

Transformative Faith: Exploring the Role of Ezekiel Guti Leadership in Advancing Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality

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Abstract. Ezekiel Guti was a renowned preacher and the founder of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA), popularly known as Forward in Faith Ministries International (FIFMI) in South Africa. Throughout his 75 years of preaching, he emphasized gender equality and advocated for women's empowerment. He authored numerous books, articles, and pamphlets covering a wide range of topics that addressed various aspects of human life. Guti was mainly known for expressing concern for women and highlighting their capabilities to achieve in life, just as men do. He introduced programs to empower women, providing them with financial freedom and independence from social systems that oppressed and violated them. To determine the extent to which Guti's teachings address gender equality and women's social issues, a study utilizing a womanist approach was conducted. This theoretical framework focuses on the experiences and perspectives of African women. The study employs a qualitative empirical research methodology, gathering information through secondary sources and interviews. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. The study explores Guti's teachings and their influence on gender equality and women's societal concerns. Guti's teachings focus on empowering and uplifting women to reach their full potential and attain their rightful place in both the economic and social spheres. The study offers valuable insights into the relationships between gender, societal change, and women's empowerment.

Keywords Ezekiel Guti's theology; gender equality; social issues; women; womanist approach

Introduction

The Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) has a rich historical background that dates to the mid-20th century in Zimbabwe. Founded by Ezekiel Handinawangu Guti, the organization began its journey in the remote areas of Ngaoni, Chipinge. Guti received a divine calling to ministry on May 12, 1960, while in Bindura, which is known for its economic struggles (Musoni, 2025). His call to serve was marked by a significant moment of revelation while praying under a eucalyptus tree, where he felt compelled to spread the gospel. In 1963, during a period of fasting and prayer in the Bindura caves, God instructed Guti to study the English Bible and learn to preach in English, as he was destined to share the gospel message across nations. This prophetic directive laid the groundwork for the ministry's expansion beyond Zimbabwe.

ZAOGA is recognized for its robust adherence to the "undiluted gospel," which underscores the primacy of biblical teachings and a pragmatic approach to evangelism. Founded by Ezekiel H. Guti, the establishment of ZAOGA in Southern Africa emanated from Guti's fervent commitment to prayer and his vision for a far-reaching global ministry. Over the subsequent decades, the church gained significant momentum, underscoring the need for transformative spiritual experiences reminiscent of Pentecost. Under Guti's leadership, ZAOGA evolved into a community-oriented grassroots movement, attracting individuals to pursue a profound relationship with Jesus Christ. By the time of Guti's passing on July 5, 2023, at the age of 100, ZAOGA had experienced remarkable growth, establishing its presence in over 175 countries worldwide.

The organization remains steadfast in its adherence to the original theological tenets established by its founder, promoting principles of unity, love, and doctrinal integrity among its adherents. In contemporary practice, ZAOGA continues to honour Ezekiel Guti's legacy by emphasizing discipleship and practical ministry efforts. The church remains firmly rooted in the teachings that defined its origins, reflecting its humble beginnings while underscoring a collective mission to serve and communicate the authentic gospel of Jesus Christ to a diverse, global audience.

In contrast to many churches that limit women's economic independence, ZAOGA FIF has emerged as a pioneering force in promoting women's financial empowerment in Zimbabwe under the visionary leadership of Ezekiel Guti. The organization has implemented various programs to foster economic empowerment, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to gender equality and social transformation. Chitando (2010) highlights the historical challenges faced by women within oppressive, patriarchal systems. Archbishop Ezekiel Guti of ZAOGA FIF has introduced measures designed to confront these challenges and effectively uplift women. Under the guidance of Apostle Guti, ZAOGA FIF has become a beacon of hope, actively advocating for gender equality in a predominantly male-dominated society. Tarugarira and Moyo (2020) aptly noted, "Religion has historically played a significant role in the suppression of women in society; nonetheless, it has also been a crucial universal source for the feminist movement and other social and political movements advocating for human rights." This is particularly evident in the church's provision of opportunities for women in leadership, education, and the development of organizational skills (Pauw, 1974). This study suggests that ZAOGA FIF sets an important precedent for other faith-based institutions, demonstrating that religious organizations can catalyze social change and gender equality rather than merely perpetuating patriarchal structures. The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine and evaluate the key teachings and writings of Ezekiel Guti that pertain to gender equality and women's empowerment.
2. To investigate how Guti's advocacy for women's empowerment has influenced women's social and economic status within the communities served by ZAOGA FIF.
3. To identify and analyze the programs and initiatives that Guti and ZAOGA introduced to empower women and promote gender equality.
4. To contribute to the academic discourse on gender equality and social transformation by providing insights derived from Guti's theology and women's experiences in Zimbabwe.

