

**WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN
KAVANGO WEST REGION IN NAMIBIA: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF
GENDER, THEOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare without doubt as required by University regulations that this work has not been presented at any other University or any other institution of higher learning other than the University of KwaZulu-Natal, (Pietermaritzburg Campus) and that unless specifically indicated to the contrary within the text it is my original work.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at using the logic of the “three-legged” African pot to depict the intersectionality of Gender, Theology and Development. It discusses the lived reality of women heading households within the Catholic Church in Kavango West Region. Central to the choice is developing a grassroots theology from below that springs from the role of their faith/theological resources drawn from the Catholic Religious rituals in sustaining themselves and contributing to social development in the area.

As it discusses the lived reality of Catholic women heading households using the logic of the “three legged” African Pot, the “first leg” is gender which depicts the disruption of the dominant narrative of patriarchy within the intersection. The “second leg” is theology which is developed from grassroots faith experiences from below. The “third leg” is development which is an integration of climate change, urban migration and economic growth. This third leg is mainly where the study seeks to apply these women’s developed theologies from grassroots faith experiences from below, in sustaining their livelihoods and contributing to social development and transformation. This study proposes two theologies from grassroots faith experiences of Catholic women heading households. The analogy of the “three legged” African pot further serves to demonstrate the intersectionality of the themes in the study, namely; women and economy (women in development + women and gender + gender and resilience), gender and theology, theology and development as proposed by Haddad as key theorist in the study in dialogue with Ackermann, Swart and Adonis.

Key Terms: Kavango West Region, women-headed households, Catholic Church, Faith/theological resources, Catholic religious rituals and social development.

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Chapter One: General Introduction

1.0. Introduction

This research project on “Women-headed households¹ within the Catholic Church in Kavango West Region in Namibia: Exploring the intersection of Gender², Theology³ and Development⁴” seeks to discover how women heading up homes within the Catholic Church in Kavango West Region in Namibia use their faith/theological resources drawn from their Catholic Religious Rituals in sustaining their livelihood and contribute to social development in their areas. This study consists of six chapters.

Chapter One which is the General Introduction covers the background, context and rationale of the study. It is identified here that the study uses the image of a “three-legged Pot”⁵, which is the African Pot⁶, to depict the intersection of gender, theology and development. Having stated the background, context and rationale of the study, it further discusses in detail; the socio-economic and contextual land scape of the Kavango West Region in Namibia, the locality, size and population of the region, the household size and sex, the state of environment, economic sector, and social welfare of the study area.

1.1. Background, Context and Rationale of the Study

The twofold Global Crisis of Climate Change and Urban Migration has contributed to the lived experiences of Women-Heading Households in Kavango West Region in Namibia. The study is deliberate in that the choices for Catholic Women Headed Households are informed by the contextual realities of their context. Central to the choices is developing a grassroots theology from below that springs from the role of their faith/theological resources drawn

¹ Women as heads of households, exercising authority to run households

² Gender referring to the social constructs/social relations between men and women, distinguished from sex that refers to the biological differences between women and men (Levy 1992).

³ A grassroots theology from below, drawn from religious assets/rituals

⁴ Socio-economic improvement/transformation of the living conditions of people (i.e. women heading households).

⁵ Maendesa, Chipo & Hakak, Yohai. 2022. “The three-legged pot and the lasting impact of the Gukurahundi: Shona Ndebele inter-tribal families in England”. In *Soc Work Soc Welf* 4/2, pp 242-251. <https://doi.org/10.25082/SWSW.22.02.004>.

⁶ Fiedler, Klaus, Gundani Paul & Mijoga, BP Hilary. 1998. “Theology cooked in an African pot”. In *ATISCA bulletin* 4/5. Malawi: Association of Theological Institutions in Southern and Central Africa.

from the Catholic Religious rituals in sustaining themselves and contributing to social development in the area.

The study does not seek to give the impression that women heading households is by accident nor does it intend to indicate that this is something that is not supposed to be but underscore that this is a lived reality in the region. Patriarchy has created a narrative that men are responsible for heading households. This view emanates from a dominant interpretation of religion and culture. However, the migration of men in search for job opportunities has given women an opportunity to disrupt this patriarchal religious and cultural view especially in African communities. Through this disruption of this dominant view of patriarchy, this research project seeks to establish the reality of women-headed households as key contributors to economic growth, family stability and social welfare. The fact that men are leaving the rural areas to the city indicates a real problem of struggle and survival yet this is the context in which women are heading and managing their homes. The Kavango West Region within the North Eastern part of Namibia which is the area of study is mainly rural.

The Researcher's Honours Research Project last year (2021) in Theology and Development Programme was carried out in Swakopmund District of Namibia. Swakopmund district's economy is based on tourism and the mining sectors. The findings that were established in the research project indicated that there was an inflow of job seekers into Swakopmund district that seemed to increase the rate of unemployment. These job seekers who are mainly men come from the Northern Parts of Namibia that for many years have served as "food security" areas for Namibia. This is not the case now, because the once "food security" areas have experienced droughts as a result of global climate change in the past years.

The researcher underscores that the global climate change and urban migration as background to the study has disrupted the dominant narrative of culture (through patriarchy that considers a man as head of the house who provides for the family) and religion (through the use of the biblical text in Ephesians 5:23 that refers to 'the husband as head of the wife'). Equally important in this research project is the observation (during the actual field work study) of how unemployment affects these women who become vulnerable to climate change and urban migration as they head homes. The question of whether the men who migrate to cities support these women who are left to head households or not is contested in the study.

The study uses the logic of the “three legged African pot” to depict the intersectionality of Gender, Theology and Development. As it discusses the lived reality of Catholic women heading households, the “first leg” is gender which depicts the disruption of the dominant narrative of patriarchy within the intersection. The “second leg” is theology which is developed from grassroots faith experiences from below. The “third leg” is development which is an integration of climate change, urban migration and economic growth. The analogy of the “three legged” African pot serves to demonstrate the intersectionality of the themes in the study.

The study attempts to establish how these women use their theology from below (faith or theological resources drawn from their religious assets/rituals) to sustaining themselves and contribute to social development in their areas. The hope is that through the study, a grassroots theology of resilience (a lived-experience theology) for women heading households in the context of socio-economic crisis within the Kavango West Region will be developed.

The Socio-Economic and Contextual landscape of Kavango West Region in Namibia

This research project on Catholic Women-Headed Households locates the study area within Kavango West Region in Namibia. Documents on the Regional Development Profile and Nkurenkuru Town Council (2015, 2019, 2020) reveal that the region is located within the Kavango Basin, of which the river being its lifeline. Apart from the river being its lifeline, Kavango West Region has substantial potentials, which are mainly in the fields of agriculture, services and construction sectors (Regional Development Profile 2015). The Kavango West Region heavily depending on agriculture sector records good rainfall with the average annual rainfall varying between 450 and 600mm (Regional Development Profile 2015). “The predominantly soil type in Kavango West Region is arenosol, which has a sandy and parous texture that drains rapidly” (Regional Development Profile 2015:8). In Namibia, the evaporation rate is high, making rain-fed crop production very risky. *Mahangu* fields for example which are the staple food and favorite crop for smallholder farmers) can fall within a period of only four weeks with dry, hot weather (MLR, Draft Integrated Kavango West Regional Land Use Plan 2013 in Regional Development Profile 2015:6). The Kavango West Region gets mostly affected as it experiences average maximum temperature over 30 degrees

Celsius for 9 months of the year and 6 degrees Celsius during winter (June, July, and August).

Locality, Size and Population

It is important to note that Kavango West Region came into existence in 2013. It was previously known as Kavango Region (comprising of both east and west) which came to be divided in 2013 into Kavango East and West Regions (Regional Development Profile 2015). The Kavango West Region covers an area of 24591 km square, consisting about 3% of Namibia's extent (Regional Development Profile 2015). The 2011 Population and Housing census indicates the population of the Kavango West Region numbered 86 529 (Regional Development Profile 2015). "This region is overwhelmingly rural, with a mere 0.01% of the people residing in urban areas, mostly in and around the town of Nkurenkuru" (Regional Development Profile 2015:4).

The region borders the Kavango East Region in the East, west of Rundu town; in the North it is bordered by the Kavango River and Angola; to the West by Ohangwena and Oshikoto Region; and by the Otjozondjupa Region to the South (Regional Development Profile 2015). Nkurenkuru Town is the capital of the Region and which is also its business and economic Centre (Nkurenkuru Town Council 2019, 2020).

Household Size and Sex

Findings from the Regional Development Profile (2015) and Namibia Gender Analysis (2017) indicate that households headed by women tend to have smaller household income. The percentage of female-headed households in Kavango West Region stands at 40% below the national average of 44% according to the 2011 Population and Housing Census.

The State of the Environment

"The Kavango West's scenic beauty and its rich diversity in woodland and wildlife are part of the Region's assets that characterize the state of its natural environment" (Regional Development Profile 2015:38). The Kavango River is very valuable because of its near pristine condition with high values of water quality and ecological integrity; high average

rainfall; natural resources which are important for livelihoods such as crops, grazing, fishing, harvesting of hardwood trees and harvesting of reeds and grass characterize important features of the natural environment in the region (Regional Development Profile 2015:38,39). However, there are environmental challenges: firstly, declared plans for future large scale irrigation works in Angola, Namibia, and Botswana could potentially destroy the river's ecological integrity if Green Scheme Projects are not reconsidered in order to ensure effective irrigation methods. At present due to climate change resulting into the drop in rainfall, the water level of the Kavango River has drastically dropped (see appendix 3).

(In appendix 3, Picture A indicates how due to climate change and low rainfalls, the water level of the Kavango River has gone drastically low. The effect is not only on the water level, but also on the loss of plant species that in the olden days use to contribute to the beauty of the river and its ecological integrity as indicated in Picture B).

Secondly, un-serviced informal areas mean that a concentration of people uses the bush as toilet, the resultant risk to pollute the land as well as the river during the rainy season as these wastes are washed into the river which is the lifeline of the region posing health hazard. Thirdly, the unregulated harvesting of hardwood trees, timber, reeds and grass pose environmental challenges. The NCE⁷ has expressed deep concern about the current commercial harvesting of slow-growing hardwood trees mainly in Kavango East and West, northern Otjozondjupa and Zambezi Regions based on the fact that due to dry climate, these woodlands are marginal and therefore reproduce slowly for viable sustainable commercial use. It is noted that these woodlands are extremely important at local and landscape scales for the subsistence livelihoods of local communities, and for the wildlife and other biodiversity that use these areas.⁸ To show the seriousness of Timber harvesting⁹ in Namibia, about 75 000 tonnes of Timber were reported in 2019, mainly to China.¹⁰

Economic Sector

⁷ Namibian Chamber of Environment (a voluntary association and body corporate separate from its members [*universitas personarum*] under Namibian Common Law.

⁸ Namibian Chamber of Environment. *The Position on Harvesting Hardwood Timber in the north-east regions of Namibia*. <https://n-c-e.org>.

⁹ Timber Harvesting is the process of cutting or removing trees for wood, paper, commercial purposes (exports) and other pulp-based products

¹⁰ Kabajari, Miya. 2021. *Timber Harvesting in Namibia*. <https://www.thinknamibia.org.na>

“The Key economic sectors in the Kavango West Region are the agricultural sector and services sectors which include government services” (Regional Development Profile 2015:41). According to the 2011 Population and Housing census, the majority of employment opportunities are created by the agricultural sector with 80%, followed by services sector with 10%. The agricultural sector includes: 1) farming (large scale crop farming, small scale commercial farms and livestock farming); 2) Forestry; and 3) Fishing. There are 2 operational Green Scheme¹¹ in the Region, namely: Sikondo Irrigation Project (800 ha) and Musese Irrigation Project (1000 ha). In these Green schemes, jobs generated have been lower than expected and have been underutilized (Regional Development Profile 2015).

Social Welfare

“Changes in poverty and inequality serve as key indicators of economic progress and social inclusion” (Regional Development Profile 2015:60). According to the record in the Regional Poverty Profile for Kavango Region (2006), poverty is perceived and understood in different ways by different communities based on locality, specific contexts and reference points (Regional Development Profile 2015:60). The definitions used in Kavango Poverty Profile and the NSA¹² report on Poverty Dynamics in Namibia about the meaning of poverty include: a lack of possessions (like cattle, ploughs, or crop fields); lack of access to education, services and markets and lack of social support structure (Regional Development Profile 2015).

1.2. Key Research Question, Sub-Questions and Objectives

Main Research Question

- How do women heading up households in the Catholic Church in Kavango West Region in Namibia use their faith/theological resources drawn from their Catholic Religious Rituals in developing a “theology from below” to sustain their livelihood and contribute to social development in the area?

¹¹ Green Scheme is a government scheme set up by MAWF which aims to encourage the development of irrigation based agronomic production in order to increase the GDP contribution of agriculture and to uplift local communities in the proximity of these schemes (MLR, Draft Integrated Kavango Regional Land Use Plan. Vol. II)

¹² National Statistics Agency

Research Sub-Questions

- What is the social context of the Catholic women-headed households of Kavango West Region?
- How do Catholic women heading up households draw on faith and theology to sustain their Livelihood?
- How are these women using their faith practices/theological resources drawn from their Catholic religious rituals to contribute to social development?

Research Objectives

- To explore a social context of the Catholic women headed households in Tondoro and Bunya Districts, Namibia.
- To establish how Catholic women heading up households draw on faith/theological resources to sustain their livelihood
- To examine how these women are using their faith practices/theological resources drawn from their Catholic religious rituals to contribute to social development.

1.3. Overview of Chapters

Having set the background, context and rationale of the study constituting Chapter One (General Introduction), Chapter Two identifies key literature and discusses the themes that have been developed to address the research question as indicated above in section 1.2.

Chapter Three covers the theoretical framework. Haddad (2000, 2003) is used as a theorist in dialogue with scholars such as Ackermann (2003, 2005, 2008), Swart et al (2010), and Adonis (2017) in the intersection of gender, theology and development. In this intersection, the Catholic Women's League in Namibia is identified as a site for women's theological project. This is interpreted and analyzed through the lenses of Women's theologies of survival by Haddad.

Chapter Four presents the research design, methodology and offers information about the research approach and process with a focus on study area, population size, sampling method,

recruitment process of participants, and the type of methodology namely focus group¹³ used in this study. The methodology covers data collection process (primary and secondary data), data collection methods (instruments, and focus groups questionnaires), ethical consideration, limitations to the study and the section on Data presentation and analysis. The presentation of data and data analysis will be done using themes that have been identified in the literature review and those that have emerged during the fieldwork study (demographic questionnaires and focus groups discussions).

Chapter Five discusses the findings from the emerging themes identified in the presentation of data through data analysis using the themes set up in the literature review and in the fieldwork study. Although the theoretical framework is applied throughout the research project as a framing of the research project, the theoretical framework becomes the basis for data analysis in this chapter.

Lastly, Chapter Six which is the general conclusion summarises the main findings, key issues and recommendations for further research.

¹³ ‘Traditionally, focus group research is ‘a way of collecting qualitative data, which essentially involves engaging a small number of people in a group discussion (or discussions) focused around a particular topic or set of issues’’ (Wilkinson 2004 in Onwuegbuzie 2009:2). “The social context of focus group provides an opportunity to examine how people engage in generating meaning, how opinions are formed, expressed, and sometime modified with the context of discussion and debate with others” (Wilkinson 1999:227).

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0. Introduction

In the preceding chapter (one), the researcher has looked at the general introduction which covers the background to the study, context and rationale of the study. Here, the researcher has identified that the study uses the image of a three-legged African Pot to depict the intersection of gender, theology and development in exploring the topic: “Women-headed households within the Catholic Church in Kavango West Region in Namibia: Exploring the intersection of gender, religion and development”.

This chapter reviews literature concerning the themes that have been developed to address the key research question.

The literature review covers four themes in addressing the research question. The first theme examines the factors informing the lived reality of women-headed households. Global Climate change and Urban migration are seen as factors that inform the lived reality of women-headed households (Mehla et al 2019, Pendleton, Nickanor & Pomuti 2012). Crucial to these factors is recognizing that patriarchy has created a narrative that men are responsible for heading households. Engaging the reality of women heading households helps us establish the position that through the disruption of this dominant view of patriarchy, women-headed households are key contributors to economic growth, family stability and social farewell. The factors informing the lived reality of women headed households will be looked at globally, at sub-Saharan level, and in particular, Kavango West in Namibia. Since the study involves class gender analysis, the second theme discusses women and economy. Three areas will be explored in the second theme, namely; women in development, women and gender, gender and resilience. In exploring the role gender plays in development, the biblical text of Ephesians (5:23-24) ‘the husband as head of the wife’ therefore head of the house and channel of household resources will be used to show how the bible can be used to facilitate a system of development that is gendered (power relations).

As a study about Catholic women heading households, the third theme discusses gender and theology. The theological reflections within the discourse of gender and theology are to be

looked at on ground that recognizes God's place and role in human life and history so that human rights and dignity are always preserved. Women's theological reflections on their lived reality become crucial within this theme on gender and theology. This leads to the fourth theme discussing theology and development. What becomes crucial in the fourth theme (theology and development) is that finding women's space within faith communities and how they draw on their religious rituals to bring about social transformation is central. In summary, in order to achieve the objective of the research project intersecting Gender, theology and development, the study investigates, discusses and analyses the impact of a theology from below (grassroots theology) developed from faith/theological resources drawn from the Catholic religious rituals on Catholic women heading households and how these women use this theology to sustain themselves and contribute to social development.

2.1. Background to Factors informing the lived reality of women-headed households: Global, Sub-Sahara and Namibia.

Global Climate change and urban migration are prerequisite to the realities of the study but not the primary focus. Mehta Lyla, et al (2019) puts us into perspective with the fact that climate shocks and stressors such as cyclones, floods droughts, changing rainfall patterns and extreme temperatures are some examples of uncertainties that planners and people in the global south confront. These realities confront women as they head homes and become core players in the economic and household sustainability. It becomes evident that,

“While local people are attuned to living, coping¹⁴ and adapting¹⁵ to uncertainties in climate-sensitive marginal environment, climate change presents a radical uncertainty that can push local people to the limits of coping or trigger paths of maladaptation. Furthermore, the traditional responses to these uncertainties intersect with other socio-economic drives of change that are multi-scalar in nature” (Gajjar et al 2018 in Melta et al 2019:2).

The fact of being attuned to living, coping, and adapting to uncertainties in climate sensitive marginal environment especially in Sub-Sahara and Namibia, results when climate change uncertainties intersect with livelihood instability in rural areas which then fuels urban

¹⁴ Relates to more immediate responses over shorter time scales such as emergency responses to draught (Smithers & Smit 1997 in Mehta et al 2019).

¹⁵ Refers to more enduring changes that are broader in nature, and cover longer and wider tempo-spatial scales such as changing agricultural patterns or livelihood practices (Smithers & Smit 1997 in Mehta et al 2019).

migration in pursuit of better financial stability and livelihood sustainability. what then promotes maladaptation in these rural areas that are heavily dependent on agriculture facing climate change uncertainties is that men migrate in search of better opportunities leaving the burden of farming to women who become heads of households during the time of crisis.

