference could be a potential benefit to leadership capacity.

Non-Materiality of Various Views against Female Leadership and Obedience

There was a strong indication from the qualitative study that female leaders were aware of the existence of various views against female leadership but did not find any of those views to be of any material effect on their leadership. Part of the non-materiality was predicated on the understanding of the church environment as democratic, allowing for the free expression of different ideas. As leaders, women had to appreciate that people could not agree on everything and that there would always be points of debate on different issues. Bacote et al. (2009) agreed that, indeed, the debate is not alien to the evangelical tradition. Thus, the debate in the church today on women in leadership has to be viewed as an extension of such debates that often exist in the church. Female leaders in this study were thus inclined to accept that there will always be debate over their positions as a matter of democracy in the church. The negative views on female leadership, according to the perspectives of the women in this study, were also immaterial in light of their view that God equipped them with the tools to deal with such criticism when he called them. This idea was equally supported in the literature, with Hiel (2016) explaining that

some female leaders in evangelical churches have come up with strategies of dealing with stereotypes and negative attitudes towards their leadership. Thus, the negative views towards female leadership existed and were acknowledged by the female leaders but were of no effect on the leadership styles, aspirations, and experiences of female leaders.

There was also significant support for the idea that leadership of women was an act of obedience to God. Female leaders in this study believed they were called and gifted to serve, and thus their leadership roles in the church were enacted out of obedience to God. They believed that those who oppose women from rising to leadership positions in the church are opposed to the Holy Spirit, who has equipped the women to serve. Refusing women, the opportunity to serve in a leadership capacity in the church was, to them, as serious as ignoring a call by God. In the same way, the female leaders in this study felt they had no option but to obey the call to serve whenever it came. Their work was thus justified rather than opposed by the scriptures. Even within the evangelical tradition, women had served in the church for many years in different capacities. Blomberg (2005) argues that there is evidence in support of the fact that evangelicals have long recognized the leadership of women and benefited from it at different levels in the church environment. Women have historically been called to serve and responded positively to the call, obeying God, and realizing positive results in the process. Thus, obedience to God was a valid ground upon which women could rise and serve in leadership positions in the church. Woods (2019) observed that though women have a long history of serving in the church and heeding God's call to leadership, their achievements are often downplayed. Ostensibly, women have served for a long time and been called to lead in many instances historically, but the church has de-emphasized these realities. This may explain why the contributions of female leaders in the church have remained invisible for a long time. However, there is no doubt that God calls

women to serve in leadership positions, and thus their service amounts to an act of obedience. In the end, it is understandable that the female leaders in the qualitative study remained unaffected by the views of their congregants regarding female leadership as their work was in response to God's call and amounted to obedience.

Contrary to the suggestions that women in leadership may face resistance due to views such as complementarianism, backed by a high view of scripture, there was no evidence in support of the same from the qualitative study. This was a major mismatch between the views and the empirical findings of the qualitative study. Dean et al. (2009) reported an incident of outright resistance against a woman speaking to a mixed-gender audience, experienced by Ann Graham Lotz, the daughter of famed evangelical preacher Billy Graham. Such incidents are not uncommon in churches with a strong complementarian leaning. However, the qualitative study did not unearth any such instances, despite there being evidence of views against female leadership in the study. Carbajal (2018) suggested that the patriarchal attitudes of some men in the evangelical tradition make it impossible for them to empathize with women and advocate for them to rise to leadership positions. This argument was equally not evident from the analysis of the findings. Though there were complementarian attitudes in the church, there was no indication that such attitudes had any relationship with how males related to female leadership. Overall, the available evidence predicting that views against female leadership such as complementarianism combined with a high view of scripture would affect female leadership was not supported by the findings from the study.

Overall, there was no discoverable impact from the various views held in the Independent Baptist African American church against female leadership on the experience of female leaders, for reasons indicated by the literature. Both the necessity of female leadership and the non-

materiality of the various views to the performance of female leaders in the church were supported by prior studies. Besides, the argument that female leaders had been called by God and their service was an act of obedience was supported by the literature. On the contrary, there was no alignment between perspectives and the findings of the study on the theoretical prediction that views against female leadership in the church, such as complementarianism, would lead to resistance towards female leadership or apathy against female leadership. Strict complementarianism and egalitarianism