Womanist Theory

The study employed the framework of Womanist theory, which has emerged as a critical response to the shortcomings of mainstream feminism in addressing the concerns and lived experiences of African-Black women. According to Williams (1995), the feminist theory developed as a counter-narrative to early feminist thought. This perspective overlooked the unique realities faced by Black women in the United States, particularly the complex interplay of race and gender that informs their experiences. Additionally, Womanist theologians argue that Black women's voices have historically been marginalized within Black theology, which male theologians have often dominated. This dynamic has contributed to a notable gap in theological discourse.

Womanist theory serves as a social critique rooted in the lived experiences of Black women. Phillips (2006) asserts that Womanist theory aims to "restore the balance between people and the environment," advocating for social justice by confronting the injustices faced by Black individuals and families. The primary focus of Womanism is on the distinct challenges that Black women encounter in their pursuit of equality and recognition within society. Therefore, it is essential to explore the origins of Womanist theory and its application in this analysis. As a framework of consciousness, Womanism seeks to address the specific realities of Black women's experiences while developing concepts and methodologies that resonate with their lived realities (Turman, 2019). The overarching goal of the Womanist movement extends beyond merely addressing inequalities; it also aims to help Black women reconnect with their cultural and religious roots, fostering introspection and collective social advancement. Evidence suggests that Ezekiel Guti has utilized both strategies in his teachings to advocate against the oppression of women. While his teachings may reflect

elements of Shona culture and patriarchal ideas, the foundational principles of Womanist theory resonate strongly throughout his work, thereby informing the approach adopted in this study.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach, with data analyzed thematically. The primary focus is on the impact of Guti's theology on gender issues, particularly women's empowerment. The study involves interviews with women's groups from ZAOGA, pastors, and female overseers in formal and informal settings. We have selected tools that directly address the critical questions posed by the research. The methodology of this study has been instrumental in determining the extent to which Ezekiel Guti's teachings engage with issues of gender equality and women's social concerns. It was crucial to consider women's perspectives regarding gender equality to assess how Guti's teachings reduce discrimination and promote empowerment. The qualitative method allows women to share their testimonies about Guti's teachings, expressing how they relate to women's issues and how they have helped them transition from male domination to self-reliance and empowerment.

Sampling and Selection Procedure

For the interviews, the sample comprises 25 participants, including married women, single women, divorced women, and widowed women, who have been members of the church for over a decade and possess a robust understanding of Guti's theological teachings. They are all beneficiaries of the ministries or empowerment programs. They were purposely selected because their diverse experiences and encounters helped balance this study; the sample consisted of a diverse group of participants, including married, single, divorced, and widowed women who are beneficiaries of various ministries or empowerment programs. This purposeful selection was crucial in ensuring a balanced and representative overview of the diverse experiences that women involved in these initiatives encountered. It is essential to highlight that the Guti approach to empowerment extends beyond merely supporting married women; it encompasses all categories of women. The participants were chosen based on their in-depth understanding of the subject matter pertinent to the study. They are regarded as reflective and engaged community members, specifically participants in the ZAOGA Women's Empowerment programs, who possess valuable knowledge and are willing to share their insights.