“Vulnerability to climate change in Namibia is driven by underlying structural factors including a history of inappropriate economic policies, gender disparities and colonization which led to chronic poverty and inequality” (Spear 2018:3).

Vulnerability to climate change fueled by a history of inappropriate economic policies, gender disparities and colonization leads to Chronic poverty and inequality which is made manifest for example, by very limited employment opportunities in Namibia (NSA, 2015), inability to engage in innovative economic activities (Dirkx et al. 2008, MET 2011), literacy and education (NSA 2011), financial capacity, access to loans (Zeidler et al. 2010, Giorgis 2011, Nyambe & Belete, 2013) and access to public services (NSA 2011, Amadhila et al. 2013) (Spear 2018). When people have limited employment opportunities; are not able to engage in innovative economic activities; lack proper education system; lack access to financial capacity and public services (Dirkx et al. 2008, MET 2011, NSA 2011, Zeidler et al. 2010, Giorgis 2011, Nyambe & Belete, 2013 NSA 2011, Amadhila et al. 2013) leads to a strong reliance on natural resources (especially by women heading homes) as many livelihoods depend on rain-fed crop and livestock farming (Muhangi & Acidri 2008, Newsham & Thomas 2009, GRN 2014) (Spear 2018:20). This has a negative impact on the environment as its ecological integrity deteriorates.

Given the reality that 52% percent of Namibia’s population nationally is female and 44% of households are female-headed (Spear 2018), those affected by the above mentioned, are women. It is also mentioned in the preceding paragraph that gender inequality in Namibia stems from historical patterns where, in the past, women did not have the same rights in decision making or hold equal access to financial, material and information resources (Angula 2010 in Spear 2018). To be specific historically, women did not have the right to be allocated land (Angula & Menjono 2014 in Spear 2018) and widows were dispossessed of their valuable assets, such as cattle, after their husband’s death (Newsham & Thomas 2011 in Spear 2018). This aspect of a historical gender inequality leads us to discuss women and economy.

2.2. Women and Economy

The focus on women-headed households suggests that it is crucial to discuss women's lived realities and the critical role women play in the economy of Sub-Saharan Africa, and Kavango West Region (Namibia) in particular, as they work on disrupting the dominant narrative of patriarchy that tend to hinder their full participation and equal share in socio-economic activities. Speaking to the reality of women heading homes and the general role women play within the economic perspective, Morgan (1992:48) states that,

“The economic and social role of women in Sub-Saharan Africa remains underestimated, both statistically and in policy formulation. Particularly under-recognized are the multiple roles that women fulfill: as good producers, carriers of water, collectors of firewood, processors and preparers of food, carers for children and the elderly and, in many rural areas, the primary family earners of cash incomes as well. Estimates of the time contribution of women to food production in much of Africa range as high as 70%, in addition to their still more dominant roles in these other areas. Meanwhile, women's access to the assets, inputs and services which are needed to perform these roles tends to be highly disadvantaged. Lack of female security in land ownership or control, concentration of extension services on men, barriers to obtaining commercial credit, and the handicaps relating to inadequate public provision of basic health care, combine in many countries to trap women in a vicious cycle of low incomes, low productivity, extreme workload and poor health”.

Morgan is critical in that women fulfill multiple roles in running and sustaining households, and that they produce food ranging as high as 70% within the African Context. This is a clear indication that women should have access to assets, inputs and services which are needed to perform their roles. As producers of food, land becomes important as asset. Within the sub-Saharan context, it is important to acknowledge and accept the truth that land is key to one's identity, power and control. From an African perspective, to have no land means to have no identity. This is why Mbatha (1996 in Philpott 1998:4) states;

“What does land mean to a black person? It is not just a commercial product. It is the place where my ancestors were buried and where I will be buried. Touch it and you touch me and my children and their children”.

Mbata's argument postulate that 'land is not just a commercial product but a place where one's ancestors have been buried and where one will be buried, to touch it is to touch one's children and their children' (Philpott 1998:4) should not be seen as applying to men exclusive of women (as not applying in patriarchal societies alone). Critically therefore is to ask; do women own land independent of their relationships to men? Should it be the case that women own land due their relationship to men and lack right of land ownership which becomes a socio-economic challenge to them as they head households? Ownership of land by women can increase productivity, as they feel connected to it and always strive towards adding value to it.

The researcher is of a strong conviction that one always takes care of that which is his or her own and puts it to good use. In the same way, women can put land to good use when they own it. How many of the Catholic Women heading homes in Kavango West Region in Namibia own land? Findings within the field work study revealed this aspect that amongst the 20 participants, 2 participants do not own land, and life becomes difficult as they head homes. This is a socio-economic challenge to these women without land. Luwaya (2018) speaks of the need to fully recognize and protect the land rights of rural women in his article "Understanding women's claim to land in an Eastern Cape Village". Land is key to women's empowerment and progress. Without land, one cannot have a roof above the head; without land, one cannot produce food, and above all, without land, one loses dignity. To show how powerful land is to women's participation in the economic growth and social sustainability, Itepu (2004) discusses how women are the driving force of food security in Kavango through the use of donkeys for agricultural and household purposes. These findings by Itepu imply that women should have the land in order to be the driving force for food security in the region. Drawn from article 95 of the Namibian Constitution, women have the same status as men on land rights, either as individuals or as members of family. It further asserts that every widow/widower will be entitled to maintain land rights she/he enjoyed during the spouse's lifetime (GRM 1998 in Tenaw, Islam & Parviainen 2009). It is however unfortunate that "often, women do not have rights to land, due to colonial legacy and some archaic traditional norms culture" (Tenaw, Islam & Parviainen 2009:24). This is evident in that the widow and her children can be evicted from the land after the husband dies and the male relatives of the deceased occupy the land (Tenaw, Islam & Parviainen 2009).

Recognizing that the majority of farmers in Kavango region (Now Kavango East and West Regions) are dependent on growing staple crop and pearl millet using draft animal power, Itepu (2004) recognizes that with landownership by women heading homes, the use of donkeys for household and agricultural purposes becomes a contributing factor to women's increase in farm (agricultural) productivity. Already nationally, "women account for more than 59% of the workforce in the agriculture and food production sector, particularly in subsistence farming where they produce 80% of the country's output" (Shoko 2021:86). In order to increase women's workforce in the agricultural and food production sector in Kavango (East and West Regions), it is important to recognize that women's access to oxen is generally limited due to high costs in purchasing them, and that generally, women do not own cattle themselves. What is challenging also is that women appear to be afraid to work with oxen, especially with those that have long horns (Itepu 2004). For this very reason, women who find themselves heading homes and carry out all household agricultural purposes find donkeys more friendly to work with (Itepu 2004). To low-income women-headed households, donkeys are generally cheap to maintain due to their more resistant nature to internal parasites often experienced by cattle although many hesitate to purchase them because they fear neighbors might consider them as poor people (Itepu 2004). Considering the friendliness of donkeys to women's use for household and farming, rural women will fully participate in community development (Itepu 2004).

Letting the global context speak to the context of Kavango where rural women are encouraged to use donkeys as draft animal power for household and farming (agriculture), Whitehead (1991) had long before noted the impact of global crisis on women being due to the fact that the economic changes of the twentieth century have relegated rural women to food production within an under-resourced 'subsistence sector' of small-scale agriculture. moreover, ask key players in the economic and socio-environmental sustainability, women are not only involved in farming (agricultural productivity) but also in conservation. Lendolvo, Munyebvu and Suich (2012) carrying out a research project examining the levels of participation of women in activities Namibia's Communal areas for conservation discover higher level of participation of women in conservancy activities. This indicates that women are important resource users and managers, and their participation creates a platform for their empowerment and enhances their role in decision making (Morgan 1992, Lendolvo, Munyebvu and Suich 2012).

Women's natural tender care and love itself is naturally linked and directed to environmental care and sustainability. This resonates with Makhosi Nzimande's use of the word *Imbokodo* "grinding stone" as a metaphor to refer to women (Nzimande 2005, 2008). Recognizing what Whitehead (1991) says about the economic changes of the twentieth century having relegated rural women to food production within and under-sourced 'subsistence sector' of small scale agriculture is a form of oppression that does not acknowledge the key role women play in the socio-economic and environmental care. The use of *Imbokodo* by Nzimande (2005, 2008) in its socio-cultural aspect as a symbol representing the cultural struggle of African women against oppressive patriarchal imposition is critical in disrupting systems that deprive women equal share in production. The use of *imbokodo* is constructed from the freedom song sung at the South African Women's Defiance Campaign against apartheid in 1956: "*Wathint' abafazi, Wathint' imbokodo, uzokufa*" translated as "You strike a woman, you strike a grinding stone, you will be crushed!". In real sense, without women's participation in the economy, the economy crushes.

2.2.1 Women and Development, Women and Gender and Gender and Resilience

Although we have seen that without women's participation in the economy, the economy of a given society crushes, Hubbard and Solomon (1995) postulate that there is a growing perception amongst Namibian women that many of their social and economic problems are related to their position as women, and thus show an increasing interest in organizing to address such problems (Buvinic and Gupta (1997). This affirms the conviction that women who head households are worthy of special attention because they are disadvantaged as they experience the burden of poverty, gender discrimination, and absence of support in their positions as heads of household. Angula (2010) engaging women and development identifies development as gender driven. This however, goes against the Namibian Constitution article 95 where women have the same status as men on land rights for example, either as individuals or as members of family. It further asserts that every widow/widower will be entitled to maintain land rights she/he enjoyed during the spouse's lifetime (GRM 1998 in Tenaw, Islam & Parviainen 2009).

The joined efforts made by women in addressing gender in-equality in Namibia as indicated by Hubbard and Solomon (1995) are indicated in the 2010 National Gender Policy of Action as yielding positive results. The National gender of Action calls for "capacity building, skills

development, mentorship and confidence building for women in parliament and other areas of public sector as well as for the representation of women in all spheres of public life” (Shejavali 2020:13). Due to the efforts in struggle for gender equality, 2016 National elections recorded 41.3% of women seats in the National Assembly and 23.8% seats in the National Assembly (Namibia Gender Analysis 2017). The 2019 National Elections showed an increase in number of seats for women in the National Assembly with 43% (Shejavali 2020). This is an indication that Namibia is working towards maximizing gender equality although there are traditional systems that continue to discriminate and suppress women’s independence to patriarchal rule. Traditionally, women have been suppressed on account of motherhood, with a negative connotation limited to bearing of children. This has relegated women to the “boundary of household” being deprived of full participation in the public sphere. Giving a new understanding to “motherhood”, Siwila (2015) in communion with other women theologians emphasize that motherhood does not only become a biological factor but about nurturing, protection and promotion of life beyond the limit of household. Key to women’s active participation in development is recognizing and respecting their right and dignity as equals in education, in all socio-economic and socio-political aspects of life (Moore 1994; Janovicek 2009; Mankman 2011; Hughes & Tripp 2015; Stromquist 2015; Nyambura 2018). This links to the next theme that looks at the importance of theology within the discourse of gender and social development.

In recognition that there are systems that continue to discriminate women’s independence to patriarchal rule, we speak about Women and Gender.

The Biblical Narrative: Ephesians 5:23-24)

Within the document narrative of patriarchy, Adonis (2017:64) brings in the biblical narrative¹⁶ of the relationship between husband and wife as a metaphor used for the relationship of the Church and Christ. Here, ‘the Church as the body of Christ is reminded of its connection to Christ as the leader of the Church. Christ is described as the head of the Church and just as the head and the body cannot function without the other, the church cannot function without Christ’ (Adonis. 2017: 64).

¹⁶ “For the husband is head of his wife, just as Christ is head of the Church, he himself the savior of the body. As the Church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything” (Ephesians 5:23-24)

Adonis (2017:64) is of the conviction that “this relationship of the Church being under the authority of Christ is however used for patriarchal control to oppress women. Men are put in the same position as Christ and women as the Church”. Adonis (2017) objects this in that women as human beings can function without men. The relationship between men and women is not the same as the relationship between Christ and the Church as it has been literally taken and taught by Church leaders. Adonis (2017:64) further critiques that instructing women being ‘subservient to their husbands “in everything” as taught by the bible resulting into women being oppressed and abused by patriarchy. This text according to Adonis (2017) has been used to keep men in position of authority, thus keeping patriarchal control for generations. This should at all levels of manifestation be deconstructed so as to construct new perspective (Rakoczy 1993 in Adonis 2017).

Another form of power control privileging men that needs to be deconstructed in this context as proposed by Nadar and Potgieter is Formenism.¹⁷ As an ideology sustained by women¹⁸ advocates that men are chief beneficiaries of the hierarchical social positioning it advocates. It “romanticises” patriarchy into leading women to believe that they too will benefit from increased male responsibility and leadership (Nadar & Potgieter 2010). One may ask, could this be the case that some women heading homes continue to be influenced by such ideology in such a way that they continue to depend on men for support instead of being independent in real sense? Nadar and Potgieter (2010:142) using feminist lens are of the conviction that “formenism might seem liberatory and harmless but can ultimately put women’s well-being and fundamental freedom at risk as it facilitates various forms of oppression”.

2.3. Gender and Theology

The researcher has looked at Gender, specifically on Women’s role in economic growth as well as women in development, women and gender, gender and resilience. It has become clear that in Namibia for example, “women account for more than 59% of the workforce in

¹⁷ Formenism, like Masculinism “subscribes to a belief in the inherent superiority of men over women, but unlike masculinism, it is not an ideology developed and sustained by men, but an ideology designed, constructed, and sustained by women” (Nadar & Potgieter 2010:141).

¹⁸ Jill Buchan, in television interview with Devi Sankaree Govender “The Church of God needs men... He has to re-instate the men, and when he does that, women will be very happy” (Nadar & Potgieter 2010:141). Gretha Wild, who advises women “to think of their husbands as kings and asserts that God has ordained that men be prophets, priests, and kings and women be their willing subjects” (Nadar & Potgieter 2010:141).

the agriculture and food production sector, particularly in subsistence farming where they produce 80% of the country's output" (Shoko 2021:86).

Shoto's findings about the critical role of women in the economy of Namibia (accounting for 59% of the workforce in the Agriculture) is an affirmation of what Mzimande (2005, 2008) asserts about women in the use of *Imbokodo* ("grinding stone"). What this means is that trying to relegate women from the economic center of a state/nation is trying to let the economy of a state/ nation crush. We now turn to the reality that when women heading homes engage their lived reality/experiences theologically transform their lives as this contributes to their own development, and the social transformation and development of their communities.

What lies beneath Social transformation and development is the need to care for the environment in a sustainable way, which then serves humanity. This aspect is crucial in that, when women heading homes engage issues of environment theologically, develop positive mindset about the environment and can have a positive impact on its sustainability. This implies that women being main economic players should be engaged in all structures where decisions are made, so that they do not remain the ones that are always disadvantaged yet key agents of economic growth. Being aware of women struggles within patriarchy, it should be indicated that no humanity is superior to the other. Humanity shares equal human right and dignity. In other words, theologically reflecting on the nature of humanity opens ways that promote and facilitate inclusive and equal participation in socio-economic development structures where all have equal share in productivity within the framework of gender diversity. Gender diversity is not ground to be used in perpetuating unfair treatment of some people that violates their human right and dignity. Humanity shares in the image of God ("*imago Dei*"), therefore shares equal rights and dignity (Lovell 1992; Swart 2006, 2010; Henriks 2007; Agbasiere & Zabajungu (eds) 1989; Walsh & Davies (eds) 1984; Ager 2014).

Putting emphasis on the "*Imago Dei*", Nadine Bowers Du Toit is of the belief that "when human beings begin to understand that they are made in the image of God and are of worth and gifted with creative agency, they have a restored sense of self-esteem and vocation" (Du Toit 2012: 263) . A restored sense of self-esteem and vocation is what every religion/faith community should advocate for, and restore in every human person. In their article "Treading Softly but Firmly" Phiri and Nadar discuss how the position of women in religion/faith

community is critical, and how it influences their sense of self-esteem and vocation. As part of women theologians of the Circle¹⁹, Phiri and Nadar (2012:9) recognize how religion influences women's thoughts, emotions, personalities and social relationships as they seek communion with God. It is important in this line; to critique how women's health²⁰ is enhanced within a religious space they form part, so that they are active participants in the transformation of their own lives and their communities. Situating women at the center of theological reflections in their faith communities can yield positive results within the framework of household and community transformation.

The importance of theological reflections within the discourse of gender and theology is to be looked at on ground that recognizes God's role in human life and history so that human rights and dignity are always preserved (De Kadt 2009).

Reference here is made to God who stands for the marginalized (Luke 4:14-30), through which all missionary activities find ground. De Kadt (2009) goes back many decades (to colonial times) when missionary societies set up what we now call health facilities – at the time mainly hospitals and schools. 'The dedication missionaries had mostly working in extremely difficult conditions to the well-being of the poor patients was admirable' (De Kadt 2009:782). We need to remember here that when a society is sick, it ceases to be productive. When poor people are sick, they cease to be productive and fail to be self-reliant. When women heading homes are sick, their households break and become toxic to the people dependent on them. Recognizing how the above mentioned areas were central to Christ's liberation mission, missionaries tried to dedicate themselves to these liberating actions meant for building healthy productive societies. However, this is a contested space as missionaries were also seen working under the colonial rule umbrella. This is in consideration with the fact that missionaries came to Africa during the same period with the colonizers, and imposed the rule of civilization (through the Gospel) without much consideration of the people's cultures and traditions (Comaroff & Comaroff 1986). Acknowledging this contested space, our focus here is on what missionaries were meant to stand for. They were meant to represent God, whose role was to give life. In this way they were meant to bear Christ's image who stood for

¹⁹ "African women's theologies" as called by Mercy A E. Oduyoye (with a diversity of names being used such: Circle theology, communal theology, hermeneutics, cultural hermeneutics, womanist theologies and African women's theologies) (Phiri & Nadar 2012).

²⁰ Understood in a broad context as comprising of the physical, emotional, psychological and social domain (Phiri & Nadar 2012)

the poor and marginalized of society, and whose words and actions were that of restoring their dignity (Selected Text Related to the OMI Constitutions and Rules 1984, Jette 1992) In spite of all they go through, the poor and marginalized trust in God's providential care. In other words, the poor do not say that their predicaments will last forever, but that God answers at the appointed time for their liberation²¹. This could also mean liberation from the Church's oppressive structures as well.

Within the context of the Church's prophetic role, Botha (2016) sees missionary activities within the context of the Church as instrument of social justice and peace. However, the success of missionary activities in the African context should find ground in what Ilo (2014) indicates; that through a socio-theological analysis of the African context, the fruit of the eschatological harvest of God's kingdom will bear on the present complex African social context. Critical to this point is the need to "mine" the spiritual, religious, cultural, human and material resources of Africa (Ilo 2014) in order to transform Africa. Thus, the provision of quality education in secondary schools in sub-sahara is key towards capacitating and empowering local people (especially women in the context of this study) to engage theologically all forms of development that speak to their own contexts (Hausiku, Piliyesi & Anyona 2020). The discussion on gender and theology becomes the basis of the next theme speaking about theology and development. The next theme argues that women contribute to their own development as they head households using their theology of resilience (theology of action/ theology of praxis) for resistance, contributing to social transformation and development. Having to discuss how women's theology of praxis (developed within Gender and Theology) contributes to social transformation and development, the next theme discusses theology and development.