It was clear that the female leaders in this study were either strictly complementarian or egalitarian, with their respective views affecting their view on the extent to which they could assume leadership responsibilities in the church. The strictly complementarian views led female leaders to believe that they could only hold leadership positions in the church under the proper covering of male headship. This view of only serving under male leadership directly matched the picture of complementarians represented in literature. Gundry (2010) explained how the complementarian view had evolved over time. Initially, complementarians were strict traditionalists arguing that women could not take up any role in the church at a leadership level. However, over time, it was increasingly acknowledged that God had endowed females with gifts, which led complementarians to accept that women could serve in leadership, albeit under cover of male leaders. The position on gifting represents a rare consensus between egalitarians and complementarians, with the exercise of authority remaining as the main battleground between the two camps. Thus, it was understandable that female leaders ascribing to the complementarian view felt that they could serve only under male leadership. The view represents how complementarianism has evolved over time but still does not accord female leaders' absolute autonomy as far as their leadership aspirations are concerned.

The study revealed new knowledge on the nature of the effect that complementarianism had on female leadership, largely in opposition to the views expressed in extant literature. Two ideas about complementarianism particularly surface, the first being the effect of spiritual gifts. According to Johnson (2010), the acceptance that women are spiritually gifted just like men may impact the attitudes of some complementarians towards accepting female leadership in more levels of the church. The contention would be that God gifts women to lead in the church, which allows them to serve in leadership positions. However, this perspective did not materialize with the self-identified complementarians in this study. It has only been accepted that women can serve as leaders in the church through their gifts but are not to exercise authority or hold positions such as Bishops and elders. The participants were quick to acknowledge that God had gifted women to serve in different ministries, but that would only proceed under cover of male headship. Put simply, the effect of the spiritual gifts concession amongst complementarians was to accept that women could serve in limited leadership positions and not unfettered as was predicated in some of the literature. Secondly, literature suggested that encounters with the service of women in leadership at a practical level was likely to lead to a change in attitudes, with perceived barriers to women in leadership removed. Sumner (2009) ventured that encounters with women teaching, preaching, and leading in the church and community would lead to many accepting that women could hold any leadership position. Again, the influence of the said practical experience with female leadership was unattested by the findings of the qualitative study. Due to a high view of scripture, some of the women in this study could not allow for praxis to determine theological implication. In summary, despite the exercise of spiritual gifts and the acknowledgment that women could teach, preach, and lead well, complementarians viewed the role of women in leadership as limited to working under male

headship. A woman could lead some ministries but would not be the overall head exercising authority, according to the complementarians in the qualitative study.

Contrary to the views of complementarians, egalitarians hold that women can lead in any position in the church regardless of whether it involved the exercise of authority or not. The study's findings were further that female leaders who held an egalitarian view saw their capacity to lead in the church as unfettered. They could rise to become Bishops, elders, and to other positions that involved the exercise of authority. This argument was congruent to the description of egalitarianism by Ware (2002). The latter argued that egalitarians viewed women and men as equal both in their creation and function. There was no hierarchy in leadership and certainly not a justification for men alone assuming leadership positions. Men and women were equal in personhood and dignity and could consequently serve God equally at all levels. It is no surprise that those leaders that subscribed to the egalitarian view in the qualitative study expected to be treated in the same way as men and accorded the same opportunities to lead. In the qualitative data, some of the egalitarian leaders in this study lamented that the stance against female leadership had led some women to leave some churches. In their view, women could lead to any level and were not in any way limited by scripture. The egalitarian view gleaned from the study's findings was quite consistent with what had been observed in the findings from the literature. It should be noted that some egalitarians believe that church leadership stops at the pulpit. While many egalitarians believe that leadership should encompass many of the ministries, they also hold that the office of pastor or preacher is limited to men.

New findings emerged from the study in respect of egalitarianism and complementarianism. Unlike predictions in literature, it was the views of the female leaders themselves that impacted female leadership and not the views of their congregants. Studies like

those presented by Dean et al. (2009) indicated that ideological leanings of the congregation may pose a challenge to female leadership, including overt shows of resistance. However, the study's findings showed that there was no effect at all from whatever views the members of the Independent Baptist African American church held about female leadership, and instead, it was the leaders' own complementarian or egalitarian attitudes that impacted their leadership prospects, practices, and expectations. Complementarian leaders expected to only lead under male headship, while egalitarian leaders felt that they could lead at any level in the church, including taking positions that encompass the exercise of authority. The study is the closest to the main finding of the qualitative inquiry that the leadership aspirations and practices of female leaders were affected by their own complementarian and egalitarian stances rather than those of their congregants.