Data Collection Process

The data for this study were collected in September 2024. The research utilized open-ended questions to facilitate focus group discussions centered around significant historical, cultural, and contemporary church activities across four main areas: 1) The history of the church as a religious institution, 2) The church's initiatives aimed at empowering women, and 3) The limitations of Guti's teachings on empowerment programs. The participants' first or native language, Manyika, was employed to gather the data. This approach was designed to enhance communication between the researcher and the respondents, yield comprehensive data, and capture entrenched cultural norms that are critical to contextual understanding. The researchers ensure the study's validity and reliability by allowing respondents to guide the conversation based on their established consensus points. At the start of the discussions, participants could revisit any interview segment and provide additional feedback or pose questions essential for their comprehension. Additionally, we can triangulate data from overlapping questions by examining consistent responses among participants.

Ethical Considerations

We employed ethical procedures to ensure voluntary participation and obtain informed consent, thereby protecting the respondents' well-being (Mouton, 2001). To protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used instead of real identities. The participants' varying ages were taken into consideration. Since the church is careful about disclosing its information, all information was given voluntarily and without fear of reprisal from church officials. Thus, the researchers kept the respondents' true identities a secret. All questionnaires and recorded data were kept private, and the appropriate institutional review boards gave

ethical approval. Each participant acknowledged their right to withdraw at any moment and provided informed consent. Throughout the study, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained to safeguard the participants' identities.

Data Analysis

Qualitative interview data were meticulously transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns. This method was deemed most appropriate for the qualitative nature of the study. After the data collection, thematic analysis was conducted to categorize the interview data into themes with recurrent and comparable characteristics. The identified themes consist of concepts, subjects, and patterns of meaning that emerged consistently throughout the research. Four thematic categories were utilized to organize the data for this study, including empowerment through theology, programmatic interventions, influence of Guti's legacy on societal norms, and intersections of faith and feminism. This organized thematic framework facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the core issues and dynamics explored within the research.

The Findings

Empowerment through Theology

Apostle Guti has been a strong advocate for women's empowerment since the early days of the church. In the 1970s, just a decade after the church was established, Guti worked alongside women who contributed to its mission through earnings. This cooperative model became a fundamental aspect of the church, encouraging members to undertake small projects to support its objectives. This approach bolstered the church's initiatives and empowered congregants, particularly women, to attain self-sufficiency and break free from traditional patriarchal constraints.

Today's woman conferences

This initiative represents a significant effort to convene women globally and equip them with the necessary tools for empowerment and inspiration. It acknowledges the diverse challenges faced by women and positions the conference as a vital resource for those seeking guidance and support. In a recent interview, a female pastor highlighted the overarching mission of Today's Woman as one of soul-winning and empowering women across various church affiliations, emphasizing the inclusive nature of the initiative beyond the confines of ZAOGA. The goal is to empower all women while promoting the vision of ZAOGA within broader communities. In an interview, one woman argues that:

Today's Woman conference has yielded positive results for all women who attend, regardless of whether they are ZAOGA members or not, as it teaches us how to utilize our hands as women, which helps eradicate poverty. When you return home through these conferences, you will be empowered, challenged, and motivated to do what other women do". She continues to say that the teachings of ZAOGA are heavenly, meaning they assert that in a world where it is said that men and women are equal, the Kingdom of God teaches that the man is the head of the household. The man is the head of the family, even though there must be respect between him and his wife. Therefore, ZAOGA teachings are based on the Word of God, which brings peace and love to the family, and in turn, provides the family with peace and love, rather than worldly teachings.

(Mrs X, 34 years old, September 2024).

The above sentiments align with those of Chingarande (2022) and Dimingu & Mgovo (2021), who note that through the development of talents, Guti enabled women to realize their potential as breadwinners and not to depend solely on male figures for family support. When women become breadwinners in the family, there is limited gender-based violence; most cases of gender-based violence are triggered by a lack of finances in the family.