2.4. Theology and Development

In the preceding theme (Gender and Theology) we have seen that finding women's space within faith communities and how they draw on their religious rituals to bring about social transformation is central. It is the theology that they develop drawn from their religious rituals that animates the discussion on theology and development. Nadar and Phiri (2012) in their work are convinced that in a research project, to achieve transformation is not just

²¹ Jeremiah 29: 11, Matthew 6:10, 1 John 5:14-15

through the product of the research, but also through the process of research. In the context of this research project on Catholic Women Headed Households, allowing women to share their experiences and engage their lived realities is pivotal. Ackermann (2003, 2005, and 2008) is critical in developing theology from lived-experiences of women. Ackermann (2003) calls this “A Feminist Theology of Praxis” which is imbedded in social analysis.

Theology according to Oduyoye (2001) refers to the expression of faith in response to experience. ‘Experience is important with respect to our truth claims. It is a set of convictions with respect to what human beings consider the truth of reality past, present and future’ (Ackermann 2008:42). This theology of praxis emerging from lived experiences is interested in women’s diverse circumstances, in what they do for the liberating and healing of themselves and their communities, and what women think about their circumstances and their actions in terms of their faith (Ackermann 2003). The aim of this theology is healing and liberating (Ackermann 2003). Theology as healing and liberating praxis provides support system to women who head households.

Ackermann (2005) in further developing a feminist theology of praxis within the context of stigma which women often face speaks of an embodied feminist practical theology that is alert to the challenges faced by women and all marginalized people in their traditions and religious institutions. This theology is also ‘concerned with the tension between theory and praxis, between what we believe and what we do about what we believe; and that our actions are concrete manifestations of who we are and what we believe’ (Ackermann 2005:386).

“Theological praxis is thus critical and self-reflective. It emphasizes the dialectical relationship between theory and praxis and introduces the essential components of ongoing critical reflection and action” (Ackermann 2005:387).

Ackermann’s point of departure is that ‘all theology should be done in the service of the fulfillment of God’s reign on earth. It is an assurance that the reign of God brings good news to people in terms of their life situations’ (Ackermann 2005:387). Thus, theological reflection and theological praxis arise within everyday messiness of Christian lives because what Christians believe and how they act, embody their efforts to meet the problems that inevitably arise when they are challenged by the values of the reign of God in their particular historical contexts (Ackermann 2005). It is in relation to this point of departure by Ackermann that Du

Toit (2022) sees the intersection between religion and development on three points of departure, namely; poverty alleviation²², social capital²³ and agency²⁴. All these aspects in the intersection point to the fact that a religious person's life in the transformation of society is inspired by the values of the reign of God as indicated by Ackermann.

Mzumara (2004) speaking to the link between theology and resilience: gender and development discusses the potential of rural women supported by an appropriate theology of development, using the context of Katete Catholic Church. Listening to women's stories in this study context of Catholic women headed households in Kavango West Region in Namibia and how they draw on their religious rituals to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development in their areas help the discussion to see the type of appropriate theology of development that can be developed to suit the study context. This links us with Connel (2002) and Cornwall (2003) who are critical about participatory and inclusive forms of development by asking "Whose voices? Whose choices" matter the most? Listening to women stories as they share their lived realities helps us in this study to establish facts about whose "voices" and "choices" are often considered when discussing participatory and inclusive forms of development.

2.4. Conclusion

The literature review covered four themes in addressing the research question. The first theme examined the factors informing the lived reality of women-headed households. Global climate change and urban migration have been seen as background factors that inform the lived reality of women-headed households. Engaging the reality of women heading households helped us establish the position that through the disruption of this dominant view of patriarchy, women-headed households are key contributors to economic growth, family stability and social farewell. Since the study involved class gender analysis, the second theme

²² This asserts that while the discourse on religion and development is more recent, religious response to poverty alleviation has a long history (charity versus development). Religious response to poverty alleviation is facilitated through the role of Faith Based Organization through which efficient development services are provided, platforms to reach the poorest of grassroots are facilitated, and values and spirituality within development work are linked to the physical and spiritual realms (Du Toit 2022).

²³ Religious organizations such as churches, play a central role in community life, often performing 'social, cultural, educational services and creating social bonds and social trust' (Du Toit 2022:95)

²⁴ 'Religious agency is part of the way in which both individuals and collectives contribute to social change. Here, all citizens, not just the elites should be active participants in their own social, political and economic life. This involves the critical aspect of challenging rich Christians to "Critically examine their own power base"' (Swart 2006 in Du Toit 2022:98).

discussed women and economy. Three areas were explored in the second theme, namely; women in development, women and gender, gender and resilience. In exploring the role gender plays in development, the biblical text of Ephesians (5:23-24) 'the husband as head of the wife' therefore head of the house and channel of household resources was used to show how the bible can be used to facilitate a system of development that is gendered (power relations).

As a study about Catholic women heading households, the third theme discussed gender and theology. The theological reflections within the discourse of gender and theology were looked at on ground that recognized God's place and role in human life and history so that human rights and dignity are always preserved. Women's theological reflections on their lived reality became crucial within the theme on gender and theology. This led to the fourth theme discussing theology and development. What became crucial in the fourth theme (theology and development) is that finding women's space within faith communities and how they draw on their religious rituals to bring about social transformation is central. Thus, having discussed the need to give women space within their faith communities (gender) to engage their religious rituals that they draw from (theology) to sustain themselves and contribute to social development (development) brought to live the intersection of Gender, theology and development portrayed within the framework of a three-legged African pot.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Gender and Development by Haddad (2000, 2003).

3.0. Introduction

As mentioned before, this study uses the logic of a three-legged African pot to depict the intersection of Gender, theology and development. The study uses Haddad (2000, 2003): *Intersecting Faith, Gender and Development as Theorist*. As Theorist, Haddad is used in dialogue with Swart et al (2010) who speaks about two things considered relevant to the study: 1) The importance of identifying with a religion/Christian community, and secondly on the importance of drawing a link between religious ritual and social capital. The importance of belonging to a religious/Christian community is very important in developing theology that is sound and meaningful. For example, in developing survival theologies of the women of *Vulindlela* as working theologies of faith of poor and marginalized, these women are first identified as belonging to a Christian community.

Engaging with Ackermann (2003, 2005, 2008), it becomes evident that in developing a theology of praxis, women engaging their lived realities are first identified with a religious/Christian community that becomes the foundation through which the theology that speaks to their context (theology of praxis) is formulated and developed. In dialogue with Haddad and Ackermann who speaks about the importance of women's experiences, Adonis (2017) further emphasizes the importance of story-telling women's experiences. This mapping of the theoretical framework indicates that Haddad (2000, 2003) in dialogue with Ackermann (2003, 2005, 2008), Swart et al (2010), and Adonis (2017) provides the framework for the development of theologies of survival and resilience for Women Heading Households in Namibia.

3.1. Women's Theologies of Survival by Haddad (2000, 2003): Intersecting Faith, Gender and Development in dialogue with Ackermann, Swart and Adonis

It is important to start framing this research project by identifying and explaining key concepts/terms. The identified theories will then evaluate and explain the relevance of the study through the justification of the scope of the study. Finally these theories indicate how the study fits into the existing research.

As indicated from the onset of this paper, Women-Headed Households refer to women as heads of households, exercising authority to run homes. The aspect of Women-Headed Households is treated as a gender space in this study. Adding the word "Catholic" as a deliberate choice to identify who these women heading homes are and how they draw on their religious rituals; we treat this aspect as a theological space. The application of their faith resources (developed into their own practical theology – walking theology²⁵) in order to improve and transform their lives at household levels is treated as development space.

In order to justify the relevance of the study; exploring African Women's Theologies of Survival: Intersecting Faith, Feminisms, and Development, Haddad (2000) sets in motion our gender space (Women-Headed Households) by defining feminism through which these women are categorized and mapped into. In broad terms, feminism is understood as an 'awareness of women's oppression on domestic, social, economic, religious, and political levels, accompanied by a willingness to struggle against such oppression' (Wieringa 1995 in Haddad 2000:142). This definition is important when discussing Women-Headed Households that become a disruption of the dominant narrative of patriarchy that men are heads of households. This is critical in that Feminist Movements seek to provide space for women to become aware of their lived realities and be willing to engage oppressive aspects of their lives in the struggle for liberation. Women have been important forces for social change in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Haddad 2000).

It becomes evident therefore, that when women discuss particular local issues as a unity and be properly articulated, social change is motioned, leading to social transformation. And women being the majority especially in the context of Namibia with 59% of the workforce in

²⁵ A lived-reality theology that is lived out of Church attendance because of its connection to lived-experiences of women.

the agriculture and food production sector, particularly in subsistence farming where they produce 80% of the country's output as pointed out by Shoko (2021), Nzimande (2005, 2008) equally believes that social transformation can take place easily when there is unity. Discussing the power of "united voices" applies to women heading homes in that when they come together and create spaces where they discuss their lived-experience issues, their voice as a unity makes an impact that foster change and transformation of their lived-reality that is oppressive. Byceson (1995 in Haddad 2000) and Mikell (1997 in Haddad 2000) argue that women in Africa are currently involved in Feminist practice through the subversion and collective organizing within the domestic sphere of the home and subsistence farming. Haddad (2000) further argues using the context of women of *Vulindlela* that these women are "engaged in hidden forms of struggle against oppression which are not easily recognized or understood" (Haddad 2000:143).

Haddad (2000) identifies that these practices are related to their survival struggle within the private domain. This aspect applies to the study of Catholic Women heading homes in Kavango West Region in Namibia who do not have well established women groups that openly engage issues of struggle but engage in hidden forms of struggle for liberation. I discovered during group discussions engaging Catholic Women Heading homes that they often accept the struggles they go through as their "cross" to carry. Platforms to challenge structures that do not advantage them are not available. These Catholic Women Heading homes in Kavango West Region may not identify with any "Feminist Movement" but 99% of them involved in the study being members of the Catholic Women's League. When given opportunity within the group to engage with their lived-realities it could lead to many areas being socially transformed.

3.1.1. Catholic Women's League as a site of Women's Theological Project

In order to show how this study fits into the existing research, we draw from African women theologians who stress on the importance of engaging women in the Church in theological reflections (Haddad 2000, 2003). This is the road that has been taken in this research project by creating space for Catholic women heading homes to engage with their religious rituals in order to develop their own theology from below (walking theology/practical theology) that sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development in their areas. In developing survival theologies of women in *Vulindlela* as the working theologies of faith of poor and

marginalized women, Haddad (2000, 2003) establishes the fact that the majority of the poor and marginalized women constitute the majority of women in the Church in South Africa. Namibia's context is not different from the context Haddad presents. The project of Catholic Women-Headed households in Kavango West Region in Namibia reveals the struggles of all women who head homes, constituting the majority being below Kavango's Poverty profile.²⁶ What becomes critical as Haddad (2000, 2003) suggests is the importance of integrating these women's voices into women's theological project. What is this women's theological project? Haddad notes through the women's commission that was formalized at a meeting of Third World Women Theologians in Mexico in 1986 what it means for the women theologians to reflect on what it truly means 'to do theology from a Third World Women's perspective' (Febella & Oduyoye 1988 in Haddad 2000:198). This is key in realizing that there is a need for the third world women to broaden their understanding of the differing socio-economic and political contexts from experiences of spirituality (Haddad 2000).

Engaging Catholic Women Heading homes in Kavango west region in Namibia there is a need to develop and establish women's theological project in Namibia. This could become a space through which women's voices could be heard and engaged theologically in order to address deep seated socio-economic, religious and political ills faced especially by women heading homes. Catholic women who were engaged in the study (Kavango west region in Namibia) expressed appreciation in engaging in the theological project and "mining" from their religious/spiritual assets in order to transform their households and socio-economic domains. This is an experience they never experienced before as Women Heading Households in Namibia because of the patriarchal system that undermines the voice of women. There is a great need for women theologians to facilitate platforms that engage ordinary women (in our context – Women Heading homes to theologically reflect on their contexts and have their contexts transformed by theologies from below).

These ideas are further strengthened by the work of three women theologians that Haddad introduces in her study of "Third World Women's Theology" namely; Denise Ackermann whose work is on "contextual liberating praxis"; Christina Landmann, whose emphasis is on

²⁶ The definitions used in Kavango Poverty Profile and the NSA report on Poverty Dynamics in Namibia about the meaning of poverty include: a lack of possessions (like cattle, ploughs, or crop fields); lack of access to education, services and markets and lack of social support structure (Regional Development Profile 2015).

“telling women’s stories”; and Madipoane Masenya’s use of “cultural practice and the bible” (Haddad 2000). “These women theologians also stress the importance of engaging women in the Church in theological reflection” (Haddad 2000:196). Engaging the concerned women in the Church has a prophetic aspect which can lead to social transformation.

Although not main theorists, to get a full glimpse of these three women theologian’s position is to look closely on their work and contribution to Haddad’s argument. Within the Work by Ackernmann (1996 in Haddad 2000:227) on “Contextual liberating praxis”, theologizing requires critical reflection that arises out of an awareness of one’s location to the marginalized and oppressed. Do those engaging women heading homes know their suffering within their space/location? Do these women heading homes consider themselves marginalized and oppressed? We do not need to presume, their voices speak louder as they engage each other through the study group which is the road that has been taken in this research project. Landman (1999 in Haddad 2000:230) in her work “telling women’s stories” regard women stories “sacred” as they include the “comfort (women) derived from being near to God”. Kanyoro (2002 in Adonis 2017:78) recounts

“Our stories are a basis for theology. Indeed, women globally are saying that theology should begin with our stories – what we feel in our society, how we feel about our children, our families, what enrages us, what makes us laugh, what our lives mean to the next neighbour and how we experience God in all these”.

Kanyoro (2002 in Adonis 2017) refers the importance of story-sharing as sharing people’s different experiences, and thus doing liberation theology. According to Kanyoro (2002 in Adonis 2017:78) the story-telling process ‘helps to make connection between faith and action because they make use of experiences and reflection as the intervals of connection’. In doing liberation theology ‘theology is no longer only an intellectual exercise, but also the expression of the religious experience of God’s people’ (Kanyoro 2002 in Adonis 2017:78). In further asserting the importance of story-telling in doing theology, Phiri, Govinden & Nadar (2002 in Adonis 2017) highlight five reasons why there is need to tell stories:

First, telling stories complement African Church history. Second, it revives and redeems tradition from women’s perspectives. Third, telling story shifts women from being observers and victims into participants and actors in history. Fourth, telling stories is therapeutic and a process of ‘narrative therapy’ so that healing and wholeness can come to African women.

Fifth, the importance of telling stories is that it creates new trajectories – transforming society to one that values the humanity of all people.

As indicated by Landman (1999) in (Haddad 2000) Catholic Women Heading homes relate their lived and embodied experiences through stories to their religious rituals and make their stories “sacred”. In this way, as Masenya (1997 in Haddad 2000) postulate, that engaging women theologically means that their context and their religious context is taken serious.

Women’s religious context is important to engage, because this space gives them identity as religious human beings. This space (religious space/church) when redemptive engages with their lived realities as a collective (Catholic Women’s League) and accords them public trust. Swart (2010:325) in his study of Churches as “stock of social capital for promoting social development” acknowledges the work of the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa (HSRC) that “in South Africa, no other social institution can claim to command the same level of public trust as the Christian Churches”. This South African context applies to Namibia’s context. Namibia as a Christian country could be used by advocates of religion in promoting arguments that bring out this sector’s social strength.

The researcher brings in this argument recognition of the Catholic Women Heading households as social capital and agents of transformative theological praxis especially those that are lay ministers. This implies that engaging their theology drawn from their religious rituals into their homes and societies commands a high level of public trust. This public trust informed by the space they occupy in their Christian communities (Catholic Women’s League and Lay ministers), their theology of praxis (theology from below/walking theology) can be a resource for transformation of their areas. This is an area uncovered during the study of Catholic Women Heading Households who are lay ministers that they are regarded as moral leaders in their Christian communities, who then become figures of moral and ethical formation in the public. In other words, the space occupied in their Christian communities command public respect and trust. As active members CWL who are lay ministers heading households, are challenged to lead by example and practice what they believe and proclaim.

Swart (2010) further establishes that the perspective of social trust has extended to faith-based sectors which are in general, agents of social development. This is in reference to their religious social welfare network, their capacity to reach out to and serve the people most in

need, and the value-laden nature of their programmes that are critical in the process of social change. Clarke and Ware (2015 in Adonis 2017:36) highlights the fact that:

“FBOs have two identities. The first is as a development agency seeking to improve the material well-being of the poor, while the second is that of a religious organization whose existence is forged from a faith basis and its understanding of religious tenet”.

FBOs being development agencies (with a religious identity) that seek to improve the material well-being of the poor, it is important to establish whether Catholic Women Heading homes in Kavango West Region have encountered faith-based organization that are able to engage their lived realities as well as their theology of praxis (walking theology) that could become a tool of social transformation.

Speaking about participatory action research, Wepener & Cilliers (2010 in Swart 2010) make a link between religious rituals and the generation of social capital. Wepener and Cilliers find the work on social capital by Ammerman important in analysing the impact of social change and transformation on congregations. And also the impact that congregations (might) have on change and transformation of society. Here, Ammerman speaks of congregations as generators of social capital (Wepener & Cilliers 2010 in Swart 2010:418). Ammerman (in Wepener & Cilliers 2010:418) defines social capital as “those connections of communication and trust that make the organization of a complex society possible”.

“Congregations here offer certain markers for identification and sense of belonging. Relationships of trust are formed here, and these relationships in turn facilitate communication and cooperation of activities in society and contribute towards the well-being of participants. Individuals, as well as the broader society, benefit from this” (Wepener & Cilliers 2010 in Swart 2010:418).

As indicated above through the work of Ammerman by Wepener and Cilliers (2010 in Swart 2010) that congregations are generators of social capital, the study of Catholic Women heading households refers congregation to CWL as generator of social capital. What is critical here is that through connections of communication and trust that are made through CWL, women heading households find markers for identification and sense of belonging, making CWL a space where Women heading homes can articulate their concerns. It is through the relationship of trust that these relationships in turn facilitate communication and

cooperation of activities in their society and contribute towards the well-being of participants as well as the broader society.

In engaging women and the Church, Haddad also points out the critical role of African Woman theologians in seeking ‘to be at the heart where theology is created, in the womb of the community of faith, and to academically articulate what is being produced (Njoroge 1997:78 in Haddad 2000:200). Again, this statement assist to grasp the importance of academic language in translating the experiences of Women Heading Households and the faith practices they draw from in formulating their own “lived-experience” and “embodied theology” that could help them sustain their livelihood and contribute to social development in Kavango West Region. This is an aspect that Catholic women heading homes in Kavango West Region lack, that is, having a body of women theologians that is able to articulate what is produced by women as they engage their lived-experiences in the light of their Church spirituality.