Having observed the respective egalitarian and complementarian stances as largely concomitant to the theoretical predictions, it was a rather odd observation that the findings of the study did not largely encompass arguments predicated on the imago Dei and the Genesis accounts of creation. Both complementarianism and egalitarianism have been largely discussed considering the Genesis accounts of creation, the fall of man, and his redemption in the death of Jesus. Ware & Equality (2012) explain both egalitarianism and complementarianism considering the Genesis accounts of creation and whether the said accounts imply any hierarchies to be applied in church leadership. The same trend is repeated by several authors, including Leene and Hendriks (2010), who connect the image of God to the concept of the trinity. Thus, it was a surprise that most of the study's participants did not justify complementarianism or egalitarianism using the Genesis accounts or the trinity. Most discussions were predicated on the New Testament, with Galatians 3:28 acting as the reference verse for egalitarians and 1Timothy

2:12 acting as the reference point for complementarians. Thus, the complementarian and egalitarian views evident among the participants were quite unusual for failure to rely on the Genesis accounts of creation, the fall of man, and the restoration in Jesus' death.

Implications of the Study

Several implications flow from the study. At a practical level, it appears that the differences in churches across the Independent Baptist African American regarding women in leadership positions reflect the current diversity of view by the women in those churches. This allows them to continue to focus on serving in leadership positions. This contributed to the continued engagement on the practices, experiences, and aspirations of female leaders in the denomination and did not warrant any special attention of serving women.

However, it underscored the idea that churches should set up policies and guidelines that allows for maximum utilization of female leadership in the church. Notably, female leaders took their mission very seriously as a matter of necessity and obedience to God. They understood that they were needed in the church to serve as role models, fill gaps in service, and heed God's calling. The church, thus, needs to support them in their calling to allow the denomination to fully benefit from the gifts that the Holy Spirit empowers them to fulfill. Female leaders in the denomination are just as important as male leaders and deserve to be respected, supported, and relied on to help the people of God realize their purpose.

The way in which the egalitarians and complementarians came to their respective views was supported by their high view of scripture. Both groups allow scripture to speak to how they engage matters of leadership and while it may be different for each, they do not waiver from their respect for the Word of God as the ultimate authority. While most literature describes a high view of scripture as though it is fundamentalism, the study revealed that this approach

underscores each of these approaches to how women interpret the scripture in view of their ability to lead and serve others through ministry. Thus, while evangelicals may be said to hold a high view of scripture in many instances, the said high view of scripture must be understood to be a real reverence of the word of God as it speaks to specific contexts.

Egalitarian views fostered an expectation of equality with men among female leaders and the expectation that they would be allowed to take any positions in the church. On the contrary, complementarian views led to the notion that a female leader could serve and exercise their gifts in different ministries within the church, but only under the proper covering of male headship. There was an important distinction between the two views and leadership consequences on the female leaders who held them. Leading at the highest levels and exercising authority certainly differs from leading or aspiring to lead only under cover of male headship. The preparation, training, and gifting needed in the two scenarios were likely to be different. The emerging effect of the egalitarian and complementarian attitudes can also serve as an important guide for training female leaders in the church. Leadership mentors and trainers should take note of the two different perspectives regarding female leadership within the church and make suitable accommodations for both views. They should train female leaders who intend or aspire to become Bishops, elders, or hold other positions of authority in the church, as well as those who wish to serve only under male headship.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

The study was delimited to the extent that it focused on the Independent Baptist African American church. This delimitation was necessary due to the case study approach methodology that was adopted. Case studies often involve an in-depth study of one or more entities. Time and budgetary limitations also made it necessary to choose an appropriate case study size that could

serve the study's purposes within the available resources. Another notable delimitation was that the study only focused on female leaders in the study and was the only ones who made it to the sample. The reasoning behind the delimitation was that the study was about female leadership, and only female leaders in the denomination could provide insight on the topic. In addition, only qualitative methods were applied to the study. This delimitation was necessary due to the explorative nature of the study as a whole and the research questions. In addition, the study was novel in the way in which it was conducted, and thus the study needed to apply qualitative methods that generate rich data that can clarify variables and set the ground for future studies.

On limitations, it is first notable that the study was conducted in a single denomination. The consequence of the case study approach was that the findings of the study could not be extended to other that feature different circumstances. Thus, the study had limited external validity, with its findings only useful for application in the Independent Baptist African American church. They could not even be extended to other denominations within the evangelical tradition. Secondly, though the study relied on primary data, the methods applied did not test for causation or correlation in a statistically significant manner. Thus, it was impossible to draw relationships between variables from the findings, and confirmatory studies would be needed to confirm any such relationships. Besides, the size of the sample participants was small, further limiting the external validity of the findings.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies should explore the topic using confirmatory studies. The present study has laid an adequate foundation for the formation of hypotheses that can be tested in the framework of different scriptural views regarding female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American church. Quantitative research designs with larger samples should be undertaken to test

the relationships between different variables in the denomination. Besides, future studies can broaden the sample size to include participants from other denominations within the evangelical tradition.