The working of talents (Matarenda)

The School of Talents' guiding principles, originally derived from the Bible, were later refined by ZAOGA in collaboration with Priscilla Ngoma, a co-founder of the school. The focus was on encouraging women to work diligently and achieve financial prosperity, opposing idleness as advocated by Gifford (1988). It is essential to note that while ZAOGA encourages the participation of men, women, and youth in Talents, this aspect of the church's teachings specifically focuses on women (Biri, 2014). Maxwell (2006) also associates Talents with femininity. He agrees that Tarugarira & Moyo should emphasize that, despite the participation of men and children, Talents primarily involve women (Tarugarira & Moyo, 2020). The strategy for economic self-reliance primarily addresses the fact that women's poverty often stems from their inability to generate income. According to Guti, women are taught income-generating skills at the School of Talents. With conviction, Guti stated that talents are "not a mechanism for the church to extract money from people, but to empower believers to attain financial stability and overcome poverty" (Guti, 2015). However, the traditional portrayal of men as the primary breadwinners restricted their resourcefulness and entrepreneurial drive, subtly influenced by the perception of men as the sole providers.

Guti made significant efforts to bridge the gender gap by providing equal opportunities that would lead to financial independence. Women reported earning substantial income by selling small items such as sweets, fruits, and socks (Maposa & Mapuranga, 2018). One expressed gratitude for being able to support her children's education through her talents and small-scale sales. She credited Guti for introducing Talents, which significantly impacted her life as a single parent. While Talents has garnered support from many women and is widely praised for its positive impact, some critics believe that the organization's role in advancing women's liberation and societal transformation has been exaggerated. Some argue that despite providing women with economic opportunities, the emphasis on traditional gender roles and submission undermines the potential benefits for women. In an interview, one individual expressed the following viewpoint:

Talent seems to be fading and losing its credibility because, after being taught to use our hands to sustain ourselves, we are taught to be submissive, resulting in our husbands taking away our money in the name of submission. Most women now manage everything in the home with this money, with men relying on it. How am I expected to say no to my money being taken while I am taught to submit and be a good wife? I am powerless and cannot resist even if I want to.

(Mrs. X, 45 years old, November 2024).

The above sentiments validate the finding made by Mwaura (2008) that women's intellectual capability is reduced when they are denied the ability to question and dispute. "Not above him, not under him, but side by side with him with a sweet spirit" is how Eunor Guti pushes for a partnership, which defies her argument. Men should think more clearly than women, according to Guti (2007). It is possible to identify patriarchy in these beliefs, and women suffer from it, mainly if they are taught that men should make all the decisions. According to the teaching, women's decisions should be defined by men, as women are perceived to have limited mental capacity (Biri, 2015). Women are expected to work hard to provide for their families and not rely solely on their husbands for support. Based on Biri's argument, the concept or idea behind Talents is not "abused," where women with irresponsible husbands are now supporting the whole family. However, a man is responsible for taking care of the family. This strains women, and there is a need for a shift in ZAOGA teachings or reemphasizing the agenda behind Talents.

Programmatic Interventions

Go quickly and tell ministries

Eunor, the wife of Guti, was the inaugural chairperson of the Go Quickly and Tell Women's ministry of ZAOGA FIFMI. Under her leadership, she prioritized the training and empowerment of women, many of whom experienced a transformative shift from poverty to prosperity (Maxwell, 2002). She launched the renowned Tuesday prayer meetings, attracting tens of thousands of women from around the world who gather weekly to intercede for God's work. Guti's wife, popularly known as Eunor, inspires married and single

women, demonstrating how one can honour one's spouse while simultaneously being a catalyst for change. Her journey toward achieving success and financial independence before marriage is a powerful encouragement for young girls to strive for excellence from an early age. In recognition of her influence, the Girls of Quality Ministry in Forward in Faith adopted the motto "Raising the young Eunors of today and forever" (Biri, 2018).

According to Oduyoye (1997), a woman who adeptly manages her affairs is often perceived as challenging societal norms. This perspective is rooted in the Shona traditional religion and culture, which traditionally prioritizes marriage for women. Nonetheless, women are encouraged to support themselves and their church through the teachings of ZAOGA. Guti emphasizes the importance of ZAOGA women as vital supporters of their ministry and that they are responsible for fulfilling all needs with their resources. They are urged to manage their households effectively and generate wealth for the Kingdom. The culture advocates celebrating each other's successes and uplifting and rejuvenating each other in matters of faith. Women are inspired to engage actively with other women for evangelism.