3.2. Conclusion

Engaging the theoretical framework, it becomes clear how important is the space of women in faith communities; how their stories/experiences are important as they engage their faith in developing their own theology from below that speaks to their context and contribute to their livelihoods. Feminist theologian Ackermann in dialogue with Haddad helps in establishing how important it is for women to put their theology into use through her feminist theology of praxis. Here Ackermann (2003) does not opt for the word “practice” but “praxis”. She does not settle for the meaning of praxis to mean “mere actions” but describes praxis as “the inseparable relationship between reflecting and acting, between what I think and believe and what I do to achieve the goals of my beliefs” (Ackermann 2003:35). Thus, this is crucial in this study engaging Catholic Women Heading Households. It relates to how they think and reflect about their own faith which they intend to put into action. The critical area is how these women through reflection and action draw on their Catholic religious rituals to formulate a theology of praxis which is bottom-up that sustains them and contribute to social development. Haddad (2000: 337) believes that within women theologies of survival, there is the presence of resistance discourse. Thus, while Haddad (2000, 2003) describes the intersecting three disciplines of gender, theology and development, feminist studies and women’s theology seek to amplify the voices of poor and marginalized women of faith. This

is in relation to the use of their theological resources to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development in their areas. This intersects gender, theology and development. Having taken a field work study that engages experiences of Catholic women heading households, the next chapter discusses the field work research design and the methodology used.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology

4.0. Introduction

This chapter offers information about the research approach, study area, study population, sampling method, recruitment process of participants, and the type of methodology used in this study. The methodology covers data collection process (primary and secondary data), data collection method (questionnaires method used in the context of focus groups discussions), ethical consideration, limitations to the study and the section on data presentation and analysis. The presentation of data and data analysis was done using themes that have been identified in the literature review and those that have emerged during the fieldwork study (demographic questionnaires within the focus groups study). The discussion of findings (Chapter 5) will flow from the themes identified in the presentation of data analysis.

4.1 Research Approach

The research strategy is a Focus Group Study (involving Catholic Women Heading homes) to enable a researcher to do an in-depth data analysis using both qualitative (explore concepts, thoughts and experiences) and quantitative approaches (facts about social phenomena, numerical and statistical inferences).

4.2. Study Area

As mentioned in the general introduction, the research project was carried out in Kavango West Region in Namibia. It was within the jurisdiction of the two Catholic Church Missions: Bunya Mission which is called St. Eugene Roman Catholic Mission, and Tondoro Mission which is called St. Laurence Roman Catholic Mission. Each of these missions has Christian communities whose members were involved in the study as participants.

4.3. Study Population

There were two groups of women heading households involved in the study. Participants were 20 in total, and each of the two groups had 10 participants (5 participants from each mission constituting a group of 10 participants). Initially, the researcher had intended to engage in the first group, women heading households who are part of the CWL group, and in

the second group, women who are not part of any Church group but ordinary members of these Catholic Faith communities. The researcher believed that their lived realities in relation to their faith practices and how they draw from their Catholic Religious rituals to sustain themselves and contribute to social development were different. However, during the recruitment process the researcher discovered that CWL is a support system group for also women heading homes in the region, accounting for almost 99% of them belonging to it (only one participant who was part of the study indicated not being a member). The researcher also discovered that although 99% of women heading homes belong to this group, some are ordinary members who just attend the group meetings twice a year (to get spiritual and moral support), while others who also are part of this group are actively involved in the life of their Christian communities as lay ministers²⁷. The researcher found this striking, and became the base through which he divided the two groups (Group one being for members of CWL who are actively involved in the life of their Christian communities as lay ministers; and Group two being for ordinary members of CWL who seek spiritual and moral support from the group). The researcher believed their lived realities in relation to their faith practices and how they draw from their Catholic Religious rituals to sustain themselves and contribute to social development are different. The purpose here was to see how these two groups of women from their different positionality within these faith communities draw from their religious rituals (faith practices) to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development in their areas.

The researcher involved a Religious Nun who helped in the identification process of the participants for the focus groups study. The Nun was the research assistant. During participants' identification process, snowball sampling process²⁸ was used. This was good in getting authentic data. The participants were informed beforehand what the focus group study was all about and sought their consent to carry out the study (focus groups discussions based on the set questionnaires) with them.

²⁷ Pastoral ministers in the Catholic Church who serve the Church but are not ordained (Ref. Pope Paul VI. 1965. *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.)

²⁸ Snowball Sampling Process 'refers to a sampling procedure when the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants' (Noy 2008:310). <https://nbn-solving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-53861>. [Accessed 20 October 2022].

4.4. Sampling Methods

The sampling method used in this study falls under Non-Probability Sampling Method²⁹. There are five sampling methods within Non-Probability Sampling, namely; 1) Quota Sampling³⁰, 2) Accidental sampling³¹, 3) Judgmental or Purposive sampling³², 4) Expert Sampling³³, 5) Snowball sampling³⁴, 6) Modal instant sampling³⁵, 7) Heterogeneity sampling.³⁶ As it has been indicated, the study used snowball sampling method. As a design process of selection that is done using networks, it is useful when the researcher knows little about a group or organization to study; who then through contact with few individuals, is directed to other participants (Etikan & Bala 2017).

In affirming this method, Noy (2008 in Mkhize 2017) refers method to when the researcher accesses information through contact information that is provided by other informants (Noy 2008 in Mkhize 2017). Opting for the snowball sampling method, the snowball sampling technique was used for two reasons: the first reason was for referrals (e.g. members who constituted the group of the “ordinary members” of the CWL heading households in both missions), and the second reason was through identification of participants who met the specifications of the study (e.g. members who constituted the group of the CWL who are involved in lay ministry in their Christian Communities in both missions), which can also be referred to as purposive sampling procedure (Mkhize 2017). According to Patton (2002 in Palinkas et al 2015:534), “Purposeful sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective

²⁹ Is a sampling procedure that will not bid a basis for any opinion of probability that elements in the universe will have a chance to be included in the study sample (Etikan 2017:1).

³⁰ This is a sampling process whereby the researcher is ease of access to his sample population based on some evident characteristic (such as sex, race) of the population of interest. This sample selection is by the convenient door of the researcher, whereby any person or individual mistakenly seen with the same characteristics will be asked pertaining the subject of the research for inclusion (Etikan & Bala 2017:1).

³¹ This is a sampling process not guided by any obvious characteristics, mostly used amongst marketers or newspaper researchers (Etikan & Bala 2017:1).

³² This is a sampling method based on the judgment of the researcher as to who will provide the best information to succeed for the objective of the study. The researcher focuses on those people with the same opinion to have the required information and be willing of sharing it (Etikan & Bala 2017:1).

³³ This is a sampling process whereby the researcher seeks for the consent of those that are expert or known expert in the area of study, and begin the process of collecting information directly from individual or group of respondent (Etikan & Bala 2017:2).

³⁴ This is a design process of selection usually done by using networks. It is useful when the researcher knows little about a group or organization to study; contact with few individuals will direct him to other group (Etikan & Bala 2017:2).

³⁵ This is a sampling method that samples the most frequent cases (e.g. one with most characteristic incident) (Etikan & Bala 2017:2)

³⁶ This is a sampling method whereby the researcher wants to include all the opinions or views and there will be no need to consider about representing these views per head (Etikan & Bala 2017:2).

use of limited resources”. “This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest” (Cresswell & Clark 2011 in Palinkas et al 2015:534). In this study, the phenomenon of interest is Catholic Women heading households who are lay ministers drawing from their religious rituals to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to Social development in their areas.

4.5. Recruitment Process of participants

The permission from the Administrator of the Apostolic Vicariate of Rundu was requested and obtained (see appendix). Before the commencement of the project, a meeting was held with the following people: The Two Parish Priests of Tondoro and Bunya Missions in Kavango West Region, the Parish Pastoral Councils of both missions, and the Religious Nun (the research assistant) who was also informed of the research project through the Apostolic Administrator of the Vicariate of Rundu, whose permission the researcher had obtained. This was good for the smooth running of the project. The above mentioned are people who are directly involved in the lives of the people in these two Catholic missions (Bunya and Tondoro Missions). In this case, they may have brought some important matters to my attention concerning the people who were especially involved in the purposive sampling procedure (the group of participants (CWL) who are lay ministers in their Christian Communities).

However, the researcher was conscious of all indications of being bias, and by all means avoided them. This is why he mixed participants from both missions together during focus group study. A door to door recruitment was followed as participants referred the researcher and research assistant to other Catholic women-heading households (the group of participants who are ordinary members of the CWL). The researcher believed participants knew each other. Participants were informed that should they wish not to be part of the study, their decisions would be respected. Should they wish to withdraw from the study after signing the consent form; their decision would be respected without any penalty. The religious nun that was involved in the data collection process as research assistant through the facilitation of these women’s group discussion processes also signed a form to abide to all ethical concerns. This happened in reference to the fact that as a Catholic priest, some participants (as women) might have found it difficult to open up to me and also avoid the possibility of them answering the questionnaires/engaging in group discussions in a way that seek to please me.

4.6. Data Collection Process

4.6.1. Primary Data

According to Hox and Boeijs (2005:593), “Primary data are data that are collected for the specific research problem at hand, using procedures that fit the research problem best”. This way of collecting data (first-hand data) gives credibility in qualitative research in that the researcher brings about issues with regard to reliability and validity, and thus a necessity to gain valid knowledge about experiences or the culture of a specific individual or group (Hox & Boeijs 2005). In this research project of Catholic women heading households on how they draw on their religious rituals to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development; developing questionnaires for focus groups discussions informed the procedure fit for the study. The first part of the primary data collection that involves the demographic characteristics such as age, marriage rates (marital status), length as head of household, level of education, occupation, number of persons in the house, number of children, number of school going children and non-school going children, and family members from the extended family dependent on participant was done through questionnaires that were given to participants and time was allocated for them to answer them through writing. The data were then collected and stored in a Safe for safety and data analysis stage. The second part of the primary data collection was carried out through questionnaires that were used during focus group discussions. An atmosphere was created, that gave space for Catholic women heading households engage with each other on their Catholic religious rituals, and how they draw from their religious rituals to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development in their areas. These discussions were recorded and later transcribed and analysed. The transcribed data is stored in a Safe for safety. According to Ndeilenga (2013:16)

“The strength of using primary data lies in its nature that takes the research to the source in order to collect empirical data. It also provides the researcher with first-hand information and observation of issues and the area of study”.

In relation to the above quotation, it becomes crucial that during the focus group study through which the researcher engaged women heading households, listening to their stories based on the questionnaires that were set allowed the researcher to observe participants especially in reference to the unexpressed in words interactions that spoke volumes about their life experiences. Observing the places where they come from also gave credibility to the

data collected. For example, when asked what they face when heading homes; listening to their stories and observing the areas they come from gave a true sense of how difficult or easy it is for them to lead households. Others were seen to have limited land; others were seen not having cattle to use when cultivating; others were seen not having support from family members; others were seen lacking the basic needs such as water and electricity in addition to lack of sufficient food supply; etc. Primary data therefore, takes the researcher on the ground, and draws him into fitting his feet in the shoes of the participants.

In making a difference between primary data and secondary data, it is important to note that;

“On every occasion that primary data is collected, new data are added to the existing store of social knowledge. Increasingly, this material created by other researchers is made available for reuse by the general research community; it is called secondary data” ((Hox & Boeije 2005:593)

Again, “by virtue of being achieved and made available, any type of primary data can serve as secondary data” (Hox & Boeije 2005:596)

4.6.2. Secondary Data

As indicated with reference to primary data definition, secondary data refers to “data collected earlier by other researchers or for other purposes than research, such as official statistics, administrative records, or other accounts kept routinely by organizations (Hox & Boeije 2005:596). From the study of Catholic women heading households in relation to the preceding given explanation of secondary data, we see that the desktop study done through the review of literature formed the category of secondary data. The literature that spoke to the themes identified in the study namely; women and economy, gender and theology (women and theology), theology and development helped in reviewing existing information, theories and views of different authors for better understanding of the study area, subject matters and key concepts covered in the study such as Kavango West Region, women-headed households, Catholic Church, Faith/theological resources, Catholic religious rituals, social development, livelihood sustainability, theoretical framework (depicting a three-Legged African Pot – Gender, Theology and Development). According to Oliever (2012 in Ndeilenga 2013:17),

“The reason for collecting data through secondary data is also meant to help the researcher to appreciate and establish the academic and research areas which are of relevance to the subject of the research. The use of secondary information has been necessitated by the fact that in reviewing literature, it highlights the different views and experiences from relevant sources”.

It is important to indicate here, that through secondary data, the researcher has been able to develop themes (drawn from the literature review) to logically present the data collected during the fieldwork study. This has been crucial to data analysis and discussion as well. It is also due to the secondary data that this research project has become academic through the use of the theoretical framework: Haddad (2000, 2003). Thus, Secondary data may be used for several reasons, namely; 1) for description of contemporary and historical attributes, 2) comparative research or replication of the original research, 3) reanalysis (asking new questions of the data that were not originally addressed), 4) research design and methodological advancement, and 5) teaching and learning (Hox & Boeije 2005).

4.7. Data Collection Instruments

Identifying the two types of data collection processes namely; the primary and secondary data collection, this section indicates the types of instruments used to collect data. The primary data was collected during the focus group study. Questionnaires became a resource through which group discussions were animated to collect data. Participants’ observations also formed part of the primary data collection process, as some participants used non-vocal expressions to communicate their message. The secondary data collection process took the form of desktop study. However,

“Using secondary data presents researchers with a number of characteristic problems. First, researchers must locate data sources that may be useful given their own research problem. Second, they must be able to retrieve the relevant data. Third, it is important to evaluate how well the data meet the quality requirements of the current research and the methodological criteria of good scientific practice” (Hox & Boeije 2005:596).

This becomes important to reflect on, as it has not been easy on the researcher finding more useful additional data to enrich and enhance the study due to the difficulty accessing some resources from the University Library website. Although the researcher was able to access relevant material for the research project to be well grounded, the researcher did fieldwork study on an area that has limited internet connection, and this became a challenge in accessing more secondary data. These have been the limitations in the study.

The use of Instruments in data collection process

Initially, the researcher had opted to audio record the demographic aspects of the research questionnaires during the primary data collection process. However, it was later seen fit to give them a written version, so as to give them more time for reflection. This enabled them give authentic data. During the study group discussions, written questionnaires were given, each participant having a hard copy. This allowed participants to closely engage questionnaires as they could think through these questionnaires at hand. A recorder was used to capture the discussions. Before that, consent from the participants was obtained to record the discussions with necessary explanation given that the data being collected will be used exclusively for academic purposes.

Focus Group as key method to data collection process

It is important to further define what is meant by focus group and why it is useful in a research. According to Sim & Snell (1996 in Sim 1998: 345), focus group is defined as “a group interview - centred on a specific topic (‘focus’) and facilitated and co-ordinated by a moderator or facilitator – which seeks to generate primarily qualitative data, by capitalizing on the interaction that occurs within the group setting”. Kitzinger (1995 in Sim 1998:345) sums up essential role of the focus group techniques this way:

“The idea behind the focus group method is that group processes can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview... when group dynamics work well the participants work alongside the researcher, taking the research in new and often unexpected directions”.

In engaging Catholic Women heading households on how they draw on their Catholic religious rituals to sustain themselves and contribute to social development, it became crucial how important it is, during the generation of primary qualitative data, to capitalize on the interaction that occurs within the group of study. This is important because one gets the opportunity to further clarify views that could be easily missed in an engaging way. According to Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, Krueger 1994 in Sim 1998), it is generally felt that having 8-12 participants is a suitable number of participants when setting a focus group.

For this very reason, two groups of Catholic women heading households in both Bunya and Tondoro Missions were involved in the study as indicated previously. The first group was for

members who constituted the group of the CWL who are involved in lay ministry in their Christian Communities in both missions. This group was comprised of 10 members, ranging from age 42-67. The second group was for members who constituted the group of the “ordinary members” of the CWL heading households in both missions. This group was also comprised of 10 members, ranging from age 30-61. This second group has a young age group that brought dynamics in the discussion of women heading households. The choice was deliberate in that, the researcher believed their (two groups) lived realities in relation to their faith practices and how they draw from their Catholic Religious rituals to sustain themselves and contribute to social development were different. The purpose here was to see how these two groups of women from their different positionality within these faith communities draw from their religious rituals (faith practices) to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development in their areas.

4.8. Ethical Consideration

The researcher stood as a Church minister (Catholic priest) who had encountered single mothers. The researcher respected participants’ spaces by engaging them with respect. Creating a safe space for them to feel free and open to engage was a priority. Participants were not forced to speak if they wished not to. Most importantly, the researcher ensured confidentiality of the information to safeguard the well-being of the research participants. This included the possibility of using pseudo names to protect research participants. As a research that involves women sharing their lived experiences, and that this might have evoked past hurts or bad memories for these women, the researcher involved counselors from the area as a support system. The researcher intended to have audio records during the data collection processes as well as taking notes during the discussions. However, the researcher first asked participants if they were comfortable with being recorded. Participants all agreed to be recorded. The purpose of recording which was to get access to the right and authentic data during transcription and writing process was explained to them. Participants were allowed to discuss in their indigenous language. This allowed the building of confidence in the participants.

4.9. Presentation and analysis of Data (Fieldwork study)

4.9.0. Introduction

The researcher has looked at the research design and methodology. It has been seen that the research strategy opted for a focus group study (see section 4.1). The study areas have been identified (in section 4.2). The study population and the division in groups have been indicated (see section 4.3). The snowball sampling method used in the study has been identified (Ref. Section 4.4). It has been shown also in section 4.5 of this chapter that before the project started; the permission from the Apostolic Vicariate of Rundu was requested and obtained. In addition, that there was a meeting held with the two parish priests of the two Catholic Missions (Bunya and Tondoro Missions) as well as the religious nun (research assistant). The topic on Data collection (section 4.6) within this chapter (methodology) further showed that data collection was through primary data collection method (first-hand information through questionnaires done within the context of focus group study) and secondary data collection method (review of literature). Questionnaires were key to data collection process which however took ethical considerations serious by respecting participants and ensuring confidentiality of their information in safe-guarding their wellbeing.

Moving further within the methodology chapter, the researcher presents the data collected through field work study, which are also analyzed in a form of framework analysis³⁷, and then discussed in chapter five. Here, the researcher first presents demographic data for each participant in each group (Group One and Group Two as indicated below) in table forms. Prior to the presentation of the demographic data, the researcher presents the study groups photos that participants have agree they can be included in the research project (see appendix 4). However, no name of participant is mentioned or attached to any discussion or point of reference. Secondly, the researcher then presents the social context of Catholic women heading households drawing from the demographic data presentation. The researcher then

³⁷ Described by Ritchie and Spencer (1994 in Rabiee 2004:657) as “an analytical process which involves a number of distinct though highly interconnected stages”. A specific distinctive aspect of framework analysis is that although it uses a thematic approach, it allows themes to develop both from the research questions and from the narratives of the research participants. The process of data analysis begins during the data collection, by skillfully facilitating the discussion and generating rich data from the discussions, complementing them with the observational notes and typing the recorded information. This state is followed by familiarization with the data, which can be achieved by listening to tapes, reading the transcripts in their entirety several times and reading the observational notes taken during discussions and summary notes written immediately during the discussions... (Rabiee 2004:657)

chooses 4 participants from each group to briefly present their household data. This is meant to show household/family stability based on the group the participant belongs. Here the researcher seeks to compare the lived reality of these participants from the two groups, to determine which participants and from which of the two groups (depending on their positionality within the CWL) have more stable homes. This area also shows their support system, including some aspects of faith/theological resources. This choice is also analyzed and discussed. Thirdly, data from the two focus groups discussions are presented in themes, findings are analyzed, and then discussed in chapter 5.