Summary

The purpose of the completed study was to investigate the influence of various views of scriptural authority of female leadership on female leaders in the Independent Baptist African American church. Focusing on scriptural views that support the views held by complementarians and egalitarians who hold to a high view of scripture showed that such views existed in the church but did not significantly affect female leaders' views of their leadership roles. The only effect on female leadership flowed from female leaders' own views. The findings of the study, to a large extent, were supported by observations in the empirical and theoretical literature. However, there were novel findings on the nature of a high view of scripture espoused by evangelicals. While evangelicals in this study indeed held a high view of scripture, they also insisted on allowing such scripture to significantly inform their approach to leadership, a fact that is often not acknowledged in published studies on the topic. Secondly, there were equally novel findings on complementarianism. While debates on spiritual gifting of women and practical encounters with female leadership were predicted to change complementarian stances in literature, it was apparent that the limited consequence of such ideas was to allow women to serve under different ministries in the church but under male headship. Complementarians in this study did not support unfettered leadership despite acknowledging their gifting and capability to lead. The most important implication of the study developed from the observation that complementarian and egalitarian views among female leaders served as the main effect on their leadership. The position that they hold on this issue is the primary determining factor in how

they lead rather than the views that others have about them. While there were differences in how the women in this study viewed leadership opportunities, both groups held to a high view of scripture which allowed them to faithfully execute their calling. Leadership trainers and mentors have a duty to prepare leaders regardless of these two views even though aspirations to lead and expectations may be quite different. Whether women believe that they should lead at highest levels or within parameters of male headship, the fact remains that they need leadership training. God has called women and men to lead His people and it is the responsibility of the Body of Christ to faithfully engage one another in this calling.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What is your opinion about female leadership in the church?
2. Do you think that the role has improved, changed, or remained dormant in the past years?
3. Is there any presence of revolt against women in leadership within your church?
4. 1st Timothy 2:12 states that “do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.” The scripture clearly has a definite presumption about the role of women in church leadership. What is your opinion regarding the references about the Bible on female leadership?
5. Does your church have clear guidelines regarding apostolic authority that define the liturgical and ecclesiastical practices of women leadership role in the church?
6. What is the view of the church regarding female leadership and how does this impact the process of ordaining women in leadership roles?
7. Egalitarianism suggests that women and men are perceived to be equal and should have similar roles in the church, including leadership. Galatians 3:28 states “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” What are your views about this stance and how has it shaped you?
8. What is your opinion about female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American church and how does it foster female participation?
9. How many women are considering leadership roles in the church currently?
10. Does the number highlight the issues the gender face regarding mentorship and motivation to take leadership roles?

11. What is the future of the church regarding female leadership? In your opinion does the stereotypic mindset about female leadership have an impact on the future.
12. Would you say that you hold a high view of scripture? What would that mean?
13. Do you think that the views of your congregants regarding scriptural authority on female leadership have any impact on the way you conduct your leadership duties?

Appendix B

Consent

Title of the Project: The Influence of Views Regarding Scriptural Authority on Female

Leadership: The Independent Baptist African American Denominational

Principal Investigator: Doctoral Student, University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, African American, female, and currently in a leadership position or aspiring to be in a leadership position who is currently in a leadership training program in the independent African American denominational church. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The main purpose of the qualitative exploratory study is to examine how different views regarding scriptural authority on female leadership affect female leadership in the Independent Baptist African American denominational.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete an interview that should take approximately 30-45 minutes. All participant interviews will be recorded.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. The benefit to society is educating female leaders to take on a more active leadership role in ministry and educating upcoming aspiring leaders who desire work in ministry.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life, including potential risk of breach in confidentiality if the data is lost or stolen.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- **Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms.**

Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.

- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with university. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting these relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at or email.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, University Blvd.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

IRB Approval

Date: 8-10-2021

IRB #: IRB-FY19-20-359

Title: THE INFLUENCE OF VIEWS REGARDING SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY ON FEMALE LEADERSHIP: THE INDEPENDENT BAPTIST AFRICAN-AMERICAN DENOMINATIONAL CONTEXT

Creation Date: 5-6-2020

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Cynthia McZeal

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Expedited	Decision	Approved
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Cynthia McZeal	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact
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Member	Cynthia McZeal	Role	Primary Contact	Contact
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Member	Mary Lowe	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact
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