School of dressmaking

The ZAOGA church has prioritized empowering women by establishing over 100 Dressmaking and Designing Schools, specifically equipping them with essential skills for achieving financial independence. Longwe and Clarke (1994) assert that offering training opportunities to women is vital for their well-being, resonating with the welfare state concept, which enables women to access training benefits to fulfil their basic needs, including food. This initiative aims to promote positive transformations for disadvantaged and marginalized individuals by empowering them. The ZAOGA FIF training centres, including the one in Masvingo, continue to operate through private funding, sustaining their relevance by providing essential skills in an ever-evolving technological landscape.

Placing women in ministerial positions

Guti asserted that God revealed to him how the church would grow and holiness through the active participation of women in preaching the gospel. The inaugural Women's Seminar, held in March 1989, aimed to "liberate women from the mindset of being considered second-class citizens and incapable, despite being created in the image of God" (Guti, 2000). He transformed the church by empowering numerous women to take top leadership positions. This movement shattered gender norms and expanded opportunities for women (Sunday Mail: Collen Murahwa, 2023). Apostle Guti strongly believed that given equal opportunities, women are equally capable as men. His actions spoke louder than words, underscoring the crucial role of men in promoting gender equality. Apostle Guti appointed women as leaders in every program, with women in leadership roles, dispelling the notion that only men were fit to lead.

Guti was a prominent figure who used his influence and position to give women in ZAOGA a platform to showcase their talents and voices. His support for gender equality extended beyond his religious community, as he advocated for other churches and society to follow suit. He believed that empowering women enhances relationships and unleashes societal potential. According to Takavarasha (1997), a central figure in ZAOGA theology is the late Mbuya Dorcas, Guti's mother and the hospital's namesake. Unlike some other religious groups, ZAOGA respects women and allows them to hold pastoral positions. Women have held various leadership roles in the church, including overseers, pastors, elders, deaconesses, and bishops. ZAOGA stands out as a church where women have achieved significant positions and led conferences and conventions without the presence of men, showcasing their ability to lead independently (Biri, 2015).

Influence of Guti's legacy on societal norms

Guti's advocacy for women's empowerment has facilitated broader societal changes, challenging traditional norms and inspiring movements for gender equality beyond the church. Through the teachings of Guti, women have managed to challenge the traditional societal norms that viewed men as property owners. Through various programs introduced by Guti, many women have become property owners and graduated from being

loggers to landlords (Mwase, 2012). Guti's teachings also influenced the general leadership setup in society and religious institutions.

In his teachings, Guti emphasized the importance of men leading in promoting gender equality. He argued that men should not perceive women as subservient or inferior but as equals with complementary strengths and abilities. Unfortunately, men misunderstood Guti's message, incorrectly believing he advocated for male leadership with women in submissive roles. One female pastor admitted to misinterpreting Professor Ezekiel's words, stating:

When I heard him say that men must lead, I assumed I would lose my position as a pastor since I am a widow. However, he assured me that I am a pastor in my own right, independent of a man, and encouraged me to continue my ministry.

(Mrs. X, 46 years, 2024).

The sentiments highlight Guti's significant legacy in advancing women's status, which aligns with the principles outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically Goal Number 5, which advocates for gender equality. The teachings of Guti are poised to continue influencing societal norms and practices long after his passing. Notably, women continue to be elected to prominent leadership positions, reflecting the enduring impact of Guti's contributions to the empowerment and advancement of women.

Intersections of faith and feminism

This study also found that Guti's work contributes to the rediscovery of women's roles within religious and social contexts. Contrary to what Tsara and Mudimeli (2024) found, where women were not allowed to lead in Johane Marange Apostolic Church, Guti allows women to become pastors and lead various programs in the church. This led to the advancement of the feminist movement, where women are given equal opportunities to their male counterparts. One of the ZAOGA FIF members confirmed this when she said:

I am pleased to be a member of ZAOGA FIF. In our church, there is no distinction between men and women. All members of the church are treated equally in terms of leadership positions. In our church, women are empowered to lead services and preach. No woman is left behind in the pursuit of economic empowerment. Guti teaches women to work hard using their hands through the 'work of Talents', which has enabled many women to become property owners, including owning houses and businesses.