4.9.1. Demographic Data Presentation

Abbreviations: P³⁸, A³⁹, M⁴⁰, W⁴¹, LHH⁴², LE⁴³, O⁴⁴, NPH⁴⁵, NCH⁴⁶, NCAS⁴⁷, NCNAS⁴⁸, FMDP⁴⁹, NI⁵⁰, Gr⁵¹/St⁵², AF⁵³, NE⁵⁴, T⁵⁵, S⁵⁶, HW⁵⁷.

Number of persons in the House

It is important to clarify that the total number of persons in the house is not determined by the indicated number of children and family members dependent on the participant. Family members dependent on the participant do not necessarily live with the participant in the same house.

³⁸ Participant

³⁹ Age

⁴⁰ Marriage

⁴¹ Widow

⁴² Length as Head of Household

⁴³ Level of Education

⁴⁴ Occupation,

⁴⁵ Number of Persons in the House

⁴⁶ Number of Children in the House

⁴⁷ Number of Children Attending School

⁴⁸ Number of Children Not Attending School

⁴⁹ Family Members Dependent on Participant

⁵⁰ Not Indicated

⁵¹ Grade

⁵² Standard (other name for grade, used during the colonial era)

⁵³ Agricultural Farmer

⁵⁴ Not Employed

⁵⁵ Teacher

⁵⁶ Secretary

⁵⁷ Health Worker

Table 1: Group One (Individual Data Presentation)

P	A	M	LHH	LE	O	NPH	HCH	NCAS	NCNAS	FMDP
P1	42	Yes	22Yrs.	NI	AF	10	8	6	2	5
P2	51	Not	5Yrs.	St. 9	AF	18	7	5	2	1
P3	52	Yes	32Yrs.	St. 7	AF	15	7	5	2	3
P4	53	Yes	NI	St. 5	NE	13	11	7	4	1
P5	54	Not	30Yrs.	St. 8	NE	15	7	6	1	1
P6	57	Not	19Yrs.	St. 8	NE	9	6	4	2	3
P7	57	Not	15Yrs.	NI	AF	4	3	1	2	1
P8	59	Not	29Yrs.	St. 8	AF	9	5	5	0	4
P9	65	Yes	24Yrs.	St. 6	NE	20	12	10	2	4
P10	67	Not	29Yrs.	St. 8	T	17	11	9	2	9

Table 2: Group Two (Individual Data Presentation)

P	A	M	LHH	LE	O	NPH	HCH	NCAS	NCNAS	FMDP
P1	30	Yes	NI	Gr.8	AF	6	4	2	2	0
P2	31	Yes	10Yrs.	Gr.8	NE	7	5	4	1	10
P3	37	Yes	15Yrs.	Gr.10	AF	7	5	3	1	1
P4	42	Yes	13Yrs.	Gr.12	AF	13	7	5	2	4
P5	46	Not	12Yrs.	Gr.10	S	9	7	7	0	5
P6	59	W	27Yrs.	St.8	AF	18	14	10	4	NI
P7	59	W	28Yrs.	St.7	AF	19	10	7	3	NI
P8	NI	W	48Yrs.	St.8	AF	14	10	10	0	2
P9	NI	Not	25Yrs.	St.8	HW	12	6	5	1	3
P10	61	Not	NI	NI	NE	7	4	3	1	1

4.9.2. The Social Context of Catholic Women-Headed Households

4.9.2 A) Marital status

The study indicates that women who are heading households are either identified as married or not married. In both groups, 8 participants are married (with each group having 4 married participants), living with their husbands, but consider themselves heads of households. In both groups, 12 participants (with each group having 6 participants) consider themselves not married. Their reality is informed by two things: 1) Death of spouse, and 2) divorced or separated. There was no participant that indicated that being head of household as a single mother was by choice.

4.9.2 B) Age rate/Age Groups

Married participants in group one range from age (42 – 67); while married participants in group two ranges from age (30 – 42). Although married, these young mothers (in reference to group two) consider themselves heads of households. The inability of their husbands to lead and provide for the family makes these young mothers take up household roles as heads. Here, being head of household is determined by the ability to lead and provide for the home. The dominant narrative of patriarchy is challenged by this inability to lead and provide for the family. Women who take up this role of heading households are not undermined on gender grounds.

4.9.2 C) Level of Education

In both groups, it is important to note that the majority of women heading households attended school during the colonial period, and the highest amongst them attended school until Standard 9. Only 5 of these women heading households attended school in the newly adopted education system of Namibia (Cambridge) in 1996. After Namibia's independence in 1990 as indicated by Kandumbu (2005:49),

“from 1992-1996 plans were made and actions related to the implementation of policies took place geared towards ensuring access to education, redress of apartheid inequalities, equality

in education, and an ongoing enhancement of the quality in education across the country with the policy document “Towards Education For All”⁵⁸.”

Although the education policy was geared towards education for all, participants felt as rural women during the discussions that, more efforts were not made in their areas to make sure they felt part of the “new Namibia education system”. The majority of them felt that some failures within the transition process contributed to the state rural women heading homes find themselves today. They however acknowledge great efforts made nationally to transform Namibia’s education system.

4.9.2 D) Occupation

In both groups, eleven participants (55%) indicated to have been sustaining their families through Agricultural farming. Those who reach the age of old pensioners (60 years) are further supported by pension fund to run their households. Six participants indicated to be not employed; one indicated to be a retired teacher; one indicated being a health worker, and one indicated being a secretary.

4.9.2 E) Number of Persons in the House

When we look at this aspect, it shows that the majority of these women heading households take care of huge families. This is mainly informed by urban migration and extended family ties⁵⁸. When the children of women heading households have grown up, they seek ways to survive. When they leave for the city, they also leave their children in the hands of their mothers (heads of households). One of the participants recounted that “many times when these children go in search of green pastures and bear children wherever they go, they always bring them and leave them with the granny (household head) in the village. These children are not always supported by their parents who prefer to hustle in the city, and the responsibility is left to the woman head of household. Some of these children are too young and require care at all times and at times it becomes difficult for these women to work.

⁵⁸ Refers to extended family members, coming to live in the woman-head’s household, on ground that they are blood related.

4.9.2 F) Household Stability indications (groups' comparison: 4 selected participants from each group).

Group One: Brief Household Data

Participant 1: (Married Yet Head of Household)

Describing her family make up, the participant lives with her husband, mother, children, father's nephew (who has a child), sister and sister's child. Although the participant is married, she is the provider in the house and makes decisions concerning the life of the family. The participant is pleased with the relationship that exists in the family. Household members work together for the good of the family which motivates her as head. In relation to her faith practice and faith values, the participant as lay minister is aware of God's unfailing help. The participant is inspired by the heart of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. According to her, Mary always remained strong no matter what happened to her son, and always treasured everything in her heart. She has taken up the heart of Mary as head of household. Prayer keeps her strong by enduring hardships. Speaking about how she provides for her family, she says "I am very much committed to farming. I harvest a lot of *Mahangu* (staple food) during good rains. I also have goats that I sell if the family is in need of money". The participant has a big field where as a family; they carry out their farming activities and a land where their home is located.

Participant 2: (Not married)

Describing her family set up, the participant lives with her two children, siblings and their children. She speaks of her family relationship being good. They work together when farming (cultivating). They advise each other in ways that build up the family. As a lay minister in her Christian Community, she says "my committed life in the church as a lay minister keeps and protects me in challenging moments as I experience the nearness of God. When I am sick, I call members of our group to pray for me and provide support". As to how she provides for the family; the participant works hard in agricultural farming, and together with her family members seek work from other people (working in other people's fields to get some money). The participant and family have a field where they cultivate, and land where their home is located.

Participant 3: (Married Yet Head of Household)

The Participant lives with her husband (who is physically challenged⁵⁹), their children, grandchildren, her siblings' children and their children, and a family member. The participant takes full responsibility of the house as head, although her husband is there. As many in the house are orphans, she is committed to taking care of them, and have all built a good relationship in the house. The participant is an active member in her Church community as reader, sacristan and a leader of the CWL in her Church Community. She says "through faith, when there is sickness in the house I pray and it works". The participant acknowledges the difficulty of taking care of a big family. However, she trusts in God's providence. They have a family land.

Participant 10 (Not Married, retired Teacher)

The participant is a retired teacher. They are 17 in the house, living with her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. She describes her family as peaceful and always tries to find a way for peace when an argument arises. She values education and always make sure that children go to school. Speaking about her faith practice and faith values she says, "I am a lay minister that does Communion Service in my Church Community and other Church activities. I feel that connectedness to God inspires me to be exemplary wherever I find myself, whether in my house or in my community. I always try to live my faith". Her old pension contributes to her family. The family has a field that it cultivates and harvests to supplement the pension.

Group Two: Brief Household Data

Participant 1: (Married but Head of Household)

The participant is the youngest of all participants in the study. She is married, lives with her husband (whom she describes as not helpful). She takes care of her husband, their four children and her younger brother. Describing the relationship that exists in the family, she sadly says "there is no good relationship, as no one helps me, my husband does not make

⁵⁹ The term is used here to refer to someone who is physically disabled.

things any better. I am the one to teach my children how to pray and also teach them the importance of education using my own context of not being able to finish school”. Prayers keep her strong, and gains moral and spiritual support from the CWL group during meetings. She survives through Agricultural farming, collection of Mangetti Fruits and Read Bean. She has a field distant from where her home is that she cultivates.

Participant 5: (Head of Household, Not Married, Not a member of CWL)

The participant is the only member in the study not belonging to the CWL group. The Participant confidently describes herself as head of household in the words “*Nyaamwange nyame nturagumbo*⁶⁰). The participant lives with her two daughters, brother and his three children and extended family. Describing her family relationship she speaks of her brother who is employed but not helpful. “His salary is for alcohol” she states. The whole responsibility of sustaining their home rests upon her. She is an ordinary member of the Church (not part of the CWL). However, praying the rosary and making intercessions through Mother Mary helps in dealing with the difficulties she faces. She struggles to feed the family although a health worker because the salary she gets from her work is too little to take care of the whole family. Her family does not own a field where they could cultivate, but a small piece of land where their home is located.

Participant 6: (Widow, Head of Household)

The participant lives with her children, siblings’ children, and extended family members (although the number of extended family members is not indicated in table 2). The participant is physically challenged⁶¹, and yet takes care of more than 18 household members. Some members of the household work together while others not. She prays through the intercession of St. Philomena (who experienced bodily healing during her persecution by Emperor Diocletian that amazed everyone⁶²) and it is believed that St. Philomena’s intercessions provides physical strengths. She feeds her home through farming and work tenders. What is striking is that although family members know about her physical condition, they still send

⁶⁰ Meaning “I myself, am head”

⁶¹ Having one hand amputated

⁶² <https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.bph?saintid=98> [accessed 20 November 2022]

their children to come stay with her. The family has a field to cultivate, but the challenge is; the family lacks resources to cultivate (cattle).

Participant 10: (Head of Household)

The participant is the most senior amongst all participants. The participant takes care of 7 household members, including 4 children, and one family member dependent on her. She struggles to survive and describes herself as a poor woman head of household. The participant does not receive help from family members, and does not have a field to cultivate. She has a small portion of land where she has built her home. She tries to cultivate around the house during the rainy season to get food to feed the family. She lives by God's providential care that comes through her complete trust in God which she asserts happens.

Analysis of Household Stability (groups' comparison: 4 selected participants from each group).

Comparing the selected participants from the two groups (1 and 2) in the study, I have observed that participants in group one (belonging to CWL and Lay ministry) have more stable homes compared to those in Group two (Belonging to CWL alone). All participants in group one, whether married or not, describe their family relationships as good, while in group two, only one participant (6) is positive about family relationships. This is an indication that group one members are more resourceful when it comes to drawing from the Catholic religious rituals in sustaining their homes. Their being active in their faith communities truly sustains their livelihoods. Although members of group two are committed to taking full responsibility of their households as heads, it becomes evident that their theology is that of the Cross as in the expressions during the discussions "It is my cross to carry, no one will carry it for me". This could be seen in line with Haddad's theology of survival. One's positionality in terms of faith practice informs how one is able to build a stable home. This way, faith/theological resources play a very important role in family and community building.

4.9.3 Focus Groups Data Analysis

4.9.3. A) Women and Household Leadership (Gender)

The study captures experiences of Women Heading Households; their achievements and failures; whether they are satisfied with their life as women heading homes or not. In both groups (group one and group two), Catholic Women Heading households feel it is their calling to be heads of households. They feel obliged to take up this role as there could be no one else to take it up. In both groups, Women Heading households feel overwhelmed by huge responsibilities to lead households with limited resources to care for their families. This is in recognition that many of them depend on Agricultural farming (as indicated before in table 1 and table 2) which has been severely compromised by climate change. In the study groups women discussed their challenges at home:

As woman head, all responsibilities of the house rest on your shoulders. For example; making sure that no one takes advantage of your household members because they come from a woman-headed household; that household members' spiritual life is taken care of, by encouraging them to attend Church services and Church activities so that they grow in fear of the fear; that household members' moral life formation is taking place by teaching them to behave in appropriate manners with everyone and not bring problems in the house and in the community; that children's academic life is not neglected by making sure they go to school (especially those that attend schools far, making sure that they have toiletries, transport money, clothes etc.); that members of the house are always healthy, because when one gets sick, you are to make sure you have money to take him or her to hospital; that members of the house have food to eat every day; make sure that during the rainy season, the field is prepared for cultivation...

The picture that is created by the statement indicates that Catholic Women Heading Households have a huge responsibility. However, the CWHH experience joy knowing that their sacrifices contribute to their household and the building of society as a whole. One participant asserted "Once our homes are toxic, the society becomes toxic as well. We have sick societies because our homes are sick". There are both positive and negative experiences when heading households according to the study groups discussions. Study groups discussions bring out the following positive experiences: 'what is positive about being head of household is when members of the house respect you as head, when members are cooperating and when children are obedient and giving a good family image in the society'. There is nothing more that gives joy to a women head of household than this. There are however, negative experiences that make the life of a woman as a head difficult. The majorities of participants shared the following:

Firstly, about the stubbornness of some male children, who at some stage in life feel they have grown up, and as men, develop the need to be recognized as head. These children are socialized into a patriarchal system from a young age therefore become a product of such a system and refuse to take instructions from the women as head of the house. One participant affirmed “no matter how as woman head talk, they ignore, because they know you will not do anything”.

Secondly, it is during the rainy season when it is time to cultivate. Here, the aspect of women and economy comes through, considering the reality that women in the study heavily depend on agricultural farming for family sustainability and community development. During the rainy season, the land needs to be prepared and some trees need to be cut/or pruned. The woman head cannot do some of the functions, for example, climbing a tree to cut off branches and put a hedge around the field is perceived to be the role of men in the society. It is at this moment that the woman head faces the hard facts that all grown children have gone to the city in search of green pastures and many who are at home are school children who are only at home during weekends or holidays. The woman head is often forced to seek help from neighbors who in return ask for payment.

Thirdly, when a woman head gets sick, her household stands still as she is the only sustainer of her household. Fourthly, when a woman head is left with children and grandchildren, she cannot improve her life, as her commitment is just on maintaining her household. There is no investment for the future, because the feeding is from hand to mouth. Lastly, participants shared how difficult it is dealing with children of family members staying in your house as woman head. A participant strongly confirmed how this is difficult: “once you try disciplining them they give wrong reports to their parents that you do not like them in your house. Orphans are even more difficult to discipline. They always refer to ‘is because our parents are dead that you treat us like this’”. It becomes difficult to managing one’s home this way.

4.9.3 B) Women and Religious Rituals (Theology)

Both groups describing their roles as Catholic Women Heading households being members of CWL and lay ministers in their Christian communities express a sense of deep trust in God.

As Women Heading households want to lead by example. For example; when they teach their children how to pray, they themselves should be seen praying. When they teach their children to respect the Sabbath day, they themselves should be seen respecting the Sabbath day. When they teach their children about love, they themselves should live in love. As lay ministers (group 1) when they instruct others to walk in the commandments of the Lord, they themselves should live by the commandments. In their households, Catholic Women Heading homes have resolved to teach their children about the commandments: first to love God above all things⁶³; second, their neighbors as they love themselves⁶⁴, and third, the commandment to honor their father and mother... that they may have long life and prosperity in the land...⁶⁵ Participants⁶⁶ feel that in order to have a healthy home or society, these commandments should find root in people's hearts. As Women Heading homes⁶⁷, keeping God's commandments begin with themselves as examples.

How being Catholic Women helps to navigate the challenges of global climate change and urban migration?

Catholic women in the study express a strong feeling about climate change and urban migration in that it is important to first of all accept the reality at hand. This is in being aware that these are global issues that touch every person, especially in Kavango West Region, Namibia. These women are aware that Climate change for example comes when it is least expected. As a person of faith, praying unceasingly helps you navigate through this reality as God intervenes. With both climate change and urban migration, women heading households draw from the following in order to become resilient and sustainable: 1) Trust in God.⁶⁸ This is linked with the table of the Eucharist, especially at consecration during the invocation of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹ One participant recounted "at that particular moment, even when you have nothing to eat, all that you have is transformed".

⁶³ Deuteronomy 5: 8-10

⁶⁴ Mark 12:31

⁶⁵ Deuteronomy 5:16

⁶⁶ Catholic Women heading households within the CWL

⁶⁷ Members of the CWL and as lay ministers

⁶⁸ "We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

⁶⁹ "You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ" (*The Daily Missal*.2012. Paulines Publications Africa)

This transformation continues at the reception of Holy Communion when the priest raises up the Body and Blood of Christ and says “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” and all respond “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed”⁷⁰ Sharing their own experiences of struggle, Women Heading homes experience peace and healing from God at this moment within the liturgy. This is further given credibility when at the dismissal; the priest says “Go in the peace of the Lord”. Participants said it is at that particular moment they realize they are been commissioned to bear witness to the good news they have heard in the Church, which is the good news of hope. They carry the peace of the Lord that binds them together in their homes and in their communities, assuring them hope no matter the challenges/crisis. 2) “Your every act should be done with love”.⁷¹ 3) Trust in God’s providence.⁷² 4) “By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat...”⁷³ 5) “Anyone unwilling to work should not eat”⁷⁴ 6) “*Walye o rara wa naha kurugana, nombwa ngadi kulya*”⁷⁵

Further Key faith practices/theological resources drawn from the Catholic Religious Rituals that sustain households and contribute to social development

Women heading households being members of CWL and lay ministers in their Christian communities believe that prayer without works cannot transform the society. They do not speak of great works, but simple works that touch human life in a humble way. They believe that the society is sick in one way or another, and needs healing through people who are actively and honestly involved in its healing process. Examples of simple works women see critical are: 1) Visiting the sick and elderly. For these women, the act of visiting the sick and elderly is itself a healing process. Sharing their own experiences as people who, at some point in their lives fell sick, participants (Catholic women heading homes) are of the conviction that many people are confined to sick beds not because they are sick physically, but because they need to be shown love and care. These women believe that Christ wants them to visit those who are not well and to demonstrate healing power.

⁷⁰ *The Daily Missal*.2012. Paulines Publications Africa.

⁷¹ 1 Corinthians 16:14

⁷² “Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? (Matthew 7:26).

⁷³ Genesis 3:19

⁷⁴ 2 Thessalonians 3:10

⁷⁵ Translated as “Do not be in sleep without working, dogs will eat you” (Rukwangali old saying – participants’ language)

They are convinced that caring for the sick is the Church's fundamental mission. They believe it is love and care that build homes and communities. 2) Visiting those who have lost their loved ones (widows/widowers/orphans) to comfort and listen to them. Catholic women are aware that in moments of death, people's hearts get broken, and need to be mended. They are aware that some people lose properties after losing their loved ones that put them in poverty. When these people are not visited and are not listened to and assisted should they need support, it is not only their homes that get destroyed but the society at large. The society at large becomes toxic. They believe that it takes the whole society with good will to build a progressive society. 3) Visiting Graves of family members. Women heading households are aware of the importance of spiritual unity between the living and the dead that can be a healing remedy to household members (spiritual health just as body health and psychological health). 4) The need to care for the poor that itself carries a blessing.⁷⁶ Women heading households draw from these words, and end up having to take care of many extended family members as indicated in tables (1 and 2). They all affirm that God in his providence opens people's hearts to the poor and needy to be provided with basic needs. 5) Being members of CWL⁷⁷. 6) Provides benefits for lay ministers. Participants who are lay ministers feel their nearness to God who is their helper, and that their trust in God is itself sustainable. And because they always live by example, their homes become stable, and positively impact their communities. Whatever they do in their homes, they always remember that they are public moral leaders. They believe that social transformation takes place when a society is morally and ethically formed.

4.9.3 C) Women, Religious Rituals and Development

When asked to share the faith practices/theological resources drawn from the Catholic religious rituals that help contribute to the development of their areas, Catholic heading homes as ordinary members of CWL and as members of CWL+ Lay Ministers began sharing the key role prayer plays in transforming the society. For these women, prayer begins with the fear of the Lord. Any given society according to them becomes troubled, when it has no fear of the Lord. Prayer being tool transforms troubled hearts to goodness. When people are

⁷⁶ "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed" (Proverbs 19:17).

⁷⁷ Where some women during conferences share their life stories and how God has intervened, giving them hope and trust in Him. Where women are instructed to fear God and be women of prayer, hard work and good example (Verbal communication of CWL Rule.2022.)

taught how to pray, it brings a good spirit in the community they affirmed. In addition, for Catholic women heading households, simple (humble) acts of love like visiting the sick and elderly, reaching out to those who lose their loved ones, reaching out to those who seem to disregard God, having open hands to assist the poor and needy, reaching out to families that are divided, being involved in marriage preparation courses and catechetical formation are the foundation towards building a moral and ethical community that is open to transformation. They are of the conviction that when these basic yet central humble acts of love are neglected, individuals live selfish lives that in turn affect the whole community. According to one participant “It is by failing to reach out to others that people fail to love and care. Community members who stop to love and care stop being a community and even a Church”.

Based on the above mentioned, participants (Catholic women heading households) feel that due to selfishness, those who have been in positions to influence/facilitate community development have not done so, causing their communities to remain poor. One participant shared of an experience whereby a community member brought a transformer in his house, and when others asked if it could be extended to them as neighbours, refused. Another participant shared about one community member who brought water pipes to his home, and when asked by his neighbours to get access to healthy water through his efforts, refused. Participants are aware that when community members are not willing to share resources, even opportunities for development from outside get hindered. In addition to this, members of the community fail to seek opportunities to discuss the things that truly affect them when every person is for himself/herself.

Apart from the above mentioned that could become key to facilitating community development and transformation, Participants in the study groups discussions mainly focused on household sustainability. This is where they speak a lot about “prayer and work” in that, “prayer without work cannot transform your home and society”. Although some participants spoke highly about God’s providential care during difficult times, they were also of the conviction that one needs to work in order to eat or always seek other means of being resilient that sustain your home and community. Here they referred to the following as mentioned before in the section of Women and Religious Rituals: 1) “By the sweat of your

face shall you get bread to eat...”⁷⁸ 2) “Anyone unwilling to work should not eat”⁷⁹ 3) “*Walye o rara wa naha kurugana, nombwa ngadi kulya*”⁸⁰

Community Projects

When asked to share on the community development projects in their areas (with recognition of Musese and Sikondo green schemes in the region), participants could not share any community projects which are close to them, apart from individual/private projects by some community members for mainly household sustainability, through which community members partly benefit. These private projects do not employ many people because they are small. However, participants felt that should these projects be supported by the local government, they could be enlarged, and increase community benefits. For example: Bunya (A Bakery and Sewing project), Musese (A vegetable garden and A Bakery), Sivara (Marula oil project), Matava (A Bakery that uses firewood – no electricity), Tondoro (A Fish Pond that is still in progress). These are just a few to mention that have potentials for community projects that could benefit a larger population in terms of the produce and employment. The rest of the participants’ communities have small vegetable gardens along the Kavango River, which are very much exposed to thieves and animals because there are no fences. All these need the local government intervention they asserted. There is a strong feeling amongst participants that local governments should begin engaging them through community meetings, to discuss ways of improving their living conditions. They (community members) are the only ones who know what they most need to develop. Meetings of such sort are not held in their communities. Participants feel they are left to hustle on their own after elections, holding on promises until the next elections come with more promises. Another participant affirmed “We live by hope in promises”.

4.9.4. Conclusion

This chapter being key to the field work research project because of its nature to present the research design, methodology, data collection, data presentation and data analysis; it has demonstrated the richness of carrying out field work study in the context of focus groups. It

⁷⁸ Genesis 3:19

⁷⁹ 2 Thessalonians 3:10

⁸⁰ Translated as “Do not be in sleep without working, dogs will eat you” (Rukwangali old saying – participants’ language)

has been presented that opting for a focus group study; the researcher was lead into an in-depth analysis through both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Having presented data collection from the two focus groups obtained through questionnaires and focus groups discussions; Catholic women experiences as they head households have been presented. These have been analyzed through the emerging themes namely; A) women and household leadership. It has been indicated here that women heading households feel overwhelmed by huge responsibilities with limited resources to care for their homes, yet this is the context they continue to survive and contribute to development of their areas. B) Women and religious rituals. This presented the fact that women engage their lived realities with their faith, and that through reflection and action, this becomes the basis through which they develop their theologies of praxis. C) Women, religious rituals (theology) and development. This demonstrated that acts of love drawn from religious rituals (through which theologies of praxis are formed) can lead to social transformation and development. Thus, having identified the themes emerging from literature review, fieldwork data presentation and analysis, the following chapter discusses the findings in a way that intersects the logic of the study - gender, theology and development.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

5.0. Introduction

Having established the research findings and analyzed findings in chapter 4, chapter 5 discusses the findings using themes that have been established in the literature review as well as in the data analysis. Discussing the findings, we first look at the factors informing the lived reality of Catholic women-headed households. This area discusses mainly women and household leadership. The following three areas of discussions begin the intersection of Gender, theology and development. This is to indicate that the second topic following the social context of Catholic women-heading households (women and household leadership) looks at women and economy (gender); the third discussing women and religious rituals (theology) and the third Theology and Development (Development). Lastly, the researcher sums up the main discussions.

5.1. Factors informing the lived reality of Catholic women-headed households

It is important to indicate again, that global climate change and urban migration are prerequisite to the realities of the study on women-headed households but not the primary focus. Here we focus on the factors informing the lived reality of Catholic women-headed households. It is first important thus, to show the social context of Catholic women-headed households in the context of the study that has been carried out. 20 participants were involved in the study as a whole. 12 of the participants are indicated “Not Married”⁸¹ This makes up 60% of not married participants and 40% of participants being married.

Further indications in the findings show that the majority of these women heading households attended school during the colonial period, through which at the dawn of Namibia’s independence in 1990, did not get opportunities to transit to the new education system of an independent Namibia that could have opened them opportunities for better life. This is why the majority of them live by agricultural farming with limited resources to improve their lives. This poses a challenge for Namibia to further carefully examine strategies that are being used during the change of National Curriculum for Basic Education, so that no child is

⁸¹ See Chapter 4, Section 4.9.2 A

left out or left behind. Learners and Teachers Case Studies should be carried out in every region (mainly rural areas) after every change of Curriculum for Basic Education to determine the effectiveness of the new system. This avoids history repeating itself. Out of the 20 participants, 14 participants aged 51-67 attended school during the colonial era. Having to take care of huge families as indicated previously in tables (1 and 2), women heading households in Kavango West Region feel overwhelmed by huge responsibilities to lead households, taking into account the impact of climate change. This is why Spear (2018:3) thus states,

“Vulnerability to climate change in Namibia is driven by underlying structural factors including a history of inappropriate economic policies, gender disparities and colonization which led to chronic poverty and inequality”.

This vulnerability to Climate change is further fueled by very limited employment opportunities (NSA 2015), inability to engage in innovative economic activities (Dirkx et al. 2008, MET 2011), literacy and education (NSA 2011), financial capacity, access to loans (Zeidler et al. 2010, Giorgis 2011, Nyambe & Belete, 2013) and access to public services (NSA 2011, Amadhila et al. 2013) (Spear 2018). Having looked at the social context of Catholic women-headed households and their vulnerability to climate change as indicated above, we turn to discuss women and household leadership

5.2. Women and Household Leadership (Gender)

In the use of her own work context through a “gendered” lens, Haddad began to reflect on her pastoral and development practice during her four years (1996-1999) as assistant priest in the Development District of Sweetwaters in Vulindlela, a semi-rural, Zulu-speaking community outside Petermaritzburg, KwaZulu Natal (Haddad 2003). From this context, Haddad realized women and children made up about 90% of the congregation and it became clearer and clearer to her that it was these women who were all too often heading the households, facing unemployment, struggling to ensure their children were educated, collecting firewood, drawing water from the local streams, and increasingly struggling with the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Haddad 2003). Haddad (2003:428) stresses that “for too long, the Church has been too slow to acknowledge its complicity in supporting the patriarchal status quo of society

within all cultures and traditions, and in so doing, has failed a large sector of its membership”.

Haddad's context gives meaning to the context of this paper through which the researcher discusses how important it is that women's voices be heard as they head households in today's context, given the background that informs women-headed households as established in sections: 1.1, 2.1 and 4.9.2.

As it has been previously established, this study opted for field work through focus groups questionnaires discussions. The Catholic Women had an opportunity to share and discuss their lived reality in relation to their faith as they head homes. Haddad (2000, 2003) emphasizes on the importance of women's voices/stories being integrated into women's theological project that is life transforming. Phiri, Govinden and Nadar when further discussing the importance of women's voices or stories enrich the discussion in that, when women share stories, they shift from being observers and victims into being participants and actors; that through sharing of stories in a narrative therapy, brings about healing and wholeness; and that sharing stories contributes to community transformation as people begin to value life. In this study, women's stories that are shared are regarded sacred as it has been discussed previously by Haddad through the work of Landman.

Throughout the focus groups discussions, the researcher picked up the continuous reference to God, women heading homes made. They acknowledge that the burden of leading homes rests upon them, but through their nearness to God in prayers and in serving God as members of CWL and also as lay ministers, God's comfort and help is often experienced. In group sharing, experiences of women heading households as stipulated below show how women stories become “sacred” (Landman 1999 in Haddad 2000) as they relate them to God's intervention in their lives.

‘As woman head, all responsibilities of the house rest on your shoulders. For example; making sure that no one takes advantage of your household members because they come from a woman-headed household; that household members' spiritual life is taken care of, by encouraging them to attend Church services and Church activities so that they grow in fear of God; that household members' moral life formation is taking place by teaching them to behave in appropriate manners with everyone and not bring problems in the house and in the community; that children's academic life is not neglected by making sure they go to school (especially those that attend schools far, making sure that they have toiletries, transport

money, have clothes etc.); that members of the house are always healthy, because when one gets sick, you are to make sure you have money to take him or her to hospital; that members of the house have food to eat every day; make sure that during the rainy season, the field is prepared for cultivation...’

When looked at closely, these stories about women’s roles as they head households could be seen in line with God’s loving care for humanity. These women become embodiment of God’s motherly love and care as they never give up on their families but endure all afflictions (as Jesus did until he died for the liberation of humanity). Women could not be understood on what they truly go through if platforms for sharing their stories and discussions of their lived realities are not created. These platforms make them share their lived experiences theologically in order that their lives are transformed. Thus, the project of Catholic Women-Headed households in Kavango West Region in Namibia reveals the struggles of all women who head homes, constituting the majority being below Kavango’s Poverty profile.⁸² What becomes critical here therefore as Haddad (2000, 2003) suggests is the importance of integrating these women’s voices into women’s theological project. What is this women’s theological project? Haddad notes through the women’s commission that was formalized at a meeting of Third World Women Theologians in Mexico in 1986 how important it was reflecting on what it means ‘to do theology from a Third World Women’s perspective’ (Febella & Oduyoye 1988 in Haddad 2000:198). This is key in realizing that there was need for the third world women to broaden their understanding of their differing socio-economic and political contexts drawing from experiences of spirituality (Haddad 2000).

Having engaged Catholic women heading homes in Kavango west region in Namibia draws me to think of the need to develop and establish women’s theological project in Namibia. This will become a space through which women’s voices could be heard and engaged theologically in order to address deep seated socio-economic, religious and political ills being faced by women as they head households.

Women and Economy

⁸² The definitions used in Kavango Poverty Profile and the NSA report on Poverty Dynamics in Namibia about the meaning of poverty include: a lack of possessions (like cattle, ploughs, or crop fields); lack of access to education, services and markets and lack of social support structure (Regional Development Profile 2015).

In the study, the demographic data collection and focus groups discussions indicate that the majority of women heading households (55%) are heavily dependent on agricultural farming. The majority of them being in agricultural farming indicates why women are the majority in Namibia nationally with 59% of the workforce in the agriculture and food production sector, particularly in subsistence farming where they produce 80% of the country's output (Shoko 2021:86).

As it has been established in section 2.2 within the literature review, given the background on how women's role in the economy has been undervalued, Haddad (2000) discusses the work of Boserup on the productive functions of rural women as major food producers. She argues that historically, 'women's work revolved around the home, subsistence farming, and informal sector, it was not taken into account by the "experts" in their development policies, planning and activities as they tended to only consider formal economy' (Haddad 2000:113). This discussion becomes important in engaging women in the study. It becomes clear here that women in the study (Catholic women heading households) operate within the informal sector as they do farming. Not much of their efforts are formally recognized. Haddad (2000: 124-125) drawing from the pre-conference meeting in India where development alternatives with women for a New Era were initiated, suggests that formal forums that give space for women to give voice and articulate their own development concerns are important. This is what we pick up in the focus groups study that local government for example in the areas of study does not create platforms that engage the people concerned for their development.⁸³

Haddad (2000) refers to the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995 attended by prominent women who held positions of authority with the new government of South Africa. The return of these women marked a new era, whereby gender concerns of Beijing were raised. These were issues of poverty alleviation and unequal access to economic opportunities and education, as well as inequality in power sharing and decision-making at all levels of society (Taylor 1997 in Haddad 2000:131).

⁸³ See chapter 4, section 4.9.3 C.

These Beijing gender concerns of 1995 still remain concerns of today, as women still battle with patriarchy. Women however, are determined to disrupt this dominant narrative of patriarchy within households in particular (see section 4.9.2 A).

In the literature review on women and economy, the researcher looked forward to answering the question: how many of the Catholic Women heading homes in the Kavango West Region in Namibia own land? Findings within the field work study revealed that amongst the 20 participants, only 2 participants are without land to cultivate. Luwaya (2018) and Itepu (2004) speak of the need to fully recognize and protect the land rights of rural women and that land should be recognized as key to women's empowerment and progress. Without land, a woman head of household cannot produce food to feed her home. Above all, without land a woman loses dignity.⁸⁴

Sharing their experiences during focus groups discussions, women heading households shared of the difficulties they face, namely during the rainy season. These women recount how difficult it is to prepare the land by either cutting or pruning trees and as well prepare hedges around the field. That unable to do this work, they look for people to work for them, who at times demand huge amounts that put them into debt when unable to pay. These become other added burdens they carry apart from the many household obligations to fulfill as heads, as indicated in the section of data presentation and analysis (4.9). These facts and more are real amongst women heading households, considering their vulnerability and difficulty in handling oxen during the period of cultivation. However, considering the friendliness of donkeys to women's use for household and farming, rural women can fully participate in community development.⁸⁵

Patriarchy and women-headed household

It is important to take note of the 40% of married participants in the study that head households while living with husbands. These women proudly describe themselves as heads of households. For these women heading households in the presence of their husbands are convinced that head of household is one who is fully involved in the leadership of the family,

⁸⁴ See chapter 2, section 2.2

⁸⁵ See Itepu 2004 in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.

which entails, being the provider, and being the guide. Sharing their experiences of being hard hustlers, they have come to accept this role. This is a disruption of the dominant narrative that men are responsible for heading households, which emanates from a dominant interpretation of religion and culture. Seeing in the study that women are standing up openly to state that they are heads of households although living with their husbands is a positive indication that Namibia (and in particular Kavango West Region) is working towards maximizing gender equality although there are traditional systems that continue to discriminate and suppress women's independence to patriarchal rule. What is key however to women's active participation in development is recognizing and respecting their right and dignity as equals in education, in all socio-economic and socio-political aspects of life (Moore 1994; Janovicek 2009; Mankman 2011; Hughes & Tripp 2015; Stromquist 2015; Nyambura 2018).

Recognizing the need to be conscious of what continue to discriminate women's independence to patriarchal rule; we speak about Women and Gender. This is in recognition of the biblical narrative⁸⁶ of the relationship between husband and wife as a metaphor used for the relationship of the Church and Christ (Adonis 2017:64). It becomes clear here that this scriptural text perpetuates patriarchal control that could oppress women according to Rakoczy and Adonis (2017) as indicated in chapter 3, section 3.1.