(Interview with Mrs X, 45 years, 2025).

This has also been supported by Dimingu (2021), who states that talents in ZAOGAS are gender-sensitive because they provide a genuine opportunity to increase the role of female ventures, unlike other churches, which often promote male domination. It is also clear from Guti's teaching that genuine changes are achievable if social and economic inequalities between genders are addressed. Most participants agreed that they had moved up the social ladder through the work of Talents. Some could buy household furniture they could not afford before they were introduced to the school of talents, while others could send their children to school.

Discussion

This literature review critically examines the extent of scholarly discourse on Guti's influence on women's empowerment through ZAOGA, shedding light on key themes pertinent to gender equality, social roles, and financial independence.

Gender Equality and Religious Teachings

Guti's theological framework advocates for a holistic approach to gender equality, encompassing the spiritual, social, and economic dimensions of life. His writings and sermons frequently underscore the notion that women's empowerment is integral to the divinely ordained transformation of society. Moyo (2020) argues that

Guti's theology articulates a fundamental connection between the liberation of women and the fulfillment of God's mission on Earth, asserting that women possess equal capabilities and callings as men within both ecclesiastical and societal realms. This perspective aligns with a burgeoning dialogue among theologians regarding the importance of feminist and womanist methodologies within religious discourse, as noted by Chitando (2010). Furthermore, Tarugarira and Moyo (2020) aptly observe that "Religion has historically played a significant role in the suppression of women in society; nonetheless, it has also been a critical universal source for the feminist movement and other social and political movements advocating for human rights." The discourse surrounding gender equality and women's empowerment within religious contexts has increasingly attracted scholarly attention, particularly regarding the roles of leaders and institutions in facilitating social transformation. Ezekiel Guti, the founder of the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA), has emerged as a significant figure whose doctrinal teachings and initiatives have substantially contributed to enhancing women's status within society (Tsara, Mudau & Mudimeli, 2025).

Biri (2018) argues that religious texts and traditions often perpetuate patriarchal systems. However, Guti's theology presents a counter-narrative by promoting women's empowerment through biblical interpretations that foster equality. Scholars such as Chitando (2010) have emphasized the need to critically examine religious teachings, suggesting that they can be reinterpreted to support gender equity. Guti's initiative to introduce programs that empower women economically and socially aligns with this re-evaluation of religious doctrine. The role of ZAOGA as a conduit for advancing women's empowerment is well-documented in the literature. The church has implemented various initiatives to enhance women's financial autonomy, social standing, and leadership opportunities within the congregational framework (Tsara & Mudimeli, 2024). Chitando (2010) emphasizes that ZAOGA has empowered women through vocational training and microfinance programs, equipping them with the essential skills necessary for economic self-sufficiency. Guti's leadership style fosters increased female participation in church governance and decision-making processes. This initiative finds further support in the work of Tarugarira (2020), who emphasizes the significant strides made by ZAOGA in reshaping women's roles within the church, moving away from traditional patriarchal norms.

The Impact of Religion on Women's Empowerment

Research has illuminated the intricate ways in which religion influences women's empowerment, revealing a duality wherein specific religious contexts have historically constrained women's roles and opportunities. In contrast, the approach adopted by Guti within the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa Forward in Faith (ZAOGA FIF) emerges as a notable transformative model. Tarugarira and Moyo (2020) contend that religious movements have the potential to act as catalysts for social change, particularly in the realms of empowerment and equality.

Guti's teachings have been pivotal in creating an environment that encourages women to pursue financial independence and empowers them to challenge oppressive societal structures by utilizing their innate talents. A significant mechanism embedded within Guti's pedagogy is the practice of consciousness raising, which serves as a fundamental component of women's empowerment (Dimingu & Mgovo, 2021). This synthesis of spiritual guidance and practical empowerment strategies highlights the potential of religious frameworks to promote gender equality and enhance the agency of women in diverse socio-economic contexts.