This critique by Rakoczy and Adonis is a liberating one. As indicated in the study of the 40% married participants heading households, it should be clear in all systems and structures that women as human beings can indeed function on their own, and cannot be easily intimidated by patriarchy. Considering that women headed households function in difficult times, it shows how resilient women can become. When listening to stories of women heading households, it becomes clear to the researcher that women are indeed grounds of stability in the society. They do not run away when faced by crises, but face crises head on. Without women, one would say that all rural households could have relocated to the cities during the current crisis of climate change for example. Mzimande (2005, 2008) is right in using the word "*imbokodo*" as a metaphor word to refer to a woman constructed from the freedom song sung at the South African Women's Defiance Campaign against apartheid in 1956: "*Wathint'*

⁸⁶ "For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the Church, he himself the savior of the body. As the Church is subordinate to Christ, so wives should be subordinate to their husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:23-24)

abafazi, Wathint' imbokodo, uzokufa” translated: “You strike a woman, you strike a grinding stone, you will be crushed!”. In real sense, without women’s participation in the economy, the economy crushes. Considering the importance of taking serious women’s experiences and their religious contexts as they continue being key to economic stability in household spaces and communities, we turn to discuss Women and Religious Rituals (Theology).

5.3. Women and Religious Rituals (Theology)

We have seen that women’s lived experiences as they head households are worth considering when pursuing progressive societies. We have seen that without women’s participation in the economy, the economy of the society crushes. This is in reference to the findings established by Shoko (2021) in Chapter 2, Section 2.2 that Namibia for example, women account for more than 59% of the workforce in the agricultural production sector, and produce 80% of the country’s output particularly in subsistence farming. Being informed by the challenges faced by women as they head homes and sustain their families through agricultural farming as the study indicates, we have become aware that women who head households are worthy of special attention because they are triply disadvantaged as they experience the burden of poverty and absence of support as heads of households. We now turn to discuss that when women heading homes engage their lived realities and experiences theologically through sharing of stories transform their lives as these inform the type of shape they would want their own development to take, as well as that of their communities.

Haddad (2000) puts us into perspective in all these women’s experiences when she argues for the presence of “resistance discourse” in survival theologies. Haddad (2003) is of the conviction that although the church was better placed to work with poor people in addressing poverty than any other institution because of its resourcefulness, as an institution the church has been unable to harness these resources for effective social transformation. She thus suggests rather, that the poor (particularly women), who do their development work in spite of the Church. It is from this ground that Haddad (2003:441) affirms “women of faith often harness physical and spiritual resources outside of the formal structure of the church in their

struggle to survive” In her use of women’s theologies of survival, Haddad further argues against what she refers to as Marxian ideology.⁸⁷ Haddad 2003:441 asserts that,

“Religion for poor and marginalized women in South Africa is not a panacea against their suffering, but rather an active weapon they use in their resistance to their oppression. Survival theologies are acts of resistance and resources for development”.

Haddad relates this with her experience in working with the women of Nxamalala in Vulindlela who literally attribute their survival to God. These women are unable to explain how in times of dire need managed to provide meals for their children or pay their school fees. Their conviction is that God provides these material needs (Haddad 2003).

Haddad’s study is the ground through which Catholic women’s theologies could be understood. When asked to share the faith practices/theological resources drawn from the Catholic religious rituals that help contribute to the development of their areas, Catholic heading homes as ordinary members of CWL and as members of CWL+ Lay Ministers began sharing the key role prayer plays in transforming the society. For these women, prayer begins with the fear of the Lord, which brings a good spirit in the community. Catholic women heading households being members of CWL and being lay ministers; their stories of simple acts of love like visiting the sick and elderly, reaching out to those who lose their loved ones, reaching out to those who seem to disregard God, having open hands to assist the poor and needy, reaching out to families that are divided, being involved in marriage preparation courses and catechetical formation are the foundations toward building a moral and ethical community that is open to transformation. The aspect of simple acts of love forms part of their first theology which will be pointed out as the discussion continues. Kanyoro (2002 in Adonis 2017:78) recounts;

“Our stories are a basis for theology. Indeed, women globally are saying that theology should begin with our stories – what we feel in our society, how we feel about our children, our families, what enrages us, what makes us laugh, what our lives mean to the next neighbour and how we experience God in all these”.

⁸⁷ ‘That religion has negatively blinded those who are poor to their structural oppression and is seen merely to act as panacea for suffering resulting in passivity’. Better explain, “Religion is the opiate of the people” (Haddad 2003:441).

Stories ‘help to make connection between faith and action because they make use of experiences and reflection as the intervals of connection’⁸⁸. Identifying women with their religious/Christian community therefore becomes important. Bringing Haddad (2000, 2003) in dialogue with Swart (2010) as she develops the survival theology of women of *Vulindlela* as working theologies of faith of poor and marginalized, there is a strong indication to the importance of women identifying with a religious/Christian community as ground to begin developing theology. At the core of women developing theology that speaks to their context is, in times of need, women establish networks of solidarity, most of which have a religious dimension (Haddad 2003). Haddad uses the “*Manyono*”⁸⁹ movement as key site where poor and marginalized women are taking control of their lives in an attempt to alleviate their lived reality of poverty. Engaging further with Ackermann (2003, 2005, 2008), it becomes evident that in developing a theology of praxis, women engaging their lived realities are first identified with a religious/Christian community that becomes ground through which the theology that speaks to their context is formulated and developed.

Further recognising and recovering the survival theologies (context theologies) of poor and marginalized women, Haddad (2000) locates sites in which these theologies may be recognized: the Mother’s Union and Contextual bible study group in Nxamalala. However, Haddad is also aware that from a liberationist position, recovering survival theologies of women might be understood to mean keeping women locked up in their oppression. However, within the understanding of survival for women of Vulindlela; Scott (1990 in Haddad 2000) asserts that such position is wrong. That;

“within the subjugated survival theologies of these women are concerted autonomous acts that bring dignity and a quality of life that move beyond the material reality of the struggle to survive” (Haddad 2000:337).

This is the context in which Catholic women heading households who are members of CWL and Lay ministry are taken in this study.

Women’s religious context is important to engage, because this space gives them identity as religious human beings. This space (religious space/church) when a healthy space, engaging their lived realities as a collective (Catholic Women’s League) accords them public trust through which they can engage their theology to bring about social transformation. This is the

⁸⁸ See Kanyoro (2002 in Adonis 2017:78)

⁸⁹ A Xhosa noun which means “to join” (See Haddad 2003:429).

ground through which we seek to develop the first type of theology Catholic women heading households use in sustaining their livelihoods and also contribute to transformation of their areas. We look at the development of Catholic women's theologies drawn from their religious rituals as follows. The development of their first theology in the study is linked to the table of the Eucharist, especially at consecration during the invocation of the Holy Spirit.⁹⁰ One participant recounted "at that particular moment, even when you have nothing to eat, all that you have is transformed". Other participants also identified with this reality. This transformation continues at the reception of Holy Communion when the priest raises up the Body and Blood of Christ and says "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" and all respond "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed". Sharing their own experiences of struggle, women heading homes experience peace and healing from God at these moments within the liturgy. This is further given credibility when at the dismissal; the priest says "Go in the peace of the Lord". Participants shared that it is at that particular moment they realize they are been commissioned to bear witness to the good news they have heard in the Church, which is the good news of hope. This good news of hope then informs their simple (humble) acts of love⁹¹ through which their "walking theology"⁹² is formed.

Women believe that faith without works cannot transform the society. They do not speak of great works, but simple works that touch human life in a humble way. They believe that the society is sick in one way or another, and needs healing through people who are actively and honestly involved in its healing process. This is what Ackermann (2003) calls a "theology of praxis". Like the study indicates on the link between reflection and action, a theology of action (like in the case of this study) emerges when women (Catholic) heading homes begin to reflect on lived experiences in light of their faith and its application to real life situations.⁹³

⁹⁰ "You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fount of all holiness. Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and Blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ" (*The Daily Missal*.2012. Paulines Publications Africa)

⁹¹ Like visiting the sick and elderly, reaching out to those who lose their loved ones, reaching out to those who seem to disregard God, having open hands to welcome/assist the poor and needy, reaching out to families that are divided, being involved in marriage preparation courses and catechetical formation, being lay ministers, being members of CWL, visiting grave yards of family members as foundations toward building a moral and ethical community that is open to transformation.

⁹² A lived-reality theology that is lived out of Church attendance because of its connection to lived-experiences of women.

⁹³ See Ackermann 2003 (in dialogue with Haddad 2000, 2003).

This is crucial in this study engaging Catholic women heading households, how they think and reflect about their own faith which they intend to put into action.

The second type of theology in the study is developed drawing from the experiences of women analyzed in chapter 4, section 4.9.3. A: Women and Household Leadership, which were discussed in chapter 5, section 5.1.1 under the same heading (Women and Household Leadership). This theology is linked to the hard facts women heading households face, namely; having to take care of huge families under limited resources, having the burden to find ways to cultivate during the rainy season bearing the fact that all grown children have gone to the city in search of green pastures, having to take care of very little children left by their parents who have gone to the city, etc. Looking closely and carefully on these stories of women heading households, the second theology which is the “theology of the cross”⁹⁴ develops. These women having accepted to carry the cross of leading households as they would say “this is our cross to carry” make these women embodiments of God’s motherly love and care. This is informed by the very fact that they would not give up on their families but be willing to endure all afflictions (as Jesus did until he died for the liberation and salvation of humanity). As Haddad would speak of this theology from experiences of poor women and marginalized as “survival theology”; women in the study link prayer and work in that “prayer without work cannot transform your home and society”. This aspect of the “theology of the cross” becomes life transforming and contributes to social development and transformation when people do not sit back because there is a crisis but find means to work/labor.

Thus, engaging women and the Church, Haddad is critical in that African Woman theologians should seek ‘to be at the heart where theology is created, in the womb of the community of faith, and to academically articulate what is being produced (Njoroge 1997:78 in Haddad 2000:200). In this study therefore, it is important to see the need for academic language in translating the experiences of women heading households and the faith practices they draw on into formulating their own “lived-experience theology”. Having established Catholic women’s theology, the researcher now moves to how this theology can be used as a resource for social development and transformation.

5.4. Theology and Development (Development)

⁹⁴ Meaning Endurance Theology

Haddad (2003:430) defines development as “a process of social change in which gender is a strategic marker and is thus crucial to any discussion on the mission of the Church”. The socio-economic improvement/transformation of the living conditions of people (i.e. women heading households) as defined initially in the intersection of the three-legged African pot becomes central within this context. This is the context in which the Catholic women’s theologies of praxis called “walking theology” built on simple acts of love and “the theology of the cross” are established. Through “walking theology” acts of love are seen by women in the study as the foundation when building a moral and ethical community that is open to transformation. Catholic women heading households are of the conviction that when these basic yet central humble acts of love are neglected, individuals live selfish lives that in turn affect the whole community. According to one participant “It is by failing to reach out to others that people fail to love and care. Community members who stop to love and care stop being a community and even a Church”. Drawing from Ackermann (2005), it is the application of what we believe in (theory) to real life situations that becomes praxis. In this way, our theology of praxis (walking theology) becomes livelihood sustainable and social transforming.

Catholic women’s application of their theology of praxis (walking theology) in fighting the ills of society for example, works this way. First, through the acts of love (which are the basis of their walking theology) the sick are cared for, who, when they get well, the whole society feels healed. This is in recognition that any member of the society that is sick, the community becomes less productive. Second, caring for those who have lost their loved ones (widows/widowers/orphans) to support, comfort and listen to them help in restoring their wholeness and dignity. This is in realizing that some people lose properties after losing their loved ones which subjects them to abject poverty. Third, participants shared that a divided family is the root cause of a society that is divided. Therefore, reaching out to them is a step towards building a united society. Fourth, being involved in marriage preparation courses. Proper family formation prepares for a better building of society according to women in the study. Fifth, taking care of the graves of the deceased family members, through which women heading households are aware of the importance of spiritual unity between the living and the dead that can be a healing remedy to household members (spiritual health just as body health and psychological health). Sixth, the need to care for the poor that itself carries a blessing. Women heading households draw especially from these words, and end up having to take care of huge families as indicated in tables (1 and 2). These women are however, a

testimony to the fact that those who care for the poor and needy are blessed. This is because having opened their homes to those in need, God has always provided them. Above all, being members of CWL, and lay ministers, their nearness to God is considered sustainable itself. In being near God they develop the fear of the Lord, through which they live by example, and this way, their homes become stable, and positively impact the society at large.

it is important here to remember that the developed Catholic women's theology developed from the Church context. Women's religious context is important to engage, because this space gives them identity as religious human beings. This space (religious space/church) when a healthy space, engaging their lived realities as a collective (Catholic Women's League) accords them public trust. In dialogue with Haddad as established in this study, Swart (2010:325) in his study of Churches as stock of social capital for promoting social development acknowledges what was highlighted by Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa (HSRC) that "in South Africa, no other social institution can claim to command the same level of public trust as the Christian Churches". This South African context applies to Namibia's context. Namibia as a Christian country could be used by advocates of religion in promoting arguments that bring out this sector's social strength.

The researcher brings in this argument in recognition that the Catholic women heading households especially those that are lay ministers are called to identify with their Christian communities' missions in creating life-giving spaces that engage issues about social transformation. This implies that engaging their theology (walking theology of simple acts of love) drawn from their religious rituals into their homes and societies commands a high level of public trust. This public trust informed by the space they occupy in their Christian communities (CWL and Lay ministers), theology of praxis (theology from below/walking theology) can be a resource for transformation of their areas.

Swart (2010) further establishes that the perspective of social trust has extended to faith-based sectors which are in general, agents of social development. This is in reference to their religious social welfare network, their capacity to reach out to and serve the people most in need, and the value-laden nature of their programmes that are critical in the process of social change. Clarke and Ware (2015 in Adonis 2017:36) highlights fact that

"FBOs have two identities. The first is as a development agency seeking to improve the material well-being of the poor, while the second is that of a religious organization whose existence is forged from a faith basis and its understanding of religious tenet".

It is unfortunate that participants who were involved in the study were not aware of FBOs and their role. This is an area that needs to be critically looked at.

Lastly, “the theology of the cross” informed by the ability to work linking prayer and works, leads to development, as people could not sit back because there is a crisis but endure in hope that something good and life transforming will happen.

5.5. Conclusion

Having discussed the development of the Catholic women’s theology (Members of CWL and Lay ministers heading households) in this study through the specs of Haddad in dialogue with Ackermann, Swart, and Adonis, we sum up the intersection of gender, theology and development in this chapter this way. First, that these women heading homes identified as Catholic feel confident as heads of households no matter the crisis faced or the limitation of resources as they head households. Engaging their lived experiences theologically helps empower them. Second, having engaged their lived experiences with their religious rituals, these Catholic women heading households developed their theologies from below (walking theology and theology of the cross) that are life sustaining and community transforming. Third, having the ability/capacity to apply these theologies in their contexts, these women will build sustainable households and contribute to social development and transformation. This draws us to the general conclusion (Chapter Six) which summarises the main findings, key issues and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 6: General Conclusion

6.0 Summary of Chapters and Conclusion

This study has attempted to answer the key research question: how do Women Heading households in the Catholic Church in Kavango West Region in Namibia use their faith/theological resources drawn from their Catholic Religious Rituals in developing a “theology from below” to sustain their livelihood and contribute to social development in the area? In answering the key research question, the study used the logic of the “three legged African pot” to depict the intersectionality of Gender, Theology and Development. I have explained the reference to Women-Headed households.⁹⁵ The logic of the intersection has been constantly maintained in that the aspect of Women-Headed households is treated as a gender space in this study. Adding the word “Catholic” as a deliberate choice to identify who these women heading households are and how they draw on their religious rituals; we have treated this aspect as a theology space. The application of their faith resources (developed into their own practical theologies – “walking theology” and “theology of the cross”) in order to improve and transform their lives at household levels as well as their areas has been treated as a development space.

In framing and developing the intersection of Gender, Theology and Development in the study of Catholic Women-Headed Households using their lived-reality and the theologies drawn from their religious rituals (Haddad, 2000, 2003) has been used in dialogue with Swart (et al 2010) who speaks about two things that became relevant to the study: 1) The importance of identifying with a religion/Christian community, and secondly on the importance of drawing a link between religious ritual and social capital. The importance of women belonging to religious/Christian community is deemed important in the study as a way through which sound and meaningful theologies could be developed. For example, in developing survival theologies of the women of *Vulindlela* as working theologies of faith of poor and marginalized, these women are first identified as belonging to a Christian community. In Engaging Ackermann (2003, 2005, 2008) in dialogue with Haddad, it became more evident that in developing a theology of praxis, women engaging their lived realities are

⁹⁵ Refers to women as heads of households, exercising authority to run homes

identified with a religious/Christian community that becomes the ground through which the theology that speaks to their context is formulated and developed. In dialogue with Haddad and Ackermann who speaks about the importance of women's experiences, Adonis (2017) emphasizes the importance of story-telling of women's experiences. This mapping of the theoretical framework indicates that Haddad (2000, 2003) used in dialogue with Ackermann (2003, 2005, 2008), Swart et al (2010), and Adonis (2017) provides the basis for constructing the theologies of survival from the rituals/faith resources of Women Heading Households. Using Haddad in dialogue with Ackermann, Swart et al, and Adonis to intersect gender, theology and development, the following conclusions are drawn.

First, that the lived experiences of women (Catholic women heading households) are important when developing women's theological project that is life-transforming. What should be understood here is that there cannot be women's theology without their voices or stories being heard. These stories or voices cannot be heard without life affirming spaces being created that give them room to share their stories.

Second, it should be known that no matter what situation women go through as they head households, sharing their stories is itself a therapy that brings healing and wholeness. Relating to the fieldwork group study, the researcher was worried at the beginning, not knowing where the discussions will lead the participants. As discussions resumed, participants were assured life-affirming space, conducive for discussions. This created an atmosphere whereby women's discussions became therapeutic and life transforming. This is evident in that no participant asked to be assisted by a counselor. The researcher thus agrees with Haddad (2000) in that the purpose of research is not just meant to draw information from people, but the process itself is crucial, at it brings healing and transformation in the lives of participants.

Third, having discussed the aspect of Gender and economy, it is important to always remember that women as "*imbokodo*" of society should never be taken for granted if social transformation is to take place.

Fourth, as women's religious contexts are taken serious, their lived experiences are transformed. In developing a theology from lived experience/women stories, we draw from Kanyoro (2002 in Adonis 2017) who affirms how women's theology is born:

“Our stories are a basis for theology. Indeed, women globally are saying that theology should begin with our stories – what we feel in our society, how we feel about our children, our families, what enrages us, what makes us laugh, what our lives mean to the next neighbour and how we experience God in all these”.

As Catholic Women Heading households draw from their religious rituals, it is important therefore, to note that, it is their experiences that inform the type of theology they would want to engage their contexts. In the study the Catholic Women Heading households thus developed two theologies from lived-experiences (below), namely; “walking theology” and “theology of the cross”.

Last, the research thus establishes that these two theologies: “walking theology” drawn from the table of the Eucharist that informs simple acts of love that are transforming, and “theology of the cross” that has the power to facilitate resilience through which Catholic Women heading households in Kavango West Region could sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development and transformation.

6.1. Recommendations

Based on findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. Women’s Theological Project

The research findings indicate the importance of women’s theological project. Here, Catholic Women’s League (CWL) is identified as a site of Women’s Theological Project. In showing how this study fits into the existing research drawing from African Women Theologians (AWT), the observation is that it is important to engage women in the Church for purposes of theological reflection (Haddad 2000, 2003). Having taken this path in this research project by creating space for Catholic Women heading homes to engage with their religious rituals in order to develop their own theology from below (walking theology/practical theology), the researcher feels obligated to further engage specific women’s groups to listen to their stories and together shape the theological terrain for especially the majority of poor and marginalized women in Africa. Namibia’s context is not different from the context Haddad presents. The project of Catholic Women-Headed households in Kavango West Region in

Namibia reveals the struggles of all women who head homes, constituting the majority being below Kavango's Poverty profile.⁹⁶ What becomes critical here therefore as Haddad (2000, 2003) suggests is the importance of integrating these women's voices into women's theological project. What is this women's theological project? Haddad notes through the women's commission that was formalized at a meeting of Third World Women Theologians in Mexico in 1986 how important it was reflecting on what it means 'to do theology from a Third World Women's perspective' (Febella & Oduyoye 1988 in Haddad 2000:198). This is key in realizing that there was a need for the third world women to broaden their understanding of their differing socio-economic and political contexts drawing from experiences of spirituality (Haddad 2000).

Thus, Engaging Catholic Women heading homes in Kavango west region in Namibia make the researcher think of the need to develop and establish women's theological project in Namibia. This could become a space through which women's voices could be heard and engaged theologically in order to address deep seated socio-economic, religious and political ills being faced especially by women heading homes. Catholic women who were engaged in the study (Kavango west region in Namibia) expressed how important it was engaging them on how to "mine" from their religious/spiritual assets in order to transform their households and socio-economic domains. This is an experience that has never been experienced before which they expressed. The researcher further stresses the great need for women theologians to facilitate platforms that engage ordinary women (in our context – women heading homes to theologically reflect on their contexts and have their contexts transformed by their own formed theologies. The pertinent question is, do we have women theologians to take up this task in Namibia and in particular the Vicariate of Rundu?

2. FBOs⁹⁷

Considering the situation of Catholic Women Heading Households who struggle to make ends meet, the researcher strongly recommends that what emerged from the research process

⁹⁶ The definitions used in Kavango Poverty Profile and the NSA report on Poverty Dynamics in Namibia about the meaning of poverty include: a lack of possessions (like cattle, ploughs, or crop fields); lack of access to education, services and markets and lack of social support structure (Regional Development Profile 2015).

⁹⁷ Faith Based Organizations

be critically looked at by the leadership of the Catholic Church in Rundu Vicariate/ NCBC⁹⁸. FBOs are faith-based sectors which are in general agents of social development. In reference to their religious social welfare network, these sectors have the capacity to reach out to and serve the people most in need and the value-laden nature of their programmes is critical in the process of social change. Clarke and Ware (2015 in Adonis 2017:36) highlight the fact that “FBOs have two identities. The first is as a development agency seeking to improve the material well-being of the poor, while the second is that of a religious organization whose existence is forged from a faith basis and its understanding of religious tenet”.

3. Local Government

There is a strong feeling amongst participants that local governments should begin engaging them through community meetings, to discuss ways of improving their living conditions. They (community members) are the only ones who know what they need to develop. Participants affirmed that meetings of this nature are not organized in their communities. Participants feel they have no support structure. Participants affirmed “We live by hope” in the fulfillment of promises by local governments.

⁹⁸ Namibian Catholic Bishops Conference

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APPENDIX 1

(English and Rukwangali versions)



ENGLISH VERSION

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

A) About Gender (Group discussions):

As women heading households, what are your experiences?

- What are your achievements as women heading homes
- What are the failures that you experience as the head?
- Would you say you are satisfied with your life as women heading homes? Discuss.
- Are there things that make your life difficult as woman head? What are they?
- How would you describe your relationship with the neighbours, especially male head?
- What challenges, if there are any, do you encounter being woman as head of family compared to man as head of family? Is it a challenge for you? If so, how do you cope or deal with the challenges? (What do you see as advantages of male headed homes?)

B. About Theology/Faith (Group discussions)

- What does it mean to you to be a Catholic woman head in your family? How would you describe your role as Catholic woman head (parenting role)?
- Would you say that being a Catholic woman helps you navigate the challenges of global climate change and urban migration? Where do you draw from as a Catholic woman to navigate this reality?

- What are your key faith practices/theological resources drawn from your Catholic religious rituals that help you sustain your household and contribute to the development of your area?
- What support system/s is/are there in your Christian Church community that helps you in your parenting role? Please describe this support system.
- How does belonging to a women's group in your Church help you sustain your family? (For those who belong to Catholic Women's League (CWL))
- How does not belonging to any Church group/women's group not affect you in sustaining your family? (For those who do not belong to any Church group)

C. About Development (Group Discussions)

- What are the faith practices/theological resources do you draw on within the Catholic religious rituals to help you contribute to the development of your area?
- What support system/s is/are there within your Local community (society) that help/s you actively partake in its social development? Please describe this support system.
- Are there moments when you feel overwhelmed in your life due to the effects of global climate change and urban migration?
- Given an opportunity what would you change about your role? How would you like to see your family's economic progress in the future as head?
- Do you feel you are given equal opportunities in the society/church as men are given in terms of support towards contributing to the Church's growth and social development of your area?
- What projects/opportunities are there in your areas that can be explored to stop urban migration and facilitate sustainable social development in your area?

(Rukwangali Version)



Yiuyungwa yombunga/mapuro hameno mo

(Group discussions/Engagement Questions)

A. Yokuhamena Rudivharwa

- Ngomugolikadi ana kupitisira embo, yinke ogwanekere nayo?
- Yinke yitompowa yoge ngomugolikadi gepata?
- Yinke eyi ayi kudigopere ngomugolikadi apitisire epata?
- Wayitambura ko ngompitisili golikadi gepata? Simwitira ko.
- Koyili eyi ayi digopeke eparu lyoge ngompitisili kadi gepata? Maudigu musinke ogo?
- Ngapi nofwaturura elikwatakano lyoge novamusinda, unene po vanturagumbo?
- Yitangalimba musinke, nsene koyili, eyi oli gwanekere nayo mokukara asi omugolikadi ogu apitisire epata kuhetakanesa mapata ava pitisire vanturagumbo? Esi sitangalimba koge ndi? Nsene asi yimo, ngapi nye omu opitimo ndi orugana noyitangalimba eyi? Mauwa musinke omono momambo aga ava pitisire vanturagumbo?

B. Yokuhamena Mapuliro/Epuro

- Yinke yina kutanta koge kukara mupisiligolikadi gomuKatolika mepata lyoge? Ngapi novhura kufwaturura kukara mugolikadi mpitisili gepata ngomuKatolika?
- Kuvhura ouyunge asi kukara mugolikadi gomuKatolika kukuvatera oparuke noyilimbikwa eyi ali retesa po elitjindo mpepo nederukiro lyovantu modoropa? Ngomugolikadi gwaKatolika, kupi olihamesere yipo o paruke noudigu owu?

- Yiviyauka yoge mukwasinke yomu lyopo unene/marunone gomapuliro aga wagusa moyiviyauka yovaKatolika aga aga vhuru kukuvatera membo lyoge ntani nokukwatesa ko makuliko momukunda gweni?
- Ruha mbatero (makwaso) ezi (aga) za (ga) kara mombunga Kriste zomomukunda gweni ezi azi kuvatere yipo osikisemo sitambo soge ngomu rerwa? Fwaturura ruha mbatero ezi?
- Ngapi kuhamena mombunga zovagolikadi mongereka zeni azi kuvatere oparuke nepata lyoge?
- Ngapi ediro kulihamesera kombunga ngeraka nkenye/mbunga zovalikadi ayi dili kuguma mparukiso zemembo lyoge? (eyi ya woowo vadira kuhamena kwa nkenye mbunga zongereka.

C. Kuhamena Ekuliko

- Yiviyauka puliro yoge mukwasinke ndi marunone gomapuliro aga wagusa moyiviyauka puro yovaKatolika aga aga vhuru kukuvatera membo lyoge ntani nokukwatesa ko makuliko momukunda gweni?
- Ruha mbatero (makwaso) ezi (aga) za (ga) kara momukunda gweni ezi azi kuvatere yipo nove okare ono manguruka mokuhamena ekuliko yikwa eparu? Fwaturura ruha mbatero ezi?
- Poyili yiruwo yimwe oli zuvhu mudigo meparu lyoge morwa kweyi ali retesa elitjindjo mpepo nerundurukiro vantu modoropa?
- Nsene vakupa mpito, sitambo soge musinke notjindja? Ngapi ono hara eparu lyoyikwamaliva lyepata lyoge li litjindje mosiruwo sokomeho?
- Kwaku li zuvha asi kumupa nompito dokuhetakana novagara mompongasano/ngereka ngwendi vanturagumbo kuhamena ekwatesoko kekuro lyongereka noyikwaparu oku mwa tunga?
- NoProjeka/nompito musinke dakara momukunda gweni odo nava vhura kuzerura yipo di hagekese po erundurukiro modoropa ntani kutarera nawa ekuro lyoyikwaparu monkarasano zeni?

Demographics

(English)

NB: Individually

a. Identification as Catholic Church Woman	Yes		No	
i. A Member of the Catholic Women's League group				
ii. A member not belonging to any Church/Women's group.				
b. Age				
c. Marital Status	Single	Married	Divorced	
d. Length as head of household				
e. Level of Education				
f. Occupation				
g. Number of persons in the House				
h. Number of Children				
i. Number of school going children and non-school going children	Attending School		Not attending school	
j. Family members from the extended family dependent on participant				



Questionnaires: (NB: Individually, should they wish to write down)

A. About Family:

- How would you describe your family set up (structure)?

- Describe the relationship that exists within the family

- Are you a practicing Catholic? Describe your faith values that sustain you as family

- How do you provide for your family?

- Does your family own land?

(Rukwangali Version)



Demographics

NB: Pamundinda

a. Sidimbwiliso so mugolikadi gomongereka zaKatolika	Yimo		Hawe
i. Muhameni moruha rombunga zovagolikadi vaKatolika			
ii. Muntu ogu gadira kuhamena kwa nkenye mbunga zongereka/mbunga zovagolikadi			
b.Nomvhura			
c.Kwa kwara	Kapi wakwara	Kwa kwara	Kwali zumba
d.Siruwo esi wa pitisira embo			
e.Sinano serongo			
f.Yirugana			
g.Sivaro sovantu vakara membo			

h.Sivaro sovanona		
i.Sivaro sovanona ava zi kosure nava ava dili kuza kosure.	Wokuza kosure	Wokudira kuza kosure
j.Vanekoro peke ava vahuguvara momu hameni mo.		

(Rukwangali Version)



RUHA MAPURO (NB: Pamundinda: Nsene vana hara kuyitjanga)

A. Kuhamena ekoro

- Ngapi novhura kufwatururra omu lya kara zepata lyoge (nomutayi depata)?

- Singonona elikwatakano eli lyakara mepata lyoge?

- Nove kuviyauka youKatolika? Fwaturura mulyo gepuro eli ali kuvatere mepata.

- Ngapi o gwana yiwizamo eyi o reresa epata lyoge/Ngapi orere epata lyoge?

- Epata lyoge lya weka evango?

APPENDIX 2

(Consent Form)

UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL
For research with human participants

INFORMED CONSENT RESOURCE TEMPLATE

Note to researchers: Notwithstanding the need for scientific and legal accuracy, every effort should be made to produce a consent document that is as linguistically clear and simple as possible, without omitting important details as outlined below. Certified translated versions will be required once the original version is approved.

There are specific circumstances where witnessed verbal consent might be acceptable and circumstances where individual informed consent may be waived by HSSREC.

Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 29 July 2022

Dear Madam

My name is Johannes Hamuyimbi Hausiku from Musese Constituency in Kavango West Region in Namibia. I am a student at the University of KwaZulu Natal in the school of Religion, Philosophy and Classics (Student No: 221119463), Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. Contact details: Cell. No: +264818087843

(Namibian Number); +27737042348 (South African Number); email: hausikuj@gmail.com.

You are being invited to consider participating in a focus group study that involves research on Catholic women heading households. This study aims to give space to Catholic women heading households to engage with each other on the relevance of their Catholic religious rituals in developing their theology (a theology from below) that speaks to their context and helps them sustain themselves and contribute to social development in their areas. The study does not seek to give the impression that women heading up households is by accident nor does it intend to indicate that this is something that is not supposed to be, but as a lived reality in the region. Patriarchy has created a narrative that men are responsible for heading households. This view emanates from a dominant interpretation of religion and culture. However, the migration of men (which forms part of the background to the study) in search for job opportunities has given women an opportunity to disrupt this patriarchal religious and cultural view especially in African communities. The fact that men are leaving the rural areas to the city indicates a real problem of struggle and survival, yet this is the context in which women are heading and managing their homes. We ask: What support system is there, that helps you become resilient during challenging moments of crisis (i.e. global climate change)? What is your theology of survival/practical theology/theology of action? At the end of the study, we will be able to explore the social context of the Catholic women-headed households in Tondoro and Bunya Districts, Namibia; to establish how Catholic women heading up households use their faith/theological resources drawn from the Catholic religious rituals to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development. I believe that when the study is finalized, it will help many women heading household develop their life-lived theology (a theology from below) rather than what the Church tells them to do, which is theology is from above. The Kavango West Region within the Northern part of Namibia which is the area of study is mainly rural.

The number of participants and duration of the study

I will carry out my research project with two groups of women heading households in both Catholic Missions (Bunya Mission and Tondoro Mission in the Kavango West Region). Each group will have 10 members. The first group will consist of women heading households who are part of the CWL⁹⁹ group. The second group will consist of women who are not part of any Church group but are members of these Catholic Faith communities. I believe their lived realities in relation to their faith practices and how they draw from their Catholic Religious rituals to sustain themselves and contribute to social development are different. The purpose is to see how these two groups of women from their different positionality within these faith communities draw from their religious rituals in developing their theology of action (from their lived reality) to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development in the area.

The duration of your participation if you choose to enrol and remain in the study is expected to be a week. There will be an allocation of 2 hours every day. This gives time in processing information and reflection. Observation of the impact of the discussions will be monitored and prioritized. This will help identify those that might need help when engaging each other, sharing discomforting experiences or past hurts.

The study may involve the following risks and/or discomforts: evoking possible past hurts or bad experiences based on past relationships. I hope that the study will create benefits by empowering participants. As a research participant, you are to be aware that discomforts, inconveniences and risks associated with the research activity might come in the process, and should you need help as a result of emotional distress that might arise as you will discuss the questionnaires regarding family life and the challenges you face as you head homes, counsellors will be available. This is an anticipation of emotional distress that might arise. We have two Counsellors who will offer psychological assistance should the need arise. Contact details:

CATHOLIC HEALTH SERVICES

⁹⁹ Catholic Women's League

(ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED UNDER SECTTON 21)

St. Laurence Tondoro Health Centre

P.O. Box 2185, Rundu, Namibia

Tel: (066) 257704

Fax: (066) 257713

Website: www.chs-namibia.org

E-mail: tondoro@chs-namibia.org

Ref.Mr. Gregory Kampanza and Ms. Lilian Mberema

However, if additional risks are identified during the course of the research, the consent process and documentation will require revisions to inform the participant as they will be re-contracted or newly contacted (Nnebue 2010). As participant, you are encouraged to be open to the counsellors made available, as this could be a healing moment for you as you speak about any past hurts or discomforting/painful experiences as you head your household. There are no direct benefits to participants in terms of material or monetary offer. However, the outcome of the research will be sent to you as participants, as a way of sharing in the benefit of your contribution and help improve your current state of life through the proposed recommendations in the study which will then seek ways of implementation.

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

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact the researcher at Cell. No: +264818087843 (Namibian Number); +27737042348 (South African Number); email: hausikuj@gmail.com or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus
Govan Mbeki Building
Private Bag X 54001
Durban
4000
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609
Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Privacy, anonymity & Confidentiality

The participants are assured that their personal data collected is kept safe. Should my research supervisor need the records of the data collected, the participants will be informed and reassured of the safety of data and that the sole purpose of the data collected is for academic use. They are encouraged to share openly and honestly, for the authenticity and validity of the research project. The use of pseudo names will be applied, should they wish their names be not known. Should they need to decline and not take part in the study anymore, they will be informed of their right to do so. They will be assured that withdrawal from the study carries no consequences or penalties (Nnebue 2010). Important to note is that they are to have time to reflect before and after they have made a decision to join. They are not to rush making decisions to be part of the study. They should be able to feel confident and free to share.

Capacity to Make Decisions

In this study of Catholic women heading households, it is important that all participants are legally competent to make informed decision. No presumption will be made that every adult has the capacity to decide and be part of the study. It is important that after outlining the study and the consent is read, time is given to the participants to ask questions and seek clarity on all things they do not understand. As participants, you will not be forced to sign. Gaining confidence and trust from you as participants is more than just rushing for the signature. Having been identified, all things will be explained in the language you understand. That

means, translations are to be made into the languages of the participants, namely; Rukwangali and Nyemba.

CONSENT

I have been informed about the study entitled: Women-headed households within the Catholic Church in Kavango West Region in Namibia: Exploring the intersection of Gender, Theology and Development by Johannes Hamuyimbi Hausiku (221119463).

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study. This study aims to give space for Catholic women heading households to engage with each other on how they draw on their Catholic religious rituals in developing their theology of action (from below) to sustain themselves and contribute to social development in the area. It is established as background, that Global Climate change and urban migration are main contributors to the reality of women heading household in the Kavango West Region in Namibia. The study does not seek to give the impression that women heading up households is by accident nor does it intend to indicate that this is something that is not supposed to be, but as a lived reality in the region. Patriarchy has created a narrative that men are responsible for heading households. This view emanates from a dominant interpretation of religion and culture. However, the migration of men in search for job opportunities has given women an opportunity to disrupt this patriarchal religious and cultural view especially in African communities. The fact that men are leaving the rural areas to the city indicates a real problem of struggle and survival, yet this is the context in which women are heading and managing their homes. The Kavango West Region within the Northern part of Namibia which is the area of study is mainly rural.

We ask: As Catholic women heading homes, what support system is there, that helps you become resilient during challenging moments of crisis (i.e. global climate change)? What is your theology of survival/practical theology/theology of action? At the end of the study, we will be able to explore the social context of

the Catholic women-headed households in Tondoro and Bunya Districts, Namibia; to establish how Catholic women heading up households use their faith/theological resources drawn from their Catholic religious rituals to sustain their livelihoods and contribute to social development. I believe that when the study is finalized, it will help these women heading household in developing their life-lived theology (a theology from below).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

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

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at Contact details: Cell. No: +264818087843 (Namibian Number); +27737042348 (South African Number); email: hausikuj@gmail.com..

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

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES

Signature of Participant

Date

**Signature of Witness
(Where applicable)**

Date

**Signature of Translator
(Where applicable)**

Date

APPENDIX 3



Picture A: Current state of the Kavango River (Taken 10/11/22)



Picture B: Kavango River Previous Years

APPENDIX 4

Group One: Members of CWL who are actively involved in the life of their Christian Communities as lay ministers.



Group Two: ordinary members of CWL who seek spiritual and moral support from the group.