Moyo (2020) contends that while Guti has made commendable strides in empowering women, systemic barriers hinder the complete implementation of gender equity principles. These challenges include entrenched cultural norms and resistance from within the church community, which may inadvertently perpetuate gender disparities. Ezekiel Guti's leadership and the initiatives of ZAOGA play a vital role in empowering women in Zimbabwe. Utilizing a womanist approach, the church addresses issues of gender inequality and advocates for social transformation, emphasizing the significance of women's contributions to both spiritual and economic spheres. Although progress is being made, ongoing efforts to challenge and dismantle cultural barriers will be essential for achieving comprehensive empowerment for women within the church and society. This literature review underscores the significance of Guti's work in promoting women's empowerment while acknowledging the complexities associated with enacting social change in a patriarchal

context. Future research in this area could yield more profound insights into the effectiveness of empowerment programs and their long-term impact on women's lives within ZAOGA and beyond.

Economic Empowerment Initiative

The implementation of economic empowerment programs by religious organizations has been a focal point in gender studies. Guti's initiatives, which include vocational training and financial literacy programs, reflect a growing trend among faith-based organizations to contribute to women's socioeconomic advancement. Studies by Chitando (2010) and Chingarande & Thondhlana (2021) suggest that such programs elevate women's status within their communities and challenge traditional gender roles. The alignment of these programs with biblical principles, as interpreted by Guti, lends them an additional layer of legitimacy in a religious context.

In summary, the literature highlights the significance of Ezekiel Guti's theology as a progressive force within a religious framework that may not have traditionally supported gender equality. Employing a womanist approach allows a nuanced understanding of his contributions to women's empowerment and social transformation (Tsara & Mudimeli, 2024). This study further explores these dimensions, providing insights into the impact of Guti's teachings on gender equality within the broader context of societal change in Zimbabwe.

The findings of this research highlight the crucial role that Ezekiel Guti's theological perspective plays in promoting gender equality and empowering women in contemporary Zimbabwe. Utilizing a womanist framework, the study elucidates how Guti's teachings confront entrenched patriarchal structures and establish a platform for women to assert their rights and capabilities. This framework enhances women's empowerment across social, economic, and spiritual dimensions, accentuating their essential contributions to ecclesiastical and societal spheres. Furthermore, Guti's theological approach presents a viable model for reforming theology in various religious contexts, advocating for the re-evaluation of doctrines that may inadvertently sustain gender inequality. The study identifies a pressing need for faith-based organizations to engage proactively in policy advocacy that champions gender equality, leveraging religious doctrines to facilitate systemic transformation within society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Ezekiel Guti's theology, viewed through a Womanist perspective, exemplifies a profound dedication to advancing gender equality and fostering social change within the ZAOGA FIF community. His progressive methods signify a departure from conventional patriarchal practices, emphasizing the importance of women's empowerment for both individual and communal advancement. Guti has laid the groundwork for meaningful systemic transformation that challenges established oppressive frameworks by implementing initiatives to improve women's economic self-sufficiency and tackling societal issues. This exploration underscores the pivotal role of religious organizations in driving social reform, illustrating how faith can be a powerful force in advocating for gender equality. As ZAOGA FIF continues to prioritize women's leadership and empowerment, it serves as an essential model for other faith-based entities, revealing the transformative potential of religion to elevate the voices of those often marginalized. Guti's impact represents a legacy in the fight for equal rights and social justice within faith communities. It calls to action for ongoing advocacy for women's rights and equitable social transformation. Future research could explore several avenues to extend the findings of this study. Comparative studies between ZAOGA FIF and other religious organizations may illuminate various approaches to women's empowerment within religious contexts, thereby enriching the discourse on gender equality in faith settings.

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Informed Consent Statement: Any research article describing a study involving humans should contain this statement: 'Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. For studies not involving humans, please exclude this statement.'

